Aspects of the career of Alexander Berry, 1781-1873

Barry John Bridges
University of Wollongong
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Chapter 8

SHOALHAVEN UNDER DAVID BERRY

Following John's death Alexander asked David and William to come to an understanding as to each's duties in management of the estate but to consult about everything, for 'two heads are better than one' and 'in no country is union more necessary than here'. This and further appeals to them to pull together went unheeded. William had no commitment to the cause. He told Alexander that he need never expect any good to come of the estate and urged him to sell the best of it. By mid 1851 it was common knowledge that David and William were at loggerheads much of the time and several years after John's death Alexander finally accepted that William would give no assistance. At the same time he perceived that part of the problem was David's refusal to accept advice from William or his sisters and his inclination to shut William out.

From fear of what would befall the family and estate should anything happen to remove David, Berry fussed over David constantly admonishing him to take care of his safety and health, often in response to expressions of concern from William and their sisters. He was conscious that both father and brother had died as a result of falls from horses and that David, a big, stout man, was a poor rider, so he urged David to ride well-broken horses and always to

1 Berry to David Berry 8/5/1848, 23/10/1848 & 29/11/1849, BP.
2 Berry to David Berry 20/12/1849, BP.
3 Berry to David Berry 5/8/1850, BP.
4 Berry to David Berry 28/10/1850, 12/6/1851, 4/7/1851, 13/11/1851 & 15/12/1851, BP.
5 Berry to David Berry 4/7/1853, BP.
6 Berry to William Berry 11/2/1857, BP.
have help at hand in case of an accident. David was also warned against travelling at night lest enemies do him harm under cover of darkness. David, physically a very strong man, never liked to appear ill or receive sympathy and was careless alike of creature comforts and his health. Berry chided him for being out at night in the colder months without a greatcoat and for his habit of sitting asleep in a chair for hours in wet clothes or boots. In consequence of such carelessness he suffered severely from influenza. By 1863 he had become very deaf: an affliction which came to put him in virtual isolation from others and which was attributed by his siblings to exposure.

Throughout the quarter century of David's management Alexander wrote hundreds of letters in which by turns he advised, exhorted, nagged, pleaded and ridiculed in the hope of securing better performance. David was usually unperturbed by anything his brother wrote whether in an angry, anguished or pleading tone and suited himself about whether he responded to 'instructions'. Berry's representation of their concerns as constantly on the brink of financial disaster were counterproductive and seem to have influenced later commentators in adopting a dismissive attitude to his complaints. According to M.D.Stephen 'David was no more dilatory as a manager than Alexander had been before 1832' and 'under his patient direction, an estate which before 1850 had occasioned more envy than profit to

7 Berry to David Berry 18/12/1848, 19/2/1851, 18/11/1852 & 30/6/1853; Berry to William Berry 13/12/1848, BP.
8 Berry to David Berry 28/4/1849, BP.
its owners was brought into efficient development'. David was in truth an incorrigibly disorganised and miserably inept manager. He kept 'everything in a muddle' and the estate went backwards in almost all areas of its varied undertakings. David's stubbornness frequently led to his ignoring advice he would have been well advised to heed.

Berry frequently complained that David left him in the dark, not informing him of what was going on at Shoalhaven or what he could expect for sale. Questions asked, sometimes repeatedly, were left unanswered. Necessary documents were not sent. Lack of information was particularly galling when deadlines for tendering had to be met. Sometimes David did not mention his court cases, depriving his brother of the chance to provide legal or other assistance. In the last year of his life Alexander complained that he had to read newspapers to get some inkling of what was happening on his own property.

The estate was far too large for one man to supervise adequately yet that is what David, unwilling to delegate authority, attempted to do. He was often away on horseback at night, not infrequently until near daybreak while his sister Nancy, fearing for his safety, wandered distracted between the house and the wharf. While David would complain to Berry of overseers or clerks he was so timid that he could not bring himself to tell the men in question of his dissatisfaction. In the eighteen sixties Alexander took to sending him letters to pass to individuals concerned; with copies to William to use if David would not do even that.

David was a chronic procrastinator. Berry told him

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11 M.D. Stephen, 'Berry, David (1795-1889)', *ADB*, v 3, 150-151.

12 Berry to William Berry 3/10/1868, BP.

13 The letters in which Berry complains of not being informed are too numerous to list.

14 Berry to David Berry 23/2/1863 & 25/9/1863, BP.
'you are always dilatory in everything',\textsuperscript{15} that 'other people act while you are thinking about it'.\textsuperscript{16} Leaving everything to the last minute was doing things 'Berry fashion'.\textsuperscript{17} An obituary notice agreed that 'David never did anything in a hurry'.\textsuperscript{18}

Endless pleas and scoldings failed to move David to collect cargo in readiness for their vessel, produce was frequently kept at Shoalhaven or sent up in dribbles despite Berry's anguished warnings that he needed sales to meet liabilities,\textsuperscript{19} sometimes David neglected to send invoices\textsuperscript{20} and there is no indication of notice being taken of unending complaints about the condition or packing of produce, despite Berry explaining in detail what was required. Berry never overcame David's habit of sending requisitions only at the last moment,\textsuperscript{21} leaving him no opportunity to time purchases to take advantage of favourable prices and costing him freight on items which should have gone down by their own vessel.

Berry likewise failed to persuade David to enter into written contracts, to give written discharges, and otherwise to keep proper records. David persisted in making verbal agreements and transacting business on the run. He went through a succession of clerks, few of whom satisfied Berry because his conduct made it impossible for the clerk to keep records efficiently. Periodically David attempted to be his own clerk. Berry recognised that this was impossible without his neglecting his proper duties and

\textsuperscript{15} Berry to David Berry 27/5/1857, BP.
\textsuperscript{16} Berry to David Berry 6/9/1859, BP.
\textsuperscript{17} Berry to David Berry 29/3/1852, BP.
\textsuperscript{18} DT, 5 Oct. 1889.
\textsuperscript{19} E.g. Berry to David Berry 14/11/1850, 30/3/1851 & 23/10/1851, BP.
\textsuperscript{20} Berry to David Berry 1/11/1852, 5/9/1853 p.s. & – /8/1862, BP.
\textsuperscript{21} E.g. Berry to David Berry 19/7/1848, 24/5/1864, 2/9/1864, 22/2/1865, 22 & 25/7/1870, BP.
David's refusal to make written contracts contributed materially to disputes and fairly frequent appearances in petty courts. On a number of these occasions his poor record-keeping resulted in embarrassment for him. For example, in a case in which he prosecuted for unpaid rent the evidence established that there was a balance owing from him. Alexander considered David a hesitant, unconvincing and sometimes incomprehensible witness, yet reacted with brotherly anger when on a couple of occasions David was roughly handled by District Court Judge Henry Carey while in the witness box. Periodically David neglected to settle small debts. In 1857 he failed to pay his sheep assessment and a fine until a distress warrant was issued. In 1861 he lost preemptive leases of Crown land by not paying on time.

There is nothing to indicate that David gave any thought to finance. From the beginning Berry complained that he drew orders for payments 'faster even than you can advise me of them' and continued to allege that he

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22 Many letters in the BP relate to the clerk-storekeeper. See especially Berry to David Berry 13/11/1851, 24/7/1854, 6/8/1863, 13/6/1864 & 24/7/1865, BP.

23 IM, 7 Dec. 1857: Shoalhaven Court of Petty Sessions 2/12/1857

24 Berry to David Berry 3/11/1856, BP.


26 Berry to David Berry 25/6/1858, 2/7/1858, 13/1/1868, 9/3/1868 & 8/10/1868, BP.

27 Berry to David Berry 12/6/1857, BP.

28 Berry to David Berry 27/11/1861, BP.

29 Berry to David Berry 2/10/1848, BP.
thought only of spending money. David would draw orders over lengthy periods when he sent nothing or next to nothing to bring in money and seemed unmoved by his brother's cries that it was impossible to go on in that way.

Lack of proper records and accountability for stock and equipment contributed to larceny being rife. Berry remarked that the Meroo swamps were almost a common and their cattle treated as common too. It came to notice that one employee 'must have appropriated to his use many hundred head - and we paid him for his trouble'. About a year before his death Berry expressed doubt whether there was a single honest tenant or servant on the property. He acknowledged that Berry property was 'considered as lawful plunder' several years before men caught stealing from the estate pleaded in extenuation that it was local custom to do so. David contributed to the problem by his weakness. In 1861 Berry named tenants he wanted removed after William reported that David would not take any action against those who had been identified as thieves. The cost of larceny must have been very considerable, especially if one adds in rampant cheating on rent paid in kind.

30 [Berry to David Berry 1864?], BP.
31 E.g. Berry to David Berry 10/5/1852, 2/8/1852 & 27/9/1852, BP.
32 Berry to David Berry 27/10/1851, 18/8/1862 & 31/1/1865, BP.
33 Berry, Memo. n.d., Marked 10-188 [1858], BP. On cattle stealing in general: Berry to David Berry 9/9/1852, 28/1/1861, 31/1/1870 & 4/12/1871, BP.
34 Berry to David Berry 14/9/1872, BP.
35 Berry to David Berry 10/8/1863. See also letter 29/12/1863, BP.
36 Berry, Memo. [dated in pencil 1864?], BP.
37 Berry to David Berry 14/1/1861, BP.
By 1852 Alexander Berry had entered his seventies. He gave the appearance of tiring and of loss of drive and enthusiasm. By then David's manifold deficiencies as a manager were obvious. Alexander was bewildered by some of David's decisions and frustrated by his deafness to instructions and pleas. He wrote that it was 'nonsense ... to attempt any longer to carry on the establishment under the present management'.\textsuperscript{38} It would be more advantageous to let the whole estate at a shilling an acre.\textsuperscript{39} In 1853 Berry wrote that he had become 'very tired' of carrying on in the face of so many annoyances and returned a number of times to the idea of selling. In the last ten years he had not had a nett return on capital of even one per cent, he was convinced that large-scale agriculture would never again pay and letting to small farmers must ruin even the richest land. If he should die suddenly the whole property would 'go to the devil at once' for David would not be able to cope. The gold rushes had raised the price of land. Sold in a judicious manner the property would realise 'an enormous sum' after payment of debts.\textsuperscript{40}

For the remainder of his life Berry returned constantly to the proposition that their best course would be to sell, with expressions of regret at lost opportunities in the past.\textsuperscript{41} In August 1862 he wrote that after forty years trial of Shoalhaven he was still in debt and it had not provided the means to build a suitable house on the estate or for David to 'live respectable'.\textsuperscript{42} There was no hope of a return commensurate with their great investment, they could easily sink £100,000 more into desirable improvements without any prospect of recovering it, and

\textsuperscript{38} Berry to David Berry 1/8/1852, BP.  
\textsuperscript{39} Berry to David Berry 18/7/1852, BP.  
\textsuperscript{40} Berry to David Berry 13/1/1853, 14/3/1853, 4 & 11/4/1853 & 5/9/1853 p.s., BP.  
\textsuperscript{41} This point was made in very many letters to David Berry.  
\textsuperscript{42} Berry to David Berry 18/8/1862, BP.
feelings of envy would prevent them being left to enjoy the estate in peace. From around 1860 Alexander wrote that he and David were two frail old men who could live more comfortably on investment at even one per cent of the capital tied up.43

In 1864 the estate had a nominal rent roll of £6,000 a year. David was employing two hundred men to farm 36,000 acres on their own account and there was a large stock of cattle and horses.44 The public believed that as owner of so large an estate employing so many men Alexander must be immensely rich. He was daily in receipt of letters asking for charity or loans, in one case for £25,000 at a low rate of interest.45 He no doubt fostered this impression of prosperity by self-satisfied statements to friends and others46 and by generous charitable giving — although much of this was done quietly and without any wish for public acknowledgement.47 A balance created by sale of part of Crows Nest estate in 185348 had by 1861 disappeared49 and by 1864 the Commercial Bank held the deeds to 5,300 acres at Numba as security for an overdraft of £2,000.50 Berry wrote that his money had 'all been spent on unproductive land and unproductive labour'.51 He then began pleading

43 E.g. Berry to David Berry 7/12/1860 p.s., BP.
44 Berry to David Berry 14/4/1864, BP.
45 Berry to David Berry 19/11/1864, BP.
46 In 1845 Elizabeth Berry's cousin Mary Shelley believed that Berry's income was £12,000 per annum — far more than it ever was: Mary Shelley to Claire Clairmont 7/6 [sic]/1845, Frederick L. Jones, ed. The Letters of Mary W. Shelley, Norman, Oklahoma 1944, v II, 245.
47 Hay, op. cit., 827.
48 Berry to David Berry 4/1/1860, BP.
49 Berry to David Berry 19/9/1861, BP.
50 Berry, Memorandum 21/2/1864, BP.
51 Berry, Memo. [1864?], also Berry to David Berry 5/4/1864 & 19/11/1864, BP.
with his brother for economy. He was too old to be worried by new encumbrances and wanted to die without debts, but David continued to increase Berry's indebtedness by investing in 'supposed improvements' and paying unproductive labour. In August 1871 Berry consolidated all debts into one at the Commercial Bank and contemplated selling more of Crows Nest to retire it.

By the early eighteen sixties Berry was complaining that the estate was returning less than at David's arrival although expenses had become much greater. Under David cattle and horses rapidly degenerated in quality and numbers. In 1869 Berry asserted that stock on the estate was worth more in 1836 than the land and stock currently were together. Although agriculture and cattle raising were the estate's principal functions it did not in that year produce enough flour or beef to supply its own needs. All buildings and facilities had a dilapidated appearance whereas thirty years earlier everything was in a respectable condition. In 1836 three vessels had been needed to convey produce to Sydney; under David one small ship was under-employed. David's incompetence was not the only factor in the decline in Berry's financial circumstances. Repeated severe flooding from 1860 and adverse seasonal conditions continent-wide between 1861 and

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52 E.g. Berry to David Berry 15/12/1863, 5 & 14/4/1864, 17/8/1871, BP.

53 Berry to David Berry 8, 12 & 18/6/1872, BP.

54 Berry to David Berry 17/8/1871, BP.

55 Berry to David Berry 24/4/1862, BP.

56 Berry to David Berry 26/7/1852, 22/7/1862, 10/1/1864, Berry to W. Jemmett Browne 6/5/1858, BP; Frank McCaffrey, First Century of Dairying in New South Wales, Sydney 1909, 173.

57 Berry to David Berry 15/11/1869, BP.

58 Berry to David Berry 15/12/1869, BP.

59 Berry to William Berry 3/10/1868, Berry to David Berry 12/3/1869, BP.
1872 reduced incomes and forced up prices.\textsuperscript{60}

David had a passionate attachment to the estate. He was implacably opposed to sale. From the beginning of the eighteen fifties it was David who pressed for continued extension.\textsuperscript{61} Berry told him he could not understand why he opposed selling let alone why he wanted more land when he had no family to leave it to\textsuperscript{62} and had to be aware that he was 'hated and detested because you already have so much you cannot use'.\textsuperscript{63} Nevertheless he bowed to David's wishes and found the money for David to outbid rivals.\textsuperscript{64}

One would expect any proprietor to replace his manager, even if also a brother, who took so little notice of directions and performed so poorly. Berry does not seem to have believed that any estate large enough to require reliance on overseers could be managed efficiently. He certainly believed the estate could be better managed than it was, writing that under others it 'would have been the most respectable place in the Colony'\textsuperscript{65} whereas they were 'merely robbed and plundered'.\textsuperscript{66} It would have cost him £300 to £500 a year for a manager, but no manager would have David's interest in the place.\textsuperscript{67} During the period of David's management Berry passed from the ages of 67 to almost 92. He was throughout an old man who had to expect


\textsuperscript{61} Berry to David Berry 6/11/1851, 5/5/1853, BP.

\textsuperscript{62} Berry to David Berry 18/8/1853, 22/7/1862, 29/12/1863, 12/5/1864 p.s., 12/2/1866 & 5/1/1869, BP.

\textsuperscript{63} Berry to David Berry 22/8/1872, BP.

\textsuperscript{64} E.g. \textit{IM}, 18 May 1856, 2 Nov. 1857.

\textsuperscript{65} Berry to William Berry 3/10/1868, BP.

\textsuperscript{66} Berry to David Berry 14/4/1864, BP. See similarly but much earlier Berry to David Berry 12/2/1844, BP.

\textsuperscript{67} On the general issue of management: Berry to David Berry 25/7/1853 & 5/8/1854, BP.
that his course was nearly run. David was his natural and chosen heir, the estate the focus of David's life. Berry was then in some respects very nearly as soft as David. The Berry papers reveal that David was by no means the only person at Shoalhaven whose failings he bore with over a long period.

Engagement in 1853 of Henry Gordon Morton (1828-1895) brought to the service of the Berry brothers the most remarkable of their Shoalhaven employees and a significant figure in the Shoalhaven community in the second half of the century. Morton, born and educated in Edinburgh, trained as a surveyor and railway engineer and had experience in both capacities in Scotland and England before migrating to New South Wales in 1852. A short time after arrival Berry persuaded him to go to Shoalhaven where he began thirty-five years service to the Berrys as surveyor and land steward and, in the later years of David's proprietorship, effective manager of the estate. In his earliest years Berry was given to jeering at Morton's performance but grew to rely a good deal on him. Morton did much to locate farms and settle tenants and to site roads and ferries. He promoted agricultural societies, libraries, working men's clubs and the Masonic order and served long periods in the magistracy and local government. While stern and methodical in business he had a quick sense of humour which made him universally popular and saved many a tense situation. Morton was in business on his own account as a surveyor and auctioneer and served as agent for the Terara estate. These roles gave him a degree of

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68 The Book of Shoalhaven: As It Was and As It Is, Sydney 1926, 20, 52; Affidavit of Henry Gordon Morton 21/11/1887, Berry Estate, v 2 (NSWA 2/8638B), 523.
69 E.g. Berry to David Berry 13/3/1857, BP.
70 The Book of Shoalhaven, 20, 52-54.
71 IM, passim.
72 Ibid., 23 Aug. 1867.
acceptability as more than a creature of Berry.

In a sense Berry's siblings as a group failed him. He had expected that they would act and be acknowledged as a kind of 'county family' on the British model. Their repressive upbringing, retiring natures, the humbler position which they had occupied in Scottish society and their ages and set ways at the time of their arrival left all of them unfitted for roles of social leadership. Berry was forced in time to accept this.73

David, a shy, reticent, courteous man had many contacts and acquaintances but no friend. He does not seem to have relished the company of William or his sisters74 for there are references over a period of years to his being out until late at night talking to his employees at Coolangatta. Possibly this was in part a reflection of a view that as master he had an obligation to socialise with employees after work, as had been the practice in Scotland.

William, became increasingly reclusive, resenting peopling of the district and objecting to visitors, even relatives.75 In time he degenerated to the point where he would not do a hand's turn about the place and in 1867 infuriated Berry by writing to complain about a hole in the roof of Coolangatta house instead of mending it.76 Berry kept him supplied with books77 and he spent most of his time reading or writing long essays which Berry dismissed as nonsense78 and his cousin John Hay conceded were 'not of

73 Berry to David Berry 16/11/1870, BP.
74 Berry to David Berry 16/8/1863, 14/6/1869, BP.
75 Berry to David Berry 27/12/1849, 19/2/1872 & 8/4/1873, BP.
76 Berry to William Berry 2/4/1867, BP.
77 E.g. Berry to David Berry 20/12/1849, 22/12/1850 & 12/9/1853, BP.
78 Berry to William Berry 3/10/1868, Berry to David Berry 23/11/1869, 21/1/1870, 19/2/1872 & 5/10/1872 p.s.s, BP.
a kind to add to the store of wisdom in the world'. In 1870 Berry described him as 'an eccentric old woman'. When Governor Belmore stayed overnight at Coolangatta William refused to show himself.

The Berry sisters Janet (Jess) and Agnes (Nancy) were miserably unhappy, reclusive women constantly wanting to return to Scotland. They did not venture amongst their neighbours and so resented strangers coming to the house that while at Coolangatta in 1858 Alexander felt unable to invite a visitor inside. He complained that neither John nor David ever did anything for the comfort of their sisters. They were difficult to do anything for. They preferred to do the work of the house themselves. No female servant could please them or was kept for long. The only man who seems to have taken any interest in them was an employee who was dismissed for his presumption. After Jess died on 23 October 1860 at the age of 76 Nancy went 'regularly melancholy mad', complained of David keeping her a prisoner at Shoalhaven and renewed her pleas to be allowed to return to Fife. For years Berry wrote anguished letters pleading with his brothers to take care of Nancy and provide her with outings for her health and

79 Hay, op.cit., 849.
80 Berry to David Berry 16/11/1870, BP.
81 Berry to David Berry 11/1/1871, BP.
82 Berry to David Berry 9/7/1849 p.s., 28/3/1850 & 11/8/1871, BP.
83 Berry to David Berry 25/6/1858, BP.
84 Berry to David Berry 15/9/1863, BP.
85 The BP contain numerous references over the years.
86 Berry to John Berry 21/8/1842, BP.
87 Berry to David Berry 25/10/1860, BP; IM, 6 Nov. 1860.
88 Berry to David Berry 12/9/1861, BP: citing letter from William Berry.
89 Berry to David Berry 11/8/1871, BP.
amusement. He was, however, angered by her impiety in persisting in her refusal to submit to the dispensation of Providence and found it 'droll' that although she had not bothered to write to Barbara for upwards of thirty years she was 'killing herself' over news in 1871 of Barbara's death. By 1870 she was unable to cope with the house and its state and that of her person declined to the point where the Berrys were said to be the talk of the district. Nancy opposed Berry's efforts to procure new clothes for her and was abetted by David and William in resisting attempts to install a housekeeper. Nancy died on 3 March 1873 after a long illness.

While Berry would not attempt to force his siblings to socialise he considered that the way in which visitors were received reflected on him. In a couple of published comments visitors early in the period were unstinting in their praise of their reception and in the later decades of his life David came to enjoy a reputation for hospitality.

There is nothing to suggest that the Coolangatta Berrys genuinely welcomed visits from strangers. In 1849 Berry told David that he did not want to

90 Berry to David Berry 15/9/1863, 7/4/1865 & 5/7/1870, BP.
91 Berry to William Berry 14/11/1860 & 2/4/1867, BP.
92 Berry to David Berry 11/8/1871, BP.
93 Berry to David Berry 5, 6, 7 & 8/7/1870, 9/12/1870, 20/3/1871 & 30/9/1871 p.s., BP.
94 SMH, 18 Mar. 1873; Berry to G. Armit 21/3/1873, BP.
96 DT, 5 Oct. 1889.
hear any more complaints of his want of hospitality. In 1858 when the other members of the family were objecting to visitors he told David that he must get a house of his own and a wife 'to enable you to invite & entertain Strangers'.

Acting as host to the monarch's representative represented a social coup of the first order. On the occasions of rare viceregal visits to Shoalhaven Berry anticipated with nervous eagerness the honour of having a governor sleep under his roof. He was mortified when Sir William Denison visited Shoalhaven in mid October 1858 and David declined to receive him. He told David that this 'did me great harm', Denison 'became my bitter enemy and tried to bedevil me - which if you had treated him with common civility might not have happened'. In 1862 and 1863 Berry was excited by the prospect of receiving Prince Alfred - but his anticipated visit to Shoalhaven did not eventuate. The great occasion of this period was an overnight stay at Coolangatta in 1870 by the Governor, the Earl of Belmore. Berry wrote in rather agitated terms a series of letters giving David instructions on how he should received the Earl, warning that if he behaved 'in the same clownish and piggish way you did to Sir William Denison you will disgrace me again very much'. This visit passed off satisfactorily and was gratifying to

97 Berry to David Berry 9/4/1849, BP.
98 Berry to David Berry 23/4/1858, BP.
100 Berry to David Berry 16/8/1869, BP.
101 Berry to David Berry 23/6/1870, BP.
102 Berry to David Berry 15/10/1862, 12/2/1863 & 1/5/1863, BP.
103 Berry to David Berry 16/8/1869, 2/9/1870, 16 & 26/11/1870, 5/12/1870 & 2/1/1871, BP.
104 Berry to David 15/11/1870, BP.
Although Berry very rarely found anything to say in commendation his siblings and directed frequent frank verbal blasts at them for their failings and foibles he remained an affectionate brother constantly worrying about them, generally forbearing to override their wishes even when he disapproved of their attitude or behaviour. His sisters were very fond of him and on his infrequent but looked-for visits to Coolangatta surfeited him on his favourite dishes and plied him with their mead and other domestic productions. His brothers and sisters obviously dismissed his verbal cantankerousness and severity as a harmless affectation.

In the words of John Hay, a periodic visitor, the estate under David was 'a perfect paradise for loafers'. He was never a hard taskmaster and 'as he advanced in years the relationship of an employer to his people became more and more merged into that of a patriarchal head'. He was so timid that he seldom protested at an employee's indolence and then only in the mildest manner.

Periodically, especially when pressed financially, Alexander told David, sometimes in terms of positive instruction, to reduce the burden of unproductive labourers, dispensing with them by mutual consent if possible but by resort to magistrates if necessary. David never took any notice.

At the end of Berry's life a wide variety of trades were being practised by a small army of artisans at Coolangatta. The building trades were represented, all

105 Berry to David Berry 29/12/1870 p.s., 30/12/1870 & 2/1/1871, BP.


107 Berry to David Berry 14/9/1848, 7/12/1863, 30/5/1864, 24/1/1865, BP.
agricultural implements needed were fabricated on the spot, there were wheel-wrights, harness makers, even a tailor to clothe the work force.

A steam mill processed all timber needed and houses and barns were sent out in frame ready for erection.108 Given this start it seems almost impossible that modest timber buildings could take years to finish, as they regularly did.109 The implication is of staggering indolence on the part of tradesmen and incompetent supervision. Although the buildings at Coolangatta had been constructed in a few years by two carpenters the large team David employed was not keeping them in repair. By 1864 the estate had acquired a ruined appearance and Berry urged repeatedly the necessity to cease employing unproductive artisans and have essential work carried out on contract.110 David's managerial incompetence was certainly a factor in the low productivity. Building workers were constantly accusing him of failing to supply them with materials needed to get on with jobs.111

Drunkenness amongst the workforce was a major problem from the later eighteen forties onwards. Repeatedly over the years Berry urged David to sack all drunkards on their payroll, for any atheists who 'would risk their salvation in the next world merely for the sake of making beasts of themselves in this' were a curse to any place. In making a contract of employment with a cooper to replace a drunk in 1848 Berry inserted a clause making drunkenness or the selling of spirits a breach and he urged David to

108 'Coolangatta Estate, Shoalhaven', unidentified newspaper cutting, BP.

109 See Berry to William Berry 11/2/1861: 'It is all nonsense for David to speak of letting 2 unfinished cottages. It would take him years to finish them!', BP.

110 Berry to David Berry 30/3/1864, 9 & 30/5/1864, undated letter 1864?, BP.

111 Berry to David Berry 20/3/1873, BP. There are many specific complaints in the BP.
include a similar clause in clearing leases, going so far as to prohibit keeping of spirits in the house and making forfeiture the penalty for a beach. He thought that no sober, decent man could object to such clauses. In 1851 when two storekeepers, one of them a tenant, were prosecuted for sly-grog selling Berry suggested that his brother attempt to reduce the scope for storekeeping by lowering the mark-up on goods sold by the estate store. There was, however, to be no solution to the drink problem in Berry's time.

Berry did succeed in getting employees to eat the produce of the estate by making it a condition of employment. In 1849, when for the first time an employee ceased to take rations from the estate, Berry wrote:

*I will give employment to no man who does not eat the produce of the farm - perhaps your prices may be higher than they are at times in Sydney but they never vary and are made to correspond with the work for which also there is a fixed price and constant employment.*

Employees paid no rent and were supplied with wood and water without charge. Weekly issue of a ration remained the system until the death of David in 1889 although the practice of paying in kind had long since ceased in New South Wales and there had been moves to prohibit it. The Berrys preserved the advantages of a captive market on the spot, more predictable labour costs and commodity returns and ensured that wages were not fuelling a black market in beef stolen from the estate.

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112 Berry to David Berry 11/9/1848 & 16/11/1848, quoted, BP. One of the very few Shoalhaven employees whom Berry respected as industrious and truthful was an overseer named Macdonald whose services were dispensed with in consequence of habitual drunkenness. Berry was sorry that Macdonald had difficulty in finding new employment but believed that he could not honestly have masked his lack of sobriety when writing him a reference: Berry to David Berry 25/7/1860, 4/8/1860 & 17/1/1861, BP.

113 Berry to David Berry 21/4/1851, BP.

114 Berry to William Berry 9/7/1849, BP.
The Berrys were most comfortable with their fellow-countrymen. It was an aspect of Berry's eccentricity that despite endless complaints about the laziness, backwardness, incompetence and ill-will of Scots positions of responsibility were almost invariably given to them. It took decades for the Irish to overcome prejudice against them. The Berrys tended to bear with Britons once employed whatever their demerits and even when an unsatisfactory employee left their service they might accept responsibility and incur trouble and expense for his welfare long afterwards.\textsuperscript{115} Aliens on the other hand were viewed as, in varying degrees, lesser breeds who should be satisfied with inferior treatment. Berry responded to the labour crisis of the early eighteen fifties when more than half of his employees departed by employing Chinese and German immigrants. Because their passages had been paid he expected Chinese to work for a pittance of $3 a month and an inferior ration and Germans for wages much below the going rate. Not surprisingly the men of both races were resentful and responded with go-slows and other forms of resistance. Because their conditions were better than they had come from Berry considered them all greedy, ignoring the fact that they had migrated to better themselves not to serve as under-priced labour. That aliens should be content with less was however a community attitude, not one peculiar to Berry. The Chinese all soon absconded and the Germans had to be coerced into staying.\textsuperscript{116} While Berry attempted to enforce his agreements by pursuing both absconders and those who enticed them from service\textsuperscript{117} he

\textsuperscript{115} See for example, BP, numerous letters Berry to David Berry from 20/10/1851 to 19/3/1873 concerning Thomas Hall and his widow, and 3/7/1862 to 21/11/1864 concerning William Scott.

\textsuperscript{116} Berry to David Berry letters 22/3/1852 to 18/10/1854, 4/6/1855, 24/9/1856, 20/1/1858 & 4/8/1862, Berry, memorandum headed 'Germans', n.d. [1855], BP; Coghlan, \textit{op.cit.}, v II, 694-695.

\textsuperscript{117} Berry to Col. Sec. 3/5/1854 54/3885, Berry to Col. Sec. 30/10/1854 54/9438, Solicitor General to Col. Sec. 29/12/1854 54/11,343, CSIL, Register 1854.
himself stooped to enticement in September 1853 by hiring eleven Irish labourers refusing to work for the rate they had agreed upon with those who brought them to the Colony.\textsuperscript{118}

Berry's original objective of raising agricultural produce for export had not been achieved and in this period the district retreated from agriculture in the face of a number of adverse influences.

After 1855 the area under wheat in New South Wales grew faster than the population but the position of farmers was made difficult by high freight charges and high profits by middlemen. From 1850 to 1865 average yield per acre declined and over a longer term it fell from 16.1 bushels per acre in 1852 to 6.1 bushels in 1896. The comparing of yields only with those of the previous year obscured this generally downward trend.\textsuperscript{119} Unaware of these trends and faced with continuing poor returns through the eighteen fifties and sixties Berry fulminated against David's lazy and incompetent staff, attributing poor crops to mere scratching of the soil.\textsuperscript{120} He sent subsoil ploughs but could not prevail on David to have them put to use.\textsuperscript{121}

Rust appeared in the Numba wheat in 1848-1849\textsuperscript{122} and became established in Shoalhaven crops in the eighteen fifties, a serious problem in the eighteen sixties at which time farmers began to reduce crops to what was sufficient for their own use, and in the late eighteen seventies put

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Berry to David Berry 8 & 12/9/1853, BP.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Coghlan, \textit{op.cit.}, v II, 673-674; Edgars Dunsdorfs, \textit{The Australian Wheat-Growing Industry 1788-1948}, Melbourne 1956, 96, 114, 133.
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Berry to David Berry 6/2/1865, BP.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Berry to David Berry 23/3/1864, BP.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Berry to David Berry 11/1/1849, BP.
\end{itemize}
an end to wheat growing in the district.\textsuperscript{123} In 1863-1864 apparently splendid crops became worthless and had to be burnt as they ripened.\textsuperscript{124} Berry calculated a loss on farming for this year of more than £1,000.\textsuperscript{125} In 1869 rust attacked every species of wheat at Shoalhaven\textsuperscript{126} and Berry ceased to cultivate a grain which had in earlier times always grown luxuriantly.\textsuperscript{127}

Shoalhaven was from early times a major contributor of maize to the Sydney market.\textsuperscript{128} Although the quality declined in this period\textsuperscript{129} it vied with wheat as the major agricultural product of the Numba farm.\textsuperscript{130} In 1871 Berry wrote that for some years it had been the only produce of any moment.\textsuperscript{131} Barley, oats, potatoes and hay were also produced, although Berry was often unhappy about the quality.\textsuperscript{132} Even as old men who were merely caretakers for stranger successors the Berry brothers kept experimenting with new crops which might bring prosperity to the district's farmers.\textsuperscript{133} As late as March 1873 Berry ordered machinery to the value of nearly £700 for sugar milling: a

\begin{enumerate}
\item William A. Bayley, \textit{History of Shoalhaven}, Nowra 1965, 60.
\item \textit{IM}, 13 Nov. 1863, Berry to David Berry 28/11/1863, Berry to Francis Lord 28/1/1864, BP.
\item Berry to David Berry 1/6/1864, BP.
\item Berry to David Berry 15/1/1869, BP.
\item Berry to Hamilton Hume 25/6/1872, BP.
\item C.J.B. Watson, \textit{An Early History of the Shoalhaven District}, n.p., n.d., 11-12; \textit{SMH}, 15 April 1854.
\item Berry to David Berry 21/2/1865, BP.
\item E.g. in 1863 3,070 bushels of maize to 2,956 bushels of wheat: Berry to David Berry 23/6/1863, BP.
\item Berry to David Berry 24/3/1871, BP.
\item W. G. Mathews to David Berry 12/1/1862, Berry to David Berry 21/2/1865 & 16/3/1865, BP.
\item Berry to David Berry 22 & 25/7/1862, 10/8/1863, 13/2/1865, 15 & 27/6/1872, BP.
\end{enumerate}
move he regretted from consideration that David was always too slow to act and both of them were too old and infirm to start such a venture.134

In the last few years of his management John Berry had allowed the breeding of cattle to decline, intending instead to concentrate on fattening purchased lean beasts. Shoalhaven was too far out of the way for this scheme to work. Berry wanted more fencing at Meroo, better management and a renewed breeding program135 - but David was 'not a good judge of cattle'136 and the results in the next few years were disappointing.137 David did not preserve the herd of young bulls,138 took no interest in maintaining the valuable pure-bred dairy herds and allowed breeds to mix and mate at will with a consequent decline in quality.139 Late in 1857 a young man went to Meroo with a view to taking the management of the cattle establishment. He found that there was still no accommodation for the man in charge, the fences so dilapidated as to be useless and the cattle very wild. He declined the position, saying that the place had been so mismanaged for years that he could not do the job to his own or anyone else's satisfaction.140

Salt beef, and to a lesser extent pork, put up in casks continued one of the estate's major products to the early eighteen fifties although only three hundred casks of beef were then being produced in a year: half of what had sometimes been achieved earlier.141 Berry was incensed when

134 Berry to David Berry 6 & 30/7/1872, 22/8/1872, 5/9/1872, 15, 20 & 27/3/1873, BP.
135 Berry to David Berry 9, 11 & 18/12/1848, BP.
136 Berry to William Berry 18/12/1848, BP.
137 Berry to David Berry 11/3/1852, BP.
138 Berry to W. Jemmett Browne 6/5/1858, BP.
139 McCaffrey, op.cit., 173.
140 Berry to David Berry 23/12/1857, BP.
141 Berry to David Berry 9/9/1852, BP.
the workers responded to his criticisms by saying in 1849 that his customers were 'too nice' and that others put up salt beef as they did.\textsuperscript{142} There was such prejudice against Berry's beef in the Commissariat Department that in January 1849 he suffered the humiliation having every cask supplied by him opened and inspected instead of the usual random sampling of an occasional cask.\textsuperscript{143} In May 1852 all the casks of another consignment for that department were deficient in weight.\textsuperscript{144} Ships' masters were another major market but some masters complained that Berry's beef was tainted and would not again purchase from him.\textsuperscript{145} There were further losses when at the height of the gold rushes whalers avoided Sydney for fear of desertions.\textsuperscript{146} For some months in 1849 David left their ship idle at Shoalhaven while Berry pleaded fruitlessly for the previous season's beef that he might not lose the chance to sell it.\textsuperscript{147} In 1852 he got Berry into a mess by not delivering beef for a Government contract until many weeks after the due date\textsuperscript{148} and a few months later lost a sale of offal beef to Mauritius when, despite repeated warnings, he failed to send it up until after the ship had sailed.\textsuperscript{149}

Despite complaints and threats Berry took no action designed to force his brother and workmen to improve their performances. After the early eighteen fifties the subject of salted meat drops out of the Berry correspondence, apparently because of the labour shortage and a decline in

\textsuperscript{142} Berry to David Berry 22/1/1849, BP.
\textsuperscript{143} Berry to David Berry 10/1/1849, BP.
\textsuperscript{144} Berry to David Berry 13/5/1852 p.s., BP.
\textsuperscript{145} Berry to David Berry 22/1/1849 & 9/1/1851, BP.
\textsuperscript{146} Berry to David Berry 10/1/1853, BP.
\textsuperscript{147} Berry to David Berry 31/5/1849, BP.
\textsuperscript{148} Commissary Ramsay to Berry 21/9/1852, Berry to David Berry 23/9/1852, BP.
\textsuperscript{149} Berry to David Berry 23/12/1852, BP.
cattle numbers to the point where all beef produced was consumed on the property.150

Tallow brought immediate payment when sold in Sydney. In the later eighteen forties and early fifties Berry could not always wait for slow returns on beef and although he disliked having to boil animals down it became an absolute necessity.151

The dairy at Jindyandy was another department not always as productive as it had been. It was difficult to find competent staff and dairy operations appear also to have given a great deal of trouble. Butter was often poorly made, not infrequently unsaleable and on occasion had flies embedded in it. The market fluctuated and prices were often low: a problem exacerbated as dairying expanded ahead of growth in the Sydney market. Berry partly countered this problem by exporting to Victoria, New Zealand and Mauritius, but the product was sometimes deficient in quality.152 In November 1863 he analysed costs and returns for the previous twelve months and found that the dairy was then a losing concern.153

Berry attempted to introduce mechanically-assisted milking to Shoalhaven. Many years prior to 1852 he wanted to trial a patent cow-milker but everyone was so strongly opposed to the idea that it seemed pointless to pursue it.154 In 1852 or 1853 he wrote to England and obtained three of the devices.155 As late as 1864 he was still

150 Berry to David Berry 30/12/1861, BP. Berry was returned as owning only 1,818 cattle of all descriptions at his death: Total Amount of Personal property belonging to the late Alexander Berry 17 September 1873, BP.

151 Berry to David Berry 4/11/1848, 25/1/1849, 28/3/1850, 1/4/1850, 9/10/1851 & 8/12/1851, BP.

152 Berry to David Berry 20/11/1848, 14/1/1850, 30/12/1850, 11/1/1864 & 11/1/1865, BP.

153 Berry to David Berry 9/11/1863 & 29/12/1863, BP.

154 Berry to David Berry 29/3/1852, BP.

155 Berry to David Berry 14/7/1853 & 18/8/1853, BP.
attempting to have the cow-milker trialled.\textsuperscript{156} This graphically illustrates his difficulties in attempting progressive farming from Sydney.

When David Berry became manager Berry horses were in high repute. In 1851 the Governor when in need of a saddle horse for his personal use, decided to buy from Berry.\textsuperscript{157} Horse-breeding was another department to decline markedly under David. In 1850 Berry was told that his horses always sold for £2 to £3 less than if supplied with pedigrees\textsuperscript{158} but from David's 'apathy and want of system' all urging of him to keep a stud book was in vain.\textsuperscript{159} In July 1852 Berry noted that 'Shoalhaven horses are not so esteemed as formerly'\textsuperscript{160} and in 1862 that they had 'greatly deteriorated' since David took over.\textsuperscript{161}

Unbroken horses were of little value. In 1852 Berry was told that a horse worth £15 broken-in would fetch only £5 unbroken.\textsuperscript{162} Getting horses properly broken-in was to prove a continuing problem.\textsuperscript{163} Onset of the gold rushes resulted in heavy demand for draught horses\textsuperscript{164} and broken-in horses sold at very high prices - but with the shortage in labour it was difficult to get animals broken-in to take  

\textsuperscript{156} Berry to David Berry 20/4/1864 p.s., BP.  
\textsuperscript{157} G. H. FitzRoy to Berry 3/2/1851, BP.  
\textsuperscript{158} Berry to David Berry 21/10/1850, BP.  
\textsuperscript{159} Berry to David Berry, part of letter, 1858?, BP.  
\textsuperscript{160} Berry to David Berry 26/7/1852, BP.  
\textsuperscript{161} Berry to David Berry 22/7/1862, BP.  
\textsuperscript{162} Berry to David Berry 24/9/1852, BP.  
\textsuperscript{163} Berry to David Berry 24/9/1856, BP.  
\textsuperscript{164} Berry to David Berry 22/5/1851, BP. Berry thought that there was 'a great deal of Humbug' in the reports about gold and that the rushes, and the demand for horses, would not last long. Berry to David Berry 26/5/1851, BP.
advantage.\textsuperscript{165} Normally horses were disposed of on commission by a dealer named Burt.\textsuperscript{166} Early in 1857 word filtered back to Berry that his overseer was telling other employees that Burt was cheating Berry. Berry dismissed this.\textsuperscript{167} It was not until 1864 that he accepted that Burt had repeatedly deceived him and that he transferred his business to another agent.\textsuperscript{168}

Many of Berry's horses were sold overseas. In the eighteen fifties he was exporting horses periodically to New Zealand and in 1861 supplied nearly one-third of the 180 heavy horses required by the artillery there.\textsuperscript{169} The bulk continued to go to India where Berry was a major supplier to the Army. Some animals sent around 1848 were still in service a decade later\textsuperscript{170} but by then Berry had to tell his brother that 'your horses bear the character of being worse handled & wilder than any other horses'.\textsuperscript{171} Until the end of the eighteen forties Berry suffered losses of about one third of the animals shipped. He was advised to condition his horses by placing them on a hard diet of grains and the shipboard allowance of water for three weeks before loading, the increase in his costs being offset against hoped-for reductions in losses.\textsuperscript{172} With onset of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{165} Berry to David Berry 22 & 26/7/1852, 1/8/1852, 9/9/1852 & 14/2/1853, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Berry to David Berry 21/4/1853 (two letters); \textit{Bell's Life in Sydney}, 23 April 1853.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Berry to David Berry 4/3/1857, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Berry to David Berry 14/1/1864, 23 & 24/2/1864 & 29/3/1864, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Berry to David Berry 25/1/1861 & 13/2/1861, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Berry to David Berry 16/8/1858, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Berry to David Berry 20/1/1858, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Berry to his brothers 7/3/1850, Berry to David Berry, 3/9/1850, 26/12/1850, 27/11/1851, 4/12/1851 & 31/1/1852, BP.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Berry to David Berry 22/5/1851, BP.
\end{itemize}
the gold rushes Berry would have preferred to sell all his horses in the Colony had he not given his word to export to India.173

The Indian Mutiny provided a boost to demand and prices174 and in May 1858 Berry wrote that he had 'been able to supply nearly 100 this season for the Indian Cavalry'.175 Lt-Colonel William Pitt Robbins, the first Indian Army remount officer to come to the Colony, visited the Berry estate in November 1857.176 In his estimation the Indian Army required about two thousand horses a year so Berry offered Numba on lease for breeding remounts, seeing this as a means of liquidating his farming establishment and all attendant problems and turning Numba to financial account. Although Robbins told Berry he favoured acceptance of the offer177 it was not taken up. After the Mutiny crisis passed the Indian market fell away. In 1869 Berry was hopeful that losses consequent upon a horse epidemic would make it necessary for the Indian Government to resume purchases.178 He appears to have been amongst breeders who despatched horses, for in 1871 he wrote that the expenses of the last lot sent were such that he would have done better to give them away.179

By the early eighteen sixties the estate's horse-breeding division was causing Berry considerable concern. The horses were by then 'very small and degenerate',180 expenses associated with their sale 'monstrous',181 and

174 In 1849 and 1853 Berry received about £10 a head, in 1859 £31: Berry to David Berry 20/12/1849, 10/3/1853, E. H. Atkinson to Berry 9/2/1859, BP.
175 Berry to W. Jemmett Browne 6/5/1858, BP.
176 JM, 23 Nov. 1857.
177 Berry to David Berry 10/12/1857, BP.
178 Berry to David Berry 24/2/1869, BP.
179 Berry to David Berry 8/11/1871, BP.
180 Berry to David Berry 10/1/1864, BP.
181 Berry to David Berry 9/10/1863, BP.
prices down nearly to the level for bullocks. Berry feared that horses would not again pay the breeder and that it would be advisable to sell them all and let the land. The few subsequent references reiterate these opinions.

The Berrys continued to the end of the period to run a few flocks of sheep on leased Crown land. These remained as from the first under the management of Caffrey, who was dreadfully slow to start and pursue jobs and whose generally unsatisfactory performance brought regular complaints - but no constructive action - from Berry. The Berrys were given no account of the number of their sheep and as there never seemed to be any increase and wethers were seldom sent for sale Berry concluded by the early eighteen fifties that a large number were being stolen. Caffrey persisted in sending up for sale drafts of lambs including animals which were lean and which spoilt the price for the lot unless drafted out, in which case they proved a nuisance to sell separately. The wool clip was always poorly presented and did not pay the shepherds' wages and as early as 1852 Berry was told that his wool

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182 Berry to David Berry 9/10/1863. Sixteen horses sold in March 1864 averaged less than £7 per head: W. G. Mathews to Berry 28/3/1864, BP.

183 Berry to David Berry 3/5/1864, BP.

184 Berry to David Berry 24/2/1869, 30/6/1869 & 8/11/1871, BP. At his death Berry owned 622 horses: Total amount of Personal property belonging to the late Alexander Berry 17 September 1873, BP.

185 Berry to David Berry 21/9/1848; SMH, 22 Feb. 1859, letter from Berry. At this period the grazing of sheep was also carried on to some slight extent by others at Shoalhaven: Account of Receipts and Disbursements in the Year 1856. Assessment on Sheep Account, V&PLA, 1857, v II.

186 Berry to David Berry 25/1/1872, BP.

187 Berry to David Berry 25/12/1851 & 20/1/1853, BP.

188 Berry to David Berry 6/11/1848, BP.

189 Berry to David Berry 20/11/1848 & 25/1/1849, BP.
had deteriorated and become very poor in quality.\textsuperscript{190}

During the flood of 1867 Caffrey congregated all of the sheep, about eight thousand, in a barn instead of on high ground causing them to be drowned.\textsuperscript{191}

Berry moved quickly to reestablish the sheep operation, purchasing a flock of fourteen hundred. The new flock got off to a bad start when Caffrey failed to put rams to the ewes in good time.\textsuperscript{192} The clip was inexplicably poor, yielding in 1871 less than one pound of washed wool per sheep compared with a New South Wales average of two and a half pounds.\textsuperscript{193} The implications are that Berry was cheated by Caffrey for decades, had some realisation of this and the gross inefficiency and from inertia forebore to act to correct the situation.

While under David Berry's management no aspect of the estate's productive activities was handled competently the enterprise benefited from generally efficient marketing. In 1862 Berry had his long empty and neglected store at Berry's Bay cleared out and began again to store produce when markets were low to await an opportunity to sell to greater advantage.\textsuperscript{194}

Shoalhaven suffered a devastating flood in February 1860. From then until after Berry's time serious flooding was endemic, causing great crop, grass and at times livestock losses, inundation of river- or creek-side villages and severe erosion.\textsuperscript{195} After a disastrous flood

\textsuperscript{190} Bern to David Berry 18/3/1853, BP.

\textsuperscript{191} Berry to David Berry 27/10/1869 & 5/2/1872, Berry to Hamilton Hume 25/6/1872, BP.

\textsuperscript{192} Berry to David Berry 5/2/1872, BP.

\textsuperscript{193} Berry to David Berry 20/3/1871, BP.

\textsuperscript{194} Berry to David Berry 22/5/1862 & 22/1/1864, BP.

\textsuperscript{195} Bayley, \textit{op.cit.}, 88-89; \textit{IM}, 8 May 1860, 10 & 21 June 1864, 26 Aug. 1864, 26 Aug. 1864, 19 & 23 April 1867, 28 June 1867; \textit{SMH}, 28 Mar. 1870, 3 May 1870; Berry to
in June 1864 a contract was let for a stone dyke to confine
the river at Numba and it was soon well on the way to
completion. Following the April 1867 flood Berry called
on Henry Morton for a report on causes. Morton wrote that
the mischief started with clearing trees and brush along
the margins of the river so that the bank had been breaking
away at an alarming rate. Pig Island was expanding as it
tracked drifting soil and sand, narrowing the channel and
directing flood waters on to the low lands of Numba. So
rapidly had siltration taken place that navigation of the
Numba ferry was confined to high tide. Apart from a narrow
channel on either side of the ferry one could walk three
quarters of the way across the river at low tide without
being above ankle deep in water. After leaving the river
the flood stream headed for Numba swamp, then to Jindyandy
dairy, across the low lands of Pyree, then through a dry
run to Apple Tree Orchard Creek. Man had interfered
seriously with natural drainage. On Crookhaven Creek
between the Shoalhaven and T.J.Leahey's grant there were no
fewer than nine so called bridges, made by rolling logs
into the stream and topping them with brush and soil,
acting as dams keeping back the water.

Berry made repeated efforts from before David's time
as manager to get neighbours, particularly the Elyards, and
their own tenants to remove obstructions from Crookhaven
Creek and even commenced legal action for damages in
consequence of flood losses. From time to time the
Illawarra Mercury added its voice on the necessity of

David Berry 4/8/1860, 17 & 22/6/1864, 28 & 31/3/1870,
3/5/1870 & 2/6/1870; Berry to Hamilton Hume 25/6/1872,
H. G. Morton to Berry 27/12/1860, 18/6/1864, 29/4/1867
& 7/3/1873, BP.

196 IM, 26 Aug. 1864.

197 H.G.Morton to Berry 29/4/1867, BP. For Berry's
comments on this report: Berry to David Berry
6/5/1867, BP.

198 Berry to David Berry 20/12/1849, 1 & 30/3/1864,
17/1/1865, 9 & 21/5/1867, 10 & 25/10/1869, 15/11/1869,
W. Lovegrove to Berry 20/5/1867, BP.
clearing obstructions. Berry found that the 'outsiders': the Elyards, Grahams and Aldcorns in particular, acted 'like a Set of lawless savages' in refusing cooperation and that some tenants behaved no better. When almost ninety he told his brother that he had no influence. He 'would as soon form a connection with the Devil or Dr. Lang' as attempt further to secure cooperation. Nevertheless he continued his efforts.

At the end of Berry's life regular severe flooding seemed likely to reduce the usefulness of all low-lying land and seriously depress the value of the Berry estate. In 1871 Berry wrote that two centuries would pass before Shoalhaven would be as good as it was in 1820 because draining and trampling of the soft ground by cattle - both measures for which he had been the original advocate - had caused the ground to sink two feet.

Berry had always been a vigorous, even pugnacious, conservationist where harbours and waterways was concerned and had realised the need for a belt of scrub along river or creek banks and behind dunes. In the last twenty years of his life he became more broadly conscious of


200 W. Lovegrove to Berry 20/5/1867, Berry's appended comment, Berry to David Berry 21/5/1867, BP.

201 Berry to David Berry 4/3/1870, 28/3/1870, 27 & 31/1/1871 & 14/2/1871, BP.

202 Berry to David Berry 3/1/1871, BP.

203 Berry to David Berry 11/4/1870, 4/11/1870 & 14/2/1871, BP.

204 Berry to David Berry 29/3/1871, BP.

205 Berry to John Berry 15/8/1837, Berry to David Berry 24/1/1853 & 24/2/1853, Berry, 'Preservation of Sydney Harbour,' n.d., William Barker to Minister for Lands 14/1/1873, copy, BP; Berry to Col. Sec. 27/1/1853 53/916, CSIL, Register 1853; V&PLC, 1854, v I, 331-333, 7 & 8 Nov. 1854; Empire, 8 Nov. 1854: LC 7/11/1854.
preservation issues. He came to see that clearing trees had
gone too far and to regret that he and David had not
reserved all remaining cedar trees, as Thomas Hall had done
on his land, to allow regeneration of the species.206 He
regretted the Government's sale of Foxground in small farms
in 1853 because this would necessarily result in eviction
or extermination of flying foxes which gave the locality
its name.207 In the last two years of his life Berry was
campaigning for protection of water birds, especially black
swans and pelicans, at Shoalhaven where shooters came from
Victoria with swivel guns mounted on low boats and
committed indiscriminate slaughter during the duck-shooting
season. Residents found themselves powerless to stop the
destruction. Henry Parkes refused Berry permission to
employ a special constable at his own expense.208

Probably no man with a drive to achieve succeeds in
accomplishing more than part of what he intended and
attempted. In 1861 Berry conceded that his progress in
developing and rendering productive the Shoalhaven estate
was much less than he had earlier anticipated.209 At his
death the bulk of it was still undeveloped and it operated
at much below its prospective productive capacity. Only
investment in pastoralism on cheap leased land offered the
sort of return on capital which Berry had looked for. His
original plan of agricultural production for export was

206 [Berry to David Berry] 5/9/1864, BP. See also Alfred
McFarland, *Illawarra and Manaro: Districts of New
South Wales*, Sydney 1872, 57-58; Mary Salmon,
'Coolangatta House - Residence of the Berrys', *Sunday
Times*, 6 Nov. 1907, ML Newspaper Cuttings, v 18, 83.

207 Berry to W. Jemmett Browne 27/12/1853, BP.

208 Berry to Minister for Works J. Sutherland 31/5/1872,
Berry to David Berry 28/3/1873, BP; McFarland,
*op.cit.*, 55.

209 Appendix to Berry to Clerk of the Executive Council
7/10/1861, BP.
unrealistic in the circumstances of the era. Berry's letters of complaint over the last quarter-century to David about dilatoriness, deficits, debt, dilapidation and drunkenness pointed to a serious malaise, toleration of which indicates both his own shying away whenever there was need to act decisively and his diminished enthusiasm as he slipped into extreme old age without any heir other than the elderly brother who was the cause of most of the problems. Although monetary returns were disappointing the estate was being constantly improved as a result of tenant action financed by David allowing offsets again rent and otherwise gained steadily in value as good land became increasingly scarce.

In contrast to the gloom and doom in his letters to David, Berry spoke to outsiders in terms of pride in his achievement. He claimed in 1861 to have 'improved, to a certain extent, more land than any other individual in the Colony'. In 1868 he sent a boyhood friend in Scotland a gazetteer of New South Wales that he might see that no fewer than twelve localities noticed were included in the bounds of his Shoalhaven property. In 1871 at which time it was home to 2,563 individuals Judge Alfred McFarland described the estate as 'the noblest property in the Colony'. Coolangatta homestead then stood buried in trees at the foot of the mountain, surrounded by green paddocks sewn with English grasses. The flats were all under cultivation or grazed for dairy purposes. On the southern side corn unsurpassed by any other in the Colony was grown. Each small farm had a house or hut, and most of them a few peach trees or small garden. The road between Numba

210 Ibid.
212 In 1863 Berry had sent down 150 orange trees for Morton to distribute to tenants: Berry to David Berry 27/6/1863, BP.
Ferry and Broughton Creek showed regard for comfort and appearance, being well shaded with oak, lilly pilly and myrtle and by vines. The estate was, McFarland said, 'managed in a spirit of forbearance, liberality, and benevolence that is almost Patriarchal':\footnote{213} thereby testifying to achievement of an important part of Berry's social ideal.

\footnote{213} McFarland, \textit{op.cit.}, 17, 34, 35, 43.