

CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC HISTORY

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

APRIL 2021, ISSUE 34



Australian
National
University

Friends of the ANU Centre for Economic History,

Welcome to this issue of the CEH newsletter. It contains a report on the Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History Conference as well as upcoming events, developments at the economic history journals and new books. Once again, thanks for your interest in the Centre for Economic History. We hope that you keep safe and well.

Tim Hatton, CEH Director

Conference Report: Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History Conference 2021

The annual conference of the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand was conducted online this year. It was hosted by the UWA Business School and the Centre for Western Australian History at the University of Western Australia in Perth. David Gilchrist was the generous host of the event, supported by the Society's executive, particularly Florian Ploeckl and Lionel Frost. The theme of the conference was 'Economic history looking West and North'.

This year's Noel Butlin Lecture was delivered by Sascha Becker (Monash) who introduced the audience to two aspects of his current research. The first half covered the consequences of forced migration on the populations of host countries, the migrants, and the home countries while the second half discussed how networks enabled people to escape persecution. Sascha's empirical research drew on cases of migrants from Germany to the rest of the world, but the research methodologies he developed are calling out for applications to other contexts.

The conference started with a session on a collaborative project, led by Hamish Maxwell-Stewart on location and life outcomes in Tasmania since the early 19th century. Hamish focused on the impact of measles epidemics in the 1860s, John Wilson discussed long term changes in the population and society, and Lionel Frost conceptualised the locational aspects of health outcomes.



Co-organisers David Glichrist, Florian Ploeckl and Lionel Frost

APEBH Conference contd.

Other participants brought the world to an Australian audience, particularly Asia. Phoebe Tang (UWA) examined the processes that led to the creation of the fresh water reservoirs in Hong Kong and in Melbourne. Linxiang Ma (Melbourne) discussed the role of political connections for the performance of state-owned enterprises in China. Sashi Karunanethy (University of Melbourne) explained the tenacity of colonial land tenure arrangements, despite their abolition, in Madhya Pradesh in India.

Focusing on early 20th century colonial Java, Mark Hup (UC Irvine) found that higher incomes from higher export product prices allowed workers to buy themselves out of corvée labour. John Tang used late-19th century regional data from Japan to estimate the impact of epidemics on mortality and economic outcomes. And Pierre van der Eng (ANU) showed that land tax registers in colonial Java facilitated rural land markets by acting as an inexpensive substitute registering land holdings in the absence of a rural land cadastre.

Among other papers on diverse settings, Martine Mariotti (ANU) found that white male military personnel in South Africa were very tall during 1865-1927; Chris Meissner (UC-Davis) demonstrated the level of connectivity between the banking sectors of two countries in 1870-1914 led to higher trade volumes between them; Laura Panza (Melbourne) found that cults of saints in pre-1100 European cities had lasting effects on persecutions of Jews and witchcraft trials; Tai-Kuang Ho (National Taiwan University) found no evidence that the transfer protection clause of the Dawes Plan caused a surge of foreign debt and capital inflows into Germany during 1924-1928; and Gertjan Verdickt (KU Leuven) found that in the 1918-19 influenza pandemic US life insurance companies preserved their profitability by offsetting the higher number of claims with lower average death claim payouts.

In line with the conference theme, organiser David Gilchrist also organised a session with presentations related to aspects of Western Australia's economic history. Tom Emery (UWA) discussed the legacy of Charles Court, autocratic WA Premier during 1974-1982. Andrew Pickford (UWA) established that WA entrepreneurs did much more than dig for gold during 1885-1916. And the conference organiser himself took on Noel Butlin's 1959 notion of 'colonial socialism' in the context of late-19th century WA. *Contd. next page*

CEH news and working papers at: <https://www.rse.anu.edu.au/research/centres-projects/centre-for-economic-history/>

The CEH welcomes courtesy announcements from affiliates and interested parties for inclusion in our newsletter (subject to editing). Please send news items to:

CEH.RSE@anu.edu.au

All CEH affiliates who are registered with RePEc are invited to add the Centre as an affiliation on IDEAS: <https://edirc.repec.org/data/cpanuau.html>

APEBH Conference contd.

A range of papers focused on Australian themes. Killian Rieder argued that tariffs in the Australian colonies of 19th were ineffective at best; Jeff Hole (Deakin) asked whether microeconomic reform in Australia started to experience a policy sclerosis during 1980-2019, while Malcolm Abbott (Swinburne) discussed reforms in Australia’s utilities sector during 1970-2020 and their impact on the performance of utilities companies.

In business history, Simon Ville and Grant Fleming analysed how the Australian corporate bond market operated during 1915-1983 before the issuing of credit ratings; Claire Wright discussed the tenacity and cohesion of interlocking directorates in Australian firms during 1910-2018; and Neil Barnwell (UTS) analysed the brief existence (1970-1975) of Associated Steamships Pty Ltd, one of the world’s first container shipping services.



From Neil Barnwell on containerisation

Gary Osmond (University of Queensland) examined the business of sport in Aboriginal reserves in Queensland in the 1920s and 1930s. Andrew Parnell (Monash University) explained that longtime 1882-1919 NSW and Commonwealth parliamentarian Bruce Smith was an early advocate of racial equality and an opponent of the ‘White Australia’ immigration policy.



The Push for Racial Equality in the Era of White Australia



Bruce Smith’s progressive ideas

Images from Gary Osmond on Aboriginal sport and Andrew Parnell on Bruce Smith

The 2021 conference allowed all participants to contribute from the comfort of their studies at home. No stress catching planes, no sleepless nights in budget hotels. But also, no opportunities for impromptu discussions to explore mutual research interests, or exchanging notes on how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting on the financial situation of universities and the employment of colleagues. A good reason to look forward to face-to-face meetings at the next Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History conference in February 2022. COVID-19 and travel bans permitting! – PvdE, MM

Upcoming Events

ANU Centre for Economic History Workshop Military Casualties in World War I

The workshop will be held on 6th August 2021 and is presently planned to be a virtual event.



Around ten million military personnel died in combat or from other causes during the First World War and another 20 million sustained what were often life-changing injuries. This epic tragedy has spawned a large literature but has largely been overlooked in cliometric research. Growing access to individual-level data makes it possible to examine the incidence of death or injury and to quantitatively assess some of the themes in the literature. These include risks associated with socioeconomic background and

physical characteristics, the changing hazard of death and injury by date of enlistment and duration of service, and the experience of servicemen in different branches of the military.

Several presenters are already committed but we would welcome additional papers on topics related to the theme. If you are interested in contributing please contact the organisers, Tim Hatton: tim.hatton@anu.edu.au and/or John Wilson: John.Wilson@unisa.edu.au.



**Australian
National
University**

Further details of the programme and how to join the workshop will be published in our July newsletter. So please watch this space!

Centre for Economic History Discussion Paper Series

The CEH website hosts a discussion paper series on a variety of topics in economic history. Recent additions to the series are as follows:

2021-01 "Explaining Trends in Adult Height in China: 1950 to 1990," by Minhee Chae & Tim Hatton & Xin Meng.

Centre affiliates and visitors are encouraged to submit working papers to the series. All papers are available at: <https://ideas.repec.org/s/auu/hpaper.html>

8th Australasian Cliometrics Workshop

Call for papers

The 8th Australasian Cliometrics Workshop will be held on Friday, 5th November 2021, at the University of Melbourne (in person and virtual delivery). Following the established Clio format of short presentations, discussant comments and substantial discussion by the audience, accepted papers will be distributed in advance to participants with the expectation of an engaged contribution.

There is no workshop theme, submissions to all topics in Economic History are welcomed. The workshop is supported and hosted by the Department of Economics at the University of Melbourne.

Extended abstracts or full papers will be accepted now through 15th July 2021. Notifications will be made during August, and full papers will be due by 22th October (two weeks before the workshop). To submit an abstract or paper as well as to RSVP to attend (including willingness to serve as a discussant), please send an email to lpanza@unimelb.edu.au or john.tang@unimelb.edu.au. Early career scholars and graduate students are particularly encouraged to apply.

Registration is free and catering will be provided to in person participants. All other costs will need to be self-funded, such as travel and accommodation. Thanks and we look forward to seeing you in Melbourne.



Western Australian Economic History Summit 2021

Call for Papers

The UWA Business School - with Ljubljana University, the UWA Centre for WA History and The Royal Western Australian Historical Society - presents the annual WA Economic History Summit. The theme for this year's summit is: The Western Australian Difference – what are the unique features of the economic history of Australia's western third? Papers will also be welcomed that address key social or economic data pertaining to Western Australia and/or papers that consider the state's economic relationships within the Australian federation or across the wider geographic region.

The keynote address will be: "New Research Topics in Economic History" By Professor Joan Roses (Head of the Department of Economic History, London School of Economics and Political Science; Editor, European Review of Economic History).

Abstracts are due by 14 May 2021 to Professor David Gilchrist at: david.gilchrist@uwa.edu. Final papers due 30 September 2021.

Date: Thursday 11 November 2021, 9am-5.30pm AWST; Location: UWA Business School & Via Zoom. Attendance is free. Please register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/western-australian-economic-history-summit-2021-tickets-147731084651>



New Books on Australian Themes

William Coleman on Australian Federation

The Federation in 1901 of the six Australian colonies into a single Commonwealth is the most researched episode in Australian political history. Yet almost every page of this history rests on a certain underlying ‘affirmative premise’: that the Federation of 1901 was begotten by commendable ideals, led by remarkable men, and pursued to its culmination by democratic processes.

THEIR FIERY CROSS OF UNION

A RETELLING OF THE CREATION
OF THE
AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION,
1889-1914

WILLIAM COLEMAN



It was a natural thing – fitting, functional, and almost inevitable. And it was, surely, for the good in its effects; at the very least, it was a mark of the progress and development of Australian life, in everything from telegraphy to sporting fixtures.

In *Their Fiery Cross of Union* William Coleman has retold the making of Australia’s federation unencumbered by any such ‘affirmative’ premise. He argues Federation was an almost accidental upshot of a contest for personal political supremacy; that the cause’s leadership was mediocre; its democracy superficial, its motivations banal, its ideals more imperial than patriotic, and its consequences injurious to Australia’s economic welfare, military security, industrial peace, and social harmony. Australia’s Federation, he concludes, was at least one generation premature, and badly botched, with enduring consequences.

Not just another recital of the familiar ‘Federation story’, *Their Fiery Cross of Union* is a fresh and searching look at ‘1901’, the foundational fact of Australia’s political existence.

Their Fiery Cross of Union: A Retelling of the Creation of the Australian Federation, 1889-1914 will shortly be published by Connor Court. You can learn more about Fiery Cross by visiting its web site, <https://fierycrossofunion.com/>.

Alex Millmow on Colin Clark

This book offers the first intellectual biography of the Anglo Australian economist, Colin Clark. Despite taking the economics world by storm with a mercurial ability for statistical analysis, Clark’s work has been largely overlooked in the 30 years since his death. His career was punctuated by a number of firsts. He was the first economist to derive the concept of GNP, the first to broach development economics and to foresee the re-emergence of India and China within the global economy. Clark wandered through the fields of applied economics in much the same way as he rambled through the English countryside and the Australian bush. His imaginative wanderings qualify him as the eminent gypsy economist for the 20th century.

The Gypsy Economist: The Life and Times of Colin Clark by Alex Millmow is published by Palgrave Macmillan, see: <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9789813369450>.

Economic History Review Workshops

In a new initiative, the Economic History Review is organising online discussions of clusters of recently published papers relating to a common theme. The idea is to discuss their wider implications, explore the challenges that remain, and identify avenues for future research. The aim is to raise the profile of published articles by promoting critical engagement and widening the scholarly audience.

The first workshop, on Middle Eastern economic history took place on the 18th February 2021. It discussed articles on house prices in the Ottoman Empire, peasant communes in the Levant and the Egyptian cotton crisis.

The second workshop, on 19th March, focused on infant and child health. Hannalis Jaadla and Romola Davenport presented their article on whether there was a clear social gradient in child mortality in early nineteenth century England using individual data from eight parishes. They found some evidence of a gradient for child deaths, none for infant deaths and relatively low mortality rates in the families of labourers. Issues raised in the discussion included the role of breastfeeding practices, the causes of death and the importance of the disease environment in explaining differences across localities.

Pei Gao and Eric Schneider's article used records stretching from 1850 to 1975 on the heights at entry and exit of boys on the training ship *Indefatigable*. They found that the adolescent growth spurt was much less pronounced before 1910, it occurred later, and varied more within a cohort. It was noted that differences within and across cohorts largely reflected pre-entry exposures. The discussion focused on the relative contributions of nutrition and disease and on the consistency of the findings with those of other studies.

Bernard Harris explored data on birthweights and placental weights recorded in early 20th century Barcelona. This revealed a U-shaped relationship between placental weight and early life mortality and other evidence suggested that placental weight might be a better measure of conditions in-utero than birthweights. Discussion focused on the link between placental weight and stress during pregnancy and on the long run trends in placental weights.

The next *EHR* workshop will be on the theme of inequality. The discussion will focus on the long-term evolution of social stratification in Costa Rica, inequality and living standards in Mexico, gender and wage inequality in Europe, and the super-rich in interwar Britain. Details on when the workshop will take place and how to join in will be posted at: <https://ehs.org.uk/news-events/>.

