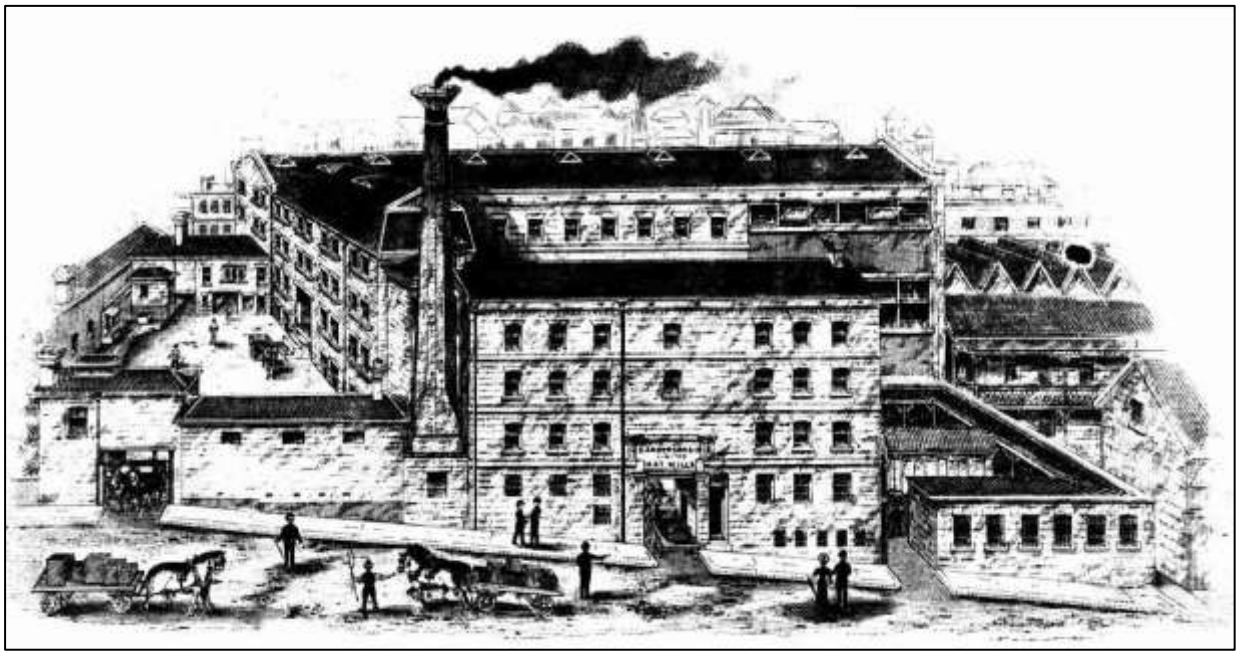
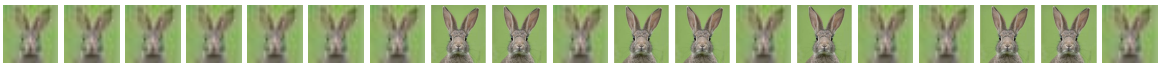
Cabbage trees and rabbits: the history of hat-making in Sydney



John W. Ross



Cover photographs, clockwise from top:

Charles Anderson's Federal Hat Mills, Surry Hills, 1902 (*Evening News*, 13 December 1902).

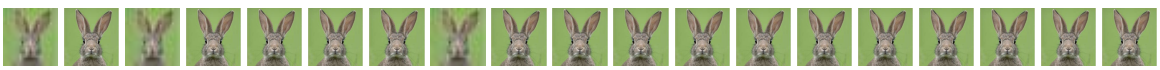
Cabbage tree hat (*Hawkesbury Gazette*, 1 July 2016)

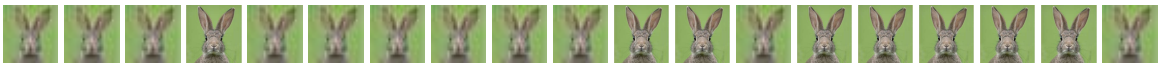
R. C. Henderson advertisement, 1946 *(Australian Women's Weekly*, 9 March 1946)

John Bardsley and Sons slouch hat, 1983 (victoriancollections.net.au website)

Page header and footer photograph:

Rabbits (RabbitScan.org.au website)





"To put the dissemination [of rabbits] into context, the spread of rabbits over Britain took 700 years, while the colonisation of two-thirds of Australia, an area 25 times the size of Britain, took only 50 years. The rate of spread of the rabbit in Australia was the fastest of a colonising mammal anywhere in the world".

> Rabbits Introduced, Defining Moments in Australian History, National Museum of Australia website.

When the first top hat was worn in 1797 by the English haberdasher John Hetherington, it nearly caused a riot, and a newspaper reported that "passers-by panicked at the sight, several women fainted, children screamed, dogs yelped and an errand boy's arm was broken when he was trampled by the mob". Hetherington was arrested and charged with the novel crime of "wearing a tall structure having a shining lustre calculated to frighten timid people".

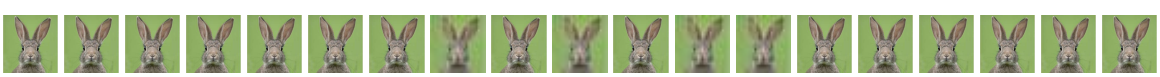
> Lou Carver, Top This…the story of Top Hats, Men's Victorian Clothing, *Victoriana Magazine*.

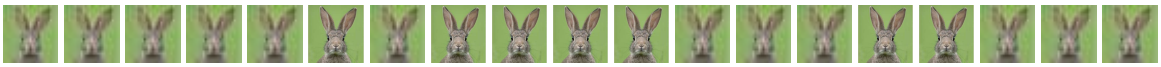
"For a morning walk in the park in summer, the straw hat with tweed suit are as correct as the black coat and silk hat, but a straw hat cannot be worn with a black coat of any kind. If a gentleman goes to a garden party in a frock coat and straw hat, he is condemned more widely than if he had committed some crime".

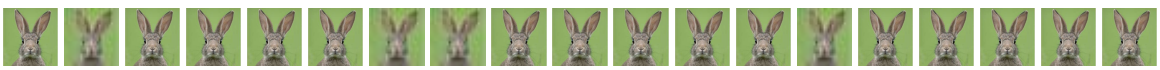
> Mrs C. E. Humphry, *Manners for Men* (1897).

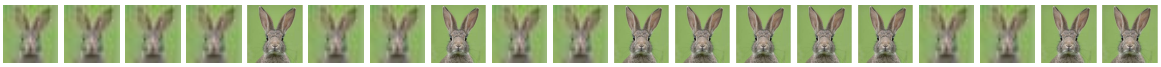
"The idiotic cap [worn by British troops] that provided no shade, blew off in the wind and did not disguise the wearer from aerial observation was no match for the Diggers, who wore comfortable soft felt slouch hats that protected in all forms of weather and always looked well".

> Poet Laureate John Masefield offering military headwear advice in World War I.









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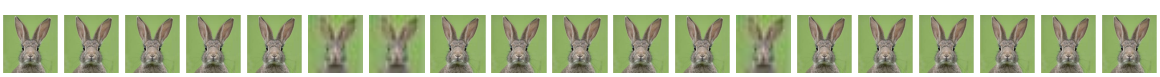
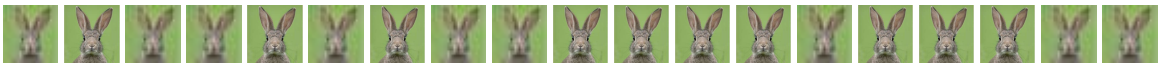
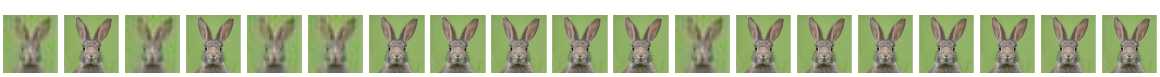
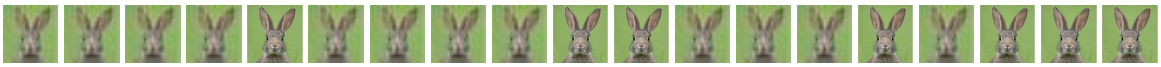
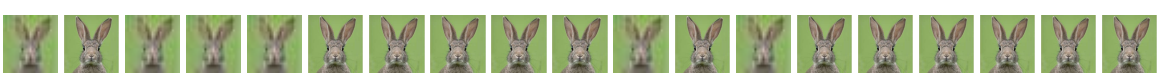
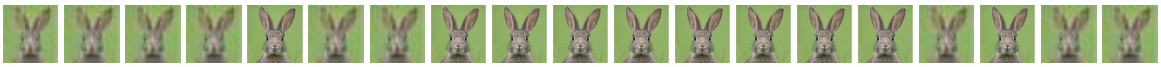


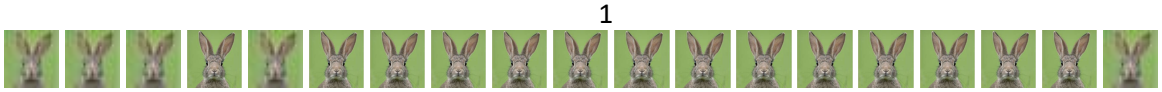


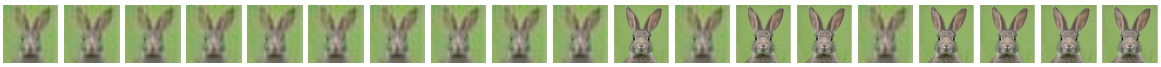












Foreword

From ancient times, hats have served as protection from the elements, as an expression of fashion and to denote a person's office or rank in society. They developed from a simple skull cap which gradually became more ornate with a band and a brim. Top hats and bowler hats became a symbol of the middle and upper classes and cloth caps were worn by working men and boys. Women's headwear developed into large and ornate bonnets through the nineteenth century and straw boaters into the twentieth century.

The arrival of European settlers in New South Wales in 1788 highlighted the inadequacy of English hats and caps in the fierce Australian sun. Before long, broad-brimmed hats were being made from the leaves of the locally-available cabbage tree palm, creating the colony's first cottage industry. This lasted well into the nineteenth century until replaced by imported straw hats in various styles.

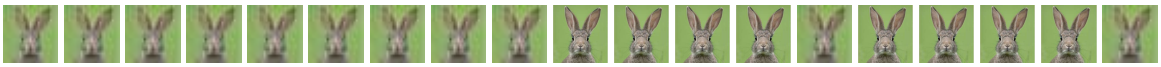
The local hat making industry was pioneered by Reuben Uther in 1815, using wool felt manufactured in Simeon Lord's woollen mill. He dominated the industry until more hat makers began operating in the middle of the century. Felt hats were made either from wool or the more expensive beaver fur, but many felt hats were imported due to the lack of a large felting industry in the colony. This changed at the end of the nineteenth century when the fur of wild rabbits was found to make good felt for hats.

Rabbits became a terrible scourge to Australian agriculture following their introduction in the mid-nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth century there were billons of them eating farmers out of house and home. But rabbit trapping provided a good living for many people, producing meat for local consumption and export and fur for the burgeoning felt hat trade. The rabbit population was only brought under some control from the 1950s with the introduction of the myxoma virus and later the calicivirus in the 1990s.

At a time when everyone wore hats, a large hat industry developed in Australia, attracting experienced hatters from the major centres in England, such as the straw hat centre of Luton in Bedfordshire and the felt hat centre of Stockport in Cheshire. Most of the men who established hat factories in Sydney learned their trade in these cities. Competition from European and Japanese hat makers was always a threat to Australian hat makers, who frequently lobbied State governments to raise import tariffs to keep their industry profitable.

Hat making was for a long time a dangerous industry to work in, as toxic mercuric nitrate was frequently used to improve the production of felt, arsenic provided green dye for decorative straw hats, potassium cyanide was used for dyeing. Fires were also an occupational hazard in workplaces with combustible straw, open fireplaces and flammable liquids in abundance. There was hardly a hat factory in Sydney that did not suffer a major fire at some time.

The two World Wars provided great opportunities for the larger hat factories to increase their businesses, and some like the small Dunkerley Hat Mills of Surry Hills were able to expand to much larger premises after winning a substantial contract for slouch hats during World War I. The firm's Akubra felt hats became world famous, although the factory moved to Kempsey in the 1970s to be closer to their rural customer base as the market changed.



Hats declined in popularity from the 1950s onwards, due to changes in fashion and the trend to more casual clothing. Despite this, hat wearing has received the occasional boost in the modern era by the stylish hats worn by the British Royal family and by promotions for skin cancer prevention in Australia. Akubra and Mountcastle continue to make slouch hats for the Australian Army.

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October, 2022
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Headwear through the ages

Acknowledgement of country

The author acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation upon whose ancestral lands inner Sydney is now located. He would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past, present and emerging, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

Protection, status and style

From ancient times, hats have served as protection from the elements. They have also been an expression of fashion and have served ceremonial functions, usually signifying the wearer's office or rank. Headwear developed from a simple skull cap called the Pileus by the ancient Greeks[1]. Artisans of classical Athens and Rome usually wore conical caps called Phrygian caps with egg-shaped crowns made of felt (named after the ancient area in Anatolia where it originated)[2]. The material protruding under the band eventually evolved into a brim. In Rome this cap was a symbol of the plebeian class, and was also called a liberty cap because any slave who was freed was given one. The cap remained a symbol of liberty, and red Phrygian caps were worn by French Revolutionaries in the 1790s.

Figure 1 Pileus and Phrygian caps (Louvre Museum)

Upper class men usually went hatless, except in bad weather or when travelling or hunting. However, the Emperor Augustus Caesar in his old age set a new fashion by always wearing a hat outside. City people wore hats in the early mediaeval era, usually made of cloth, often as a loose hood for both men and women. In the seventeenth century, Europeans also wore hats indoors as well as outdoors. A popular style was the low-crowned hat with a broad brim turned up on two or three sides (bicornes or tricornes), favoured by aristocrats and cavaliers. A stiff high crowned round hat was also popular with Dutch burghers and Puritans.

The silk top hat, originating in Florence, appeared in England in 1810. This hat with a cylindrical crown replaced the tricorne as standard attire for gentlemen after the French Revolution. The bowler, named after the London hatters Thomas and William Bowler who invented it, was introduced in 1850. Cloth caps with visors became standard attire for working men and boys[3].

It was only from the late seventeenth century that women's headwear became distinctive from men's hats and not influenced by male fashions. The word "milliner" as a maker of women's hats

was first recorded in 1529 to refer to the products from Milan, such as ribbons, gloves and straw hats. The haberdashers who imported these products were known as “Milaners”, which evolved to “milliners”.

Figure 2 French revolutionaries in Phrygian caps (Getty images)

The bonnet dominated women’s fashions through the nineteenth century, becoming very large with many ribbons, flowers, feathers and gauze trim. By the end of the century, many other styles were popular, such as wide brims with flat crowns. In the 1920s, women’s hair was cut much shorter, and the cloche hugged the head like a helmet with a very small brim. There have always been two basic styles of hats – brimmed and brimless, and two basic forms – caps and hats. Milliners take these shapes and continue to craft a never-ending range of headwear for men and women[4].

Figure 3 Joan Crawford wearing a cloche, 1927 (Wikipedia)

Early colonial hat making

Mad dogs and Englishmen…

The first European settlers in Australia arrived in January 1788 in eleven ships carrying convicts and the people looking after them. Governor Arthur Phillip recorded that 753 convicts and their children and 277 others (officials, passengers, marines and their families)[5] stepped onto the shore at Botany Bay. They landed in the middle of a Sydney summer that is typically hot and humid. In the eighteenth century, everyone wore hats outside as part of social etiquette. A drawing of a group of convicts being led to the transport ships in London in about 1788 shows them all wearing hats or caps, none of them wide-brimmed[6].

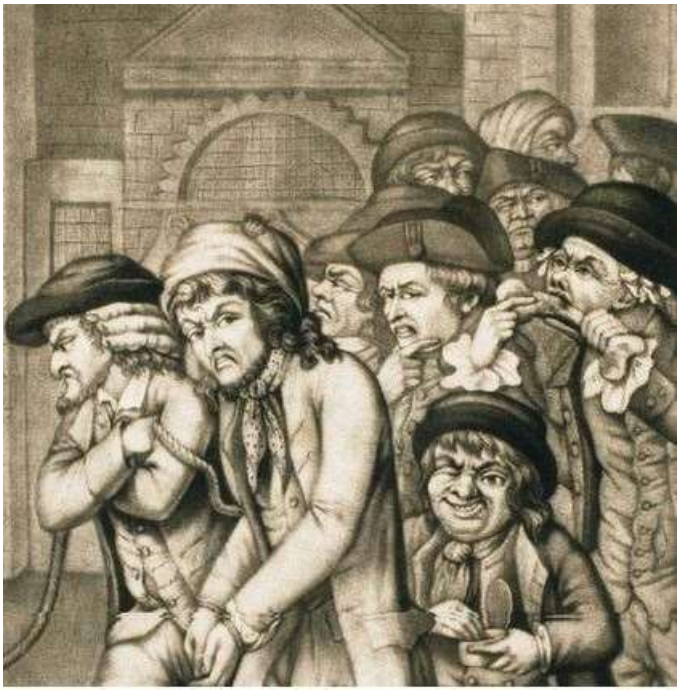


Figure 4 Convicts in London c1788 (State Library of NSW)

Headwear was included in the clothing issued to convicts from the early days of the penal settlement in New South Wales. When the First Fleet arrived, each male convict was issued with a tall crowned hat and a woollen cap[7]. Major George Druitt admitted to the visiting Commissioner John Bigge in 1820 that convict-issue hats were "quite useless, and afford no protection to the heat from the sun".

Fortunately the Sydney basin contained an abundance of cabbage tree palms, whose young leaves could be cut into strips for plaiting into the basic material for fashioning straw hats. Once the skill of plaiting had been taught to enough people, cabbage tree hats could be turned out in sufficient numbers to keep the harsh antipodean sun off the untanned faces and necks of the new settlers.

Hats indicated one's status in society, particularly in colonial Australia. But the first convicts were not distinguished by their clothing, as it was collected and sent out from England and was not actually a uniform in the early years. Until the mid-1820s, convicts lived in their own houses and were not required to wear any special clothing. Then from the 1820s, many convicts wore government-made

clothing with arrows printed on it, and were given a leather cap with drop-down flaps that formed a brim[8].

Figure 5 Convict's leather cap 1820-1855 (State Library of NSW)

Reuben Uther - pioneer hat maker

In 1806, the wealthy emancipist Simeon Lord contracted the teenaged Reuben Uther (1791-1880) as an indentured clerk while he was working with seal skins in London. Uther arrived in Sydney in 1807 and worked as a clerk or manager for Lord[9]. In January 1808, he was one of about 80 colonists who signed John Macarthur's request to Major George Johnston to depose Governor William Bligh[10]. In 1811, he established a hat factory in partnership with Lord and Francis Williams, having mastered the craft of hat-making since his arrival in the colony[11].

Simeon Lord (c1771 – 1840) was a pioneer merchant and magistrate in the early colony. He became a prominent trader, buying and selling ships' cargoes and becoming one of Sydney's wealthiest men. Finding that he was unable to import the goods he was hoping to sell in the early part of Governor Lachlan Macquarie's term (1810 – 1821), Lord launched an ambitious scheme of manufacturing many of the goods himself. In 1820 he showed Commissioner John Bigge samples of his textiles, hats, stockings and leather, which Bigge estimated were good enough to be a threat to British manufacturers. Lord's enterprise expanded to the extent that in 1826 he told Governor Sir Ralph Darling that he was employing twenty convicts in tanning and currying leather, as well as manufacturing hats, cloth, blankets, soap and candles[12].

Reuben Uther's hat factory was near Lord's woollen mill, located in his large warehouse in Bridge Street. As well as hats, Lord manufactured and advertised coarse cloth, blankets and flannels[13]. In 1812, Governor Macquarie granted him 400 aces at the Mount Gilead Estate as a reward for his contribution to establishing local industries. The land is near the junction of the Menangle Creek and the Nepean River.

Like many other Sydney merchants, Uther was very interested in agriculture, and by March 1815, he had contracted to supply meat to the government stores. That year, he set up his own hat factory at 15 Hunter Street[14], and then in 1817 he moved to Pitt Street[15]. He founded the felt hat-making industry in New South Wales, and monopolised it for some years. In 1820, Uther published a

newspaper notice advising that his hats would have his stamp in the crown in the future, as other inferior hats were being passed off as being of his manufacture[16].

In Jul 1829 he married Ann, eldest daughter of Lancelot Iredale, emancipist and wealthy ironmonger[17]. By 1840, he was also importing hats and advertised a shipment with the brands Christie, Townsend, Barber and Harris at his shop at 87 Pitt Street[18]. In 1845, he was selling imported men's French velvet nap hats and ladies' riding hats[19].

In March 1851, Uther sold his hat business to John Ducker, who carried on the factory and shop which was by then located at 274 Pitt Street[20]. Then in 1861, he sold the furniture and other goods in his home at 331 Crown Street Surry Hills[21] and travelled to England[22]. Like many of the wealthy men in the colony, he was a public benefactor, and in April 1878 the foundation stone was laid for the Wesleyan Church and Sunday school in Cleveland Street Surry Hills (now called the Kirk), to be built on land that Uther provided cheaply to the Wesleyan Conference[23].

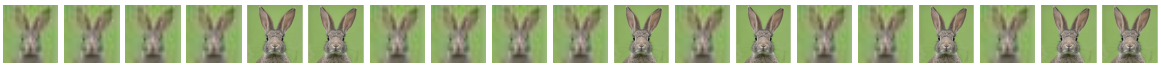
He died in Sydney in Jul 1880, and his obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that he was the last survivor of those who signed the infamous paper in 1808 requesting the overthrow of Governor Bligh, the other signatories having long since "passed over to the majority"[24]. By the time of his death he had a typically wide range of interests for a merchant of the time - in agriculture, iron and hat manufacturing and the general retail trade. His estate, which included the Imperial Arcade, was valued at £250,000[25]. This is equivalent to roughly $40 million today[26].

From the cottage to the factory

Straw hats

There are numerous historical accounts of convicts making straw hats from the leaves of cabbage tree palms. They learned straw plaiting in the prison hulks, which has been called a classic prison craft[27]. The construction of Hyde Park Barracks was ordered by Governor Macquarie to provide accommodation for male convicts, to improve their morale and increase their productivity (Macquarie was a keen improver of both). Designed by the emancipist architect Francis Greenway, the Barracks was completed in 1819, accommodating almost 600 convicts who were locked in each night.

Figure 6 Typical convict clothing (Clothing & Fashion Encyclopaedia)



Among the convicts living at the Hyde Park Barracks were those with the trades of hat maker, milliner, hat finisher and hatter who may have made such straw hats and taught the skill to others[28]. David Collins' account of the early years of the colony records cabbage tree hats being worn as early as 1799[29], and they continued to be popular throughout the nineteenth century. The convict John Barker told Commissioner John Bigge in 1820 that the Barracks convicts made straw hats in their spare time to make money for bread, tea, sugar and tobacco, in addition to the rations they were issued[30].

However, while they were widely manufactured at the cottage level, the production of cabbage tree hats did not develop into a large industry, partly because of the cost of labour, increasing competition from imported straw and felt hats and over-exploitation of the local cabbage tree palms. This meant that widespread use of cabbage tree hats was restricted to the nineteenth century[31]. After this, the more fashionable straw boaters were imported from England and Italy to cater for the straw hat market.

Felt hats

As described above, Reuben Uther was the pioneer hat manufacturer in New South Wales, but he specialised in woollen felt hats, and did not compete with the cabbage-tree hat industry. By the 1840s, he was also importing men's and women's hats. In Australia, fur felt hat makers first established themselves where rabbits were most plentiful: Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales[32]. The felt hat-making industry began in earnest in Melbourne in the early 1880s with factories such as the large Denton Hat Mills in Abbotsford[33].

Felt hat making was never a cottage industry due to the large number of staff required for the many processes involved in turning fur or wool into finished hats, as well as specialised equipment such as hat blocks, presses, trimming and sewing machines. Sydney's largest hat manufacturers established themselves in the first decade of the twentieth century: Charles Anderson (Federal Hat Mills), Benjamin Dunkerley (Later Akubra), R. C. Henderson and John Bardsley.

The cabbage tree hat – saving the colonists from sunburn

Learning from Luton

Straw plaiting and the manufacture of straw hats and bonnets were well established in the English counties of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire by the end of the seventeenth century. A bill in Parliament in 1689 requiring people to wear woollen headwear resulted in a petition against the bill claiming that over 14,000 people in and around the towns of Luton and Dunstable made their living by making straw hats. It is not clear why the straw plaiting industry developed in this part of England, but its closeness to London and a plentiful supply of good quality wheat straw were probably key factors. Luton became synonymous with hat-making, and the Luton Town Football Club still has the nickname “the Hatters”.

Figure 7 Victorian-era bonnet (Deviant Art website)

The development from cottage industry to mass production in factories came in the second half of the nineteenth century with the introduction of mechanisation. Blocking machines which shaped the hats were introduced in the 1860s and straw hat sewing machines came in during the 1870s, greatly increasing productivity. Felt hat making also began in Luton in the 1870s. The division of work was that women sewed the hats and men blocked them. But the establishment of larger factories employing 100 to 500 staff did not kill off the cottage industry, which continued to make straw hats and sell them to the larger factories[34].

The first cottage industry in New South Wales

Because straw plaiting was a well-practised craft in Britain when the first convicts arrived in Sydney, it was natural that, in the absence of a supply of wool to make felt or wheat to make straw, the local environment would be investigated to find a useful substitute. Young cabbage tree palm leaves were found to be suitable for plaiting, after blanching and splitting. The fibre from the fronds was woven together to make a lightweight hat with a wide flat brim to protect their faces from the harsh Australian sun[35].

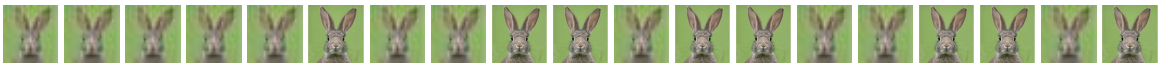
Figure 8 Cabbage tree palm leaf (pacsoa.org.au)

To prepare the material for making hats, the young unopened hands of the palm tree were scalded in hot water for about ten minutes to make the leaf fan out before bleaching in the cold night air. The leaf was then cut into thin strips with a purpose-made shredder, about 5 or 6 strips at a time. They were plaited into lengths, called sinnets, usually many metres long.

The sides of the crown were made first and shaped onto a wooden hat block of the required size, followed by the brim, the lining, the black velvet band, leather chin strap and finally the shaping of the centre over the crown. A hat that was well-made and well-stitched would last for up to three years[36]. It did not get waterlogged in the rain, but retained its springiness and dried quickly in the sun. It always kept its shape[37].

Figure 9 Cabbage tree shredder & plaited sennets (Sydney Living Museums)

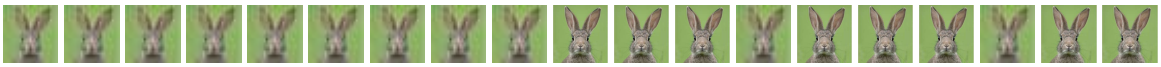
Aboriginal people also used part of this tree for food, medicine and shelter. The fibres were used to make string, rope and fishing line. The colonists built their wattle and daub huts from the wood from the cabbage tree trunks. These hats are among the first products made completely from Australian materials by the colonists. They were a very popular and practical hat, and were still being made in the early twentieth century[38].



Thus the colony's first cottage industry was born. It is difficult to think of an item from colonial days that played such a prominent role in people's lives for so long. Poems were written about it and sketches were made. It provided shelter from the harsh Australian sun as well as industry and income when times were hard. It was used by working men everywhere, including convicts, bushrangers, shepherds, drovers, coach drivers and explorers[39]. The Burke and Wills expedition carried thirty cabbage tree hats amongst its supplies in 1861[40].

It was known that prisoners in Cockatoo Island earned money for tea, sugar and tobacco by making cabbage tree hats in their spare time. The material was supplied by a dealer in Sydney who purchased the finished article from the convicts. The convicts themselves made little from their labour, but in those days a well-made hat fetched a good price. As time went by and convicts finished their sentences, the hat making industry became the domain of women and children.

In the late 1830s and 1840s, Australian-born boys (dubbed Currency Lads) began to identify themselves as United Australians, and wore cabbage tree hats, perhaps as a symbol of their unity. By 1840, they were described as the Cabbage Tree Hat Mob, and were the forerunners of the larrikins who showed disdain for the settler class[41]. The hat became an emblem of bushmen and later a fashion item for city people[42]



The wild rabbit – a plague or a resource?

Where did all these damned rabbits come from?

Five domestic rabbits arrived with the First Fleet[43], and another sixteen were brought from Capetown by the ship *Gorgon* with the Third Fleet in 1791[44]. By the mid-1820s, rabbits were breeding around houses in Sydney. Wild rabbits were released in Tasmania in the early 1820s and by 1824 a firm in Hobart was reportedly making felt hats out of rabbit skins. On the mainland, the Henty brothers brought rabbits to Portland in western Victoria in 1834[45].

Thomas Austin (1815 – 1871) was an English settler who arrived with his family in Hobart Town in 1831 to join his emancipist uncle James Austin (1776 – 1831), who had established a successful ferry service across the Derwent River. The uncle died just before Thomas arrived, but he and his siblings and cousins all benefited from the late uncle's generosity in helping to establish them in the colony. In 1837, Thomas crossed Bass Strait and settled on the site of Winchelsea, developing his sheep runs to an estate of 29,000 acres called Barwon Park[46].

As a member of the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria, Thomas Austin helped introduce many species from England, including hares, blackbirds and thrushes, and was breeding wild rabbits and partridges. He introduced 24 breeding rabbits on his estate in October 1859 as game for shooting parties. While his efforts were praised at the time, he has since been blamed for introducing a major pest to the country. Austin also gave wild rabbits to others, including people from the other Australian colonies, which probably facilitated their spread.

Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, visited Barwon Park during the first Royal visit to the Australian colonies in 1867-68. An article in the *Illustrated Australian News* reported that the prince shot 416 rabbits in three and a half hours, rendering the guns so hot they blistered the hands of the loader. A 1997 Anti-Rabbit Research Foundation handbook says that it is common for wild rabbit populations to increase eight to ten-fold in one breeding season, so it was not surprising Austin's released rabbits reproduced rapidly[47].

Figure 10 Prince Alfred at Barwon Park (National Museum of Australia)

By the early 1890s, rabbits were in plague proportions in western Victoria. Settlers often carried rabbits over long distances and released then, and releases around Wentworth and Balranald were decisive in spreading them in New South Wales[48]: Wentworth is at the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers and Balranald is on the Murrumbidgee River. Putting a pair of rabbits on a river bank is like putting a passenger on a slow train: eventually they will almost certainly reach the end of the line: the Darling River took them up to Queensland and the Murrumbidgee and then the Lachlan Rivers took them to central New South Wales[49].

A good living for some

Wild rabbits devastated farming areas, competing with farm animals for food and water, and efforts involving fencing, trapping and shooting failed to halt the spread. But some compensation was that rabbit meat was processed and canned for export from the 1870s and provided a useful source of food and employment during the two great economic depressions of the 1890s and the 1930s[50].

Figure 11 Rabbit wagon c1930 (National Museum of Australia)

By 1929, the rabbit industry was reportedly the largest employer of labour in Australia. From 1870 to 1970, over 20 billion (repeat: billion) rabbits were commercially trapped or poisoned in south-east Australia. The rabbit carcasses and skins were both worth money. Thousands of rabbiters in the eastern States and South Australia earned in a week up to ten times the rates of pay of building and metal industry tradesmen, earning high incomes until 1970. Rabbiters were independent suppliers who chose when to work, what to work for (skins or carcasses), and who to sell to. They were able to live in one location all year, unlike other rural workers who frequently had to travel for seasonal work.

Wool remained the nation's major export earner, but income from wool ended up in a small number of (mostly rich) hands, while the rabbit industry provided daily cash income for many thousands of workers, which was spent locally in hundreds of rural businesses. The rabbit industry also prospered during war, depression and drought, unlike other rural industries. By the late 1920s, over 20,000 trappers worked full time, trapping for carcasses and skins or poisoning for skins.

Thousands were also employed in various freezer works located in towns and cities, packing, skinning and transporting carcasses by the tens of millions. Thousands more were employed in the skin-buying firms in rural areas and cities. Nearly 10,000 workers made felt hats out of rabbit skins, gelatin from skin scraps and fertilizer and animal feed from the remains not fit for human consumption. Essentially, the rabbit industry was nose-to-tail consumption at its most efficient[51].

Tackling the rabbit problem

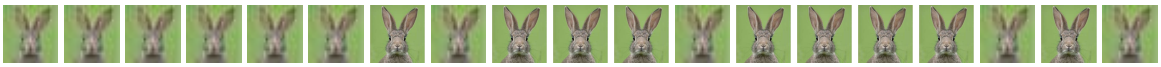
In Europe, wild rabbits never reached the plague proportions they did here, partly because their numbers were kept in check by many natural predators such as foxes, lynxes, badgers and other carnivores. But in Australia there were no natural predators in large enough numbers – the rabbits easily out-bred any culling of their numbers by quolls, feral cats and foxes. All that rabbits need to live well are some ground to burrow into and enough grass to eat: this describes a large percentage of rural Australia.

A situation that Australian farmers can only dream about is that in the European rabbit's native habitat of the Iberian peninsula, Portugal has classified the wild rabbit as "Near Threatened"[52] and Spanish authorities have reclassified it as "Vulnerable" due to dwindling numbers since 2005[53].

Figure 12 The wild rabbit: one of ten billion plus (rabbitscan.org.au)

The rabbit as a pest is one of the most studied topics in Australia. Scientific research into how to eliminate them entirely began in the 1880s and continues today. Many writers on the subject regard the rabbit industry in a negative light and argue that commercialisation has done more harm than good[54]. By the 1940s, there were calls from farmers for more control of the rabbit population. The introduction of the myxoma virus in 1951, spread by mosquitoes and rabbit fleas, significantly reduced rabbit numbers. But while sporadic outbreaks of myxomatosis still occur, a general resistance to the virus developed and numbers rose again[55].

But it was found that while myxomatosis killed millions of rabbits after its release in 1951, it did not kill the rabbit industry. After 1950, many rabbit processing firms sourced their rabbits from central Australia, an area too dry for the virus-carrying mosquitoes, and continued exporting until the 1970s. Some writers even argue that the commercial rabbit industry was a far better solution to the rabbit



"problem" than poisoning or myxomatosis[56]. In 1995 the calicivirus was released, reducing the rabbit population further[57].

In 2014, the Akubra company announced that there were no longer enough rabbits in the country for its needs, and would be importing up to 70% of rabbit fur from overseas. Managing Director Stephen Keir IV pointed out that in the decade since the release of the calicivirus, exported rabbit meat had been quarantined and most of the eight suppliers of wild and tamed skinned rabbits had closed down, leaving only one. He also said Akubra's biggest supplier was the Ukraine, and the worsening political situation there made it hard to do business[58].

In response to this threat to the national icon (the hat, not the rabbit), the redoubtable Federal Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter MP, proud wearer of an Akubra Arena hat, issued an outraged media release in July 2015 informing the nation he was "hopping mad over Akubra importing rabbit skins", and expressing faith that Akubra would return to using Australian rabbit skins. He may not have realised that the last thing his rural voters wanted was for rabbit numbers to explode back to the level where the felt hat industry was again self-sufficient in local rabbit skins[59].

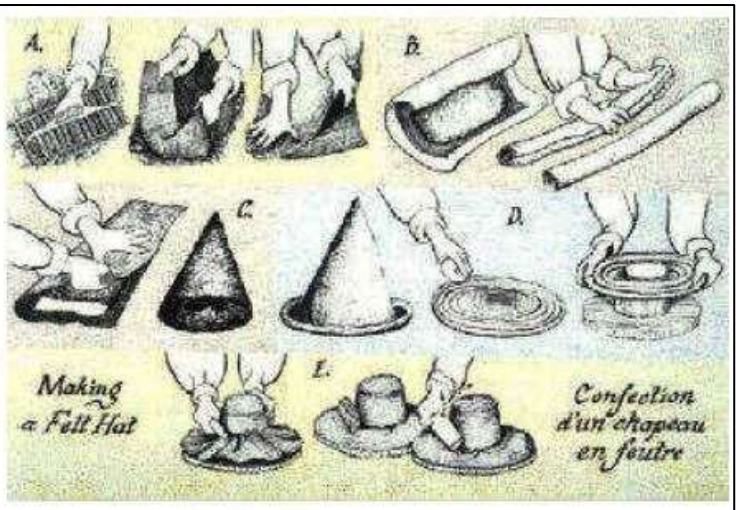
Felt hat making

A painstaking craft

Felt is a textile produced by matting, condensing and pressing fibres together. It can be made of natural fibres such as wool or synthetic fibres such as acrylic. There are many different types of felt for industrial, technical and craft applications. Felt making is an ancient craft going back to the Sumerians or earlier, and felt rugs, tents and clothing are still made by nomadic peoples.

Felt hat making is painstaking but skilled manual work and includes some 27 distinct operations[60]. The Melbourne Millinery Hub has identified nine main departments in a hat factory, and most hats were put through each one:

- Skin processing
- Fur preparation
- Cone forming
- Felting
- Dyeing
- Stiffening
- Wet operation (shaping)
- Final polishing
- Inspection and packaging[61].



A. Carding (combing the fibers), Bowing (cleaning and fluffing)
B. Matting (various layers of the fiber into felt)
C. Basoning (manipulated the batt of felt into a triangular shape called a capade or gore that will become the crown of the Hat)
D. Flanging (attaching the brim)
E. Blocking (forcing the hat body onto a wood form and stamping the moisture from it)

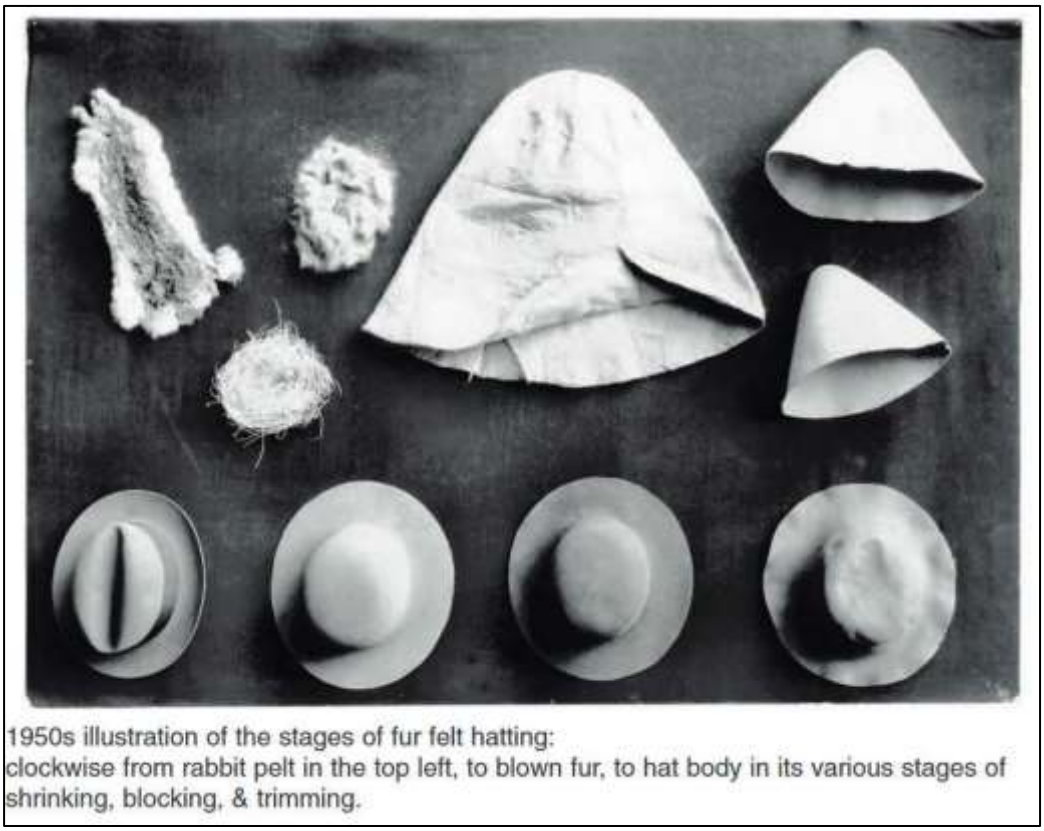
Figure 13 Stages in making a felt hat

Part of the process was to apply a variety of chemicals, including compounds of mercury, resulting in serious health problems for nineteenth century workers and the so-called “mad hatters’ disease”,

which was essentially mercury poisoning of the central nervous system. The Federated Felt Hatting Employees' Union of Australasia was formed in 1911 to provide national representation for hatters and milliners. It combined a number of State-based unions, including the New South Wales Society of Journeymen Felt Hatters and Trimmers and Binders (established in 1902 and quite possibly the longest title in the history of the international labour movement)[62].

Wool or fur?

Wool has been used to make felt hats from ancient times. While it is the most affordable type of felt, wool is very porous and does not shed water. Wool felt also loses its shape more easily than fur felt and is heavier and rougher in feel. But it is a good material for travelling as it can be pushed back into shape after being packed away, and generally works well when not exposed to rain.



1950s illustration of the stages of fur felt hatting:
clockwise from rabbit pelt in the top left, to blown fur, to hat body in its various stages of shrinking, blocking, & trimming.

Figure 14 A rabbit becomes a felt hat (Hat Works Museum)

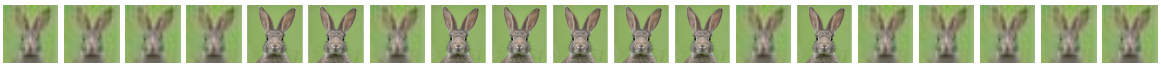
Beaver fur, on the other hand, was the gold standard for hat quality until the late nineteenth century. It felts more tightly, resulting in a dense lightweight and thin hat which holds its shape in rain (and snow, if required) longer than lesser quality hats. Beaver fur also has sheen, softness and the most durability – it will last a lifetime. However, beaver fur was not in great abundance, which was reflected in the high price.

Rabbit fur is to a large extent the Goldilocks material for fur felt hat making. It can be felted fairly tightly and is in much more abundance than beaver fur. A rabbit fur hat is therefore more affordable and is also soft to the touch. As it does not felt as tightly as beaver fur, rabbit fur requires more thickness to obtain the desired stiffness and waterproofing ability[63].

The soft under-fur from European wild rabbits caught in Australia was found to produce high quality felt. Animals traditionally used to make felt hats in the nineteenth century, such as the North American beaver, were becoming increasingly scarce. Rabbits, on the other hand, seemed to be in virtually unlimited supply. Rabbit pelts that were once discarded came to be in demand as Australian and other hat makers caught on to its use. By the 1880s, Australian rabbit skins were being auctioned in their millions in London, a major centre for felt and hat making[64].

Figure 15 Steam blocking hats at Sargoods factory (State Library of NSW)

In the 1870s, the hat maker Benjamin Dunkerley invented a machine to quickly remove the unwanted hair tip from rabbit fur, allowing the under-fur to be used for felt hat marking. This was while he was working for a hat maker in Tasmania. In the early twentieth century he moved to Sydney and started making rabbit fur felt hats in large numbers[65].



A hazardous profession

In the 1800s, felt hatters used skills, tools and materials that had hardly changed in almost three hundred years. The few changes often resulted in further hazard in the workplace. Air in workshops was laden with animal fibre and dangerous chemicals were increasingly common. Any real concern for occupational health was a long way off.

Mercury poisoning of felt makers was often not a direct killer, and its effects could be masked by age and other illnesses. In any case, the condition was hardly mentioned in the hat making industry, and mercury was never banned under English law. Strong chemicals were employed in three stages of hatmaking: dyeing, stiffening and singeing. Sulphuric acid was used as a fixer for dyes, and when methylated spirits was introduced for singeing excess hairs off near-finished hats, it was a potent mix that resulted in many factory fires[66].

Mercury

Animal fur was readied for use in both men's and women's hats through a process known as felting or carroting (so-called because mercuric nitrate turned the fur orange and shrank it, making it easier to remove from the skin). Hair was removed from the hide and exposed to heat, moisture and mechanical pressure, causing it to mat together to form felt.

Prior to the seventeenth century, the skin and hair were separated using urine. French hat makers noticed that the urine of some hat workers was more effective for felting than others. It was discovered that the urine of workers being treated for syphilis with mercuric chloride made the hairs soft and very pliable, enabling them to felt together more easily. Mercuric nitrate was later used, and by the end of the seventeenth century this process had spread to England as well[67].

Figure 16 Beaver hat containing mercury (Bata Shoe Museum)

Syphilis is a sexually-transmitted bacterial infection that was extremely common in pre-antibiotic times. The bacterial agent was only identified in 1905, more than 400 years after it began to devastate Europe when Columbus returned from the New World in the 1490s, reportedly bringing a "great pox" back with his crew. The disease erupts in three stages, first appearing as ulcers that slowly heal, but reappearing with a variety of symptoms that come and go over several years before finally emerging with severe symptoms that often result in death.

As it cut a swathe through the world, syphilis collected several new names, each one seeking to assign this terrible disease to somewhere else: the French called it the Neapolitan Disease (and vice versa), the Russians the Polish Disease, the Polish and Persians the Turkish Disease, the Turkish the Christian Disease, the Japanese the Chinese Pox, while way over in Tahiti it was dubbed the British Disease.

Mercury ointment became a widely-accepted treatment for syphilis (but only of the symptoms) due to its antimicrobial properties, but prolonged use of mercury produced terrible side effects that killed many patients before syphilis did. Despite the cure being ultimately worse than the disease, mercury remained the go-to drug until 1910 when the Nobel Prize-winning scientist Paul Ehrlich discovered the antisyphilitic effects of arsenic compounds. This radical treatment targeted the disease and not just the symptoms. But like its predecessor, arsenic produced harmful side effects while destroying the disease. Eventually, the discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in 1928 produced the magic bullet that killed the disease without killing the patient first.

Although mercury was useful in forming fur felt, prolonged inhalation of mercury vapours, released on exposure to heat, resulted in the so-called “Mad hatters’ disease”. This affected workers’ gastrointestinal and central nervous systems. Notable symptoms included tremours, timidity, irritability and mental instability. The condition eventually led to the expression “mad as a hatter” by the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

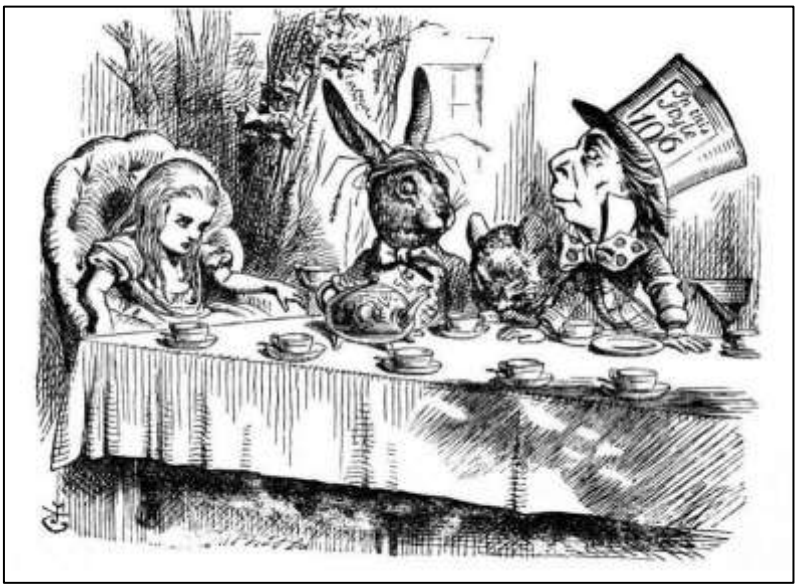


Figure 17 Lewis Carroll's Mat Hatter, 1865 (John Tenniel)

However, the famous “Mad Hatter” character from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* was not based on an ill hat maker (in fact he was a hat seller), but possibly on Theophilus Carter, an eccentric furniture dealer of Carroll’s acquaintance who greeted customers in a top hat. In any case, the fictional character was a colourful extrovert, not the shaking and shrinking wallflower that mercury poisoning creates[68]. After research on the health effects of mercury in the late 1930s, a ban on its use in felting was implemented by the United States Public Health Service in December 1941[69].

Arsenic

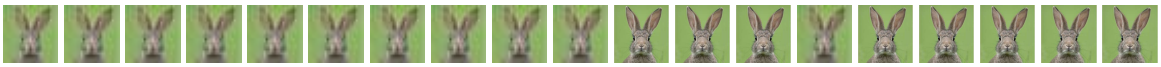
Good quality green dye had long eluded the fashion industry, which had to make do with a rather dull mixture of blue and yellow dyes until 1778 when the Swedish-German chemist Carl Wilhelm Scheele (1742-1786) developed a brilliant green pigment, known as Scheele's Green. It was later improved by a more stable pigment called Emerald Green. It was a huge success, and green was everywhere: wallpaper, candles, children's toys, fashionable garments and accessories. It looked good both in daylight and under gaslight.

But Scheele's Green had one major drawback: the pigment was made from highly toxic copper arsenite. While arsenic compounds were available over the counter for much of the nineteenth century and used in many household chores (in rat poison, for example), their exact level of toxicity was initially unknown[70]. Arsenic is especially dangerous because it has no taste or smell, so a person can be exposed without knowing it. There is no specific treatment for arsenic poisoning, and the best way is to remove exposure to it, although full recovery may take months[71].

Figure 18 Toxic green paint and dress (*Esquire* magazine)

In February 1862, the *London Times*, reporting on the toxicity of the emerald green gowns worn by fashionable women, claimed they contained half their weight in arsenic: a 20-yard ball gown could contain 900 grains of arsenic, while about five grains would kill an adult. The *British Medical Journal* wrote in 1862 that a lady wearing a green ball gown carried in her skirts enough arsenic to slay all of the admirers she may meet in half a dozen ballrooms. Wide-brimmed hats topped with leaves and flowers were also very popular at this time, bringing nature and greenery to the drab Victorian cities. But the ever-informative *Times* reported that each hat could fatally poison twenty people[72].

Fortunately for fashion conscious Victorians, the wearers of these toxic garments were largely separated from the poisonous fabric by petticoats and from the headwear by an inside lining. But the dressmakers and milliners had no such protection, often working arsenic powder into the fabric, inhaling it as they worked themselves into an early grave. French studies found that no cats or rats survived in flower-making factories, and that workers suffered from ulceration and other skin problems, as well as cancer[73].



In the Edwardian era, there was a craze for putting whole birds on hats, most of which would have been treated with arsenic. The use of arsenic in hats gaily adorned with birds, leaves and feathers persisted in Britain until the 1930s[74].

Potassium cyanide

Potassium cyanide (KCN) is a colourless crystalline salt that is highly soluble in water. The moistened solid emits small amounts of hydrogen cyanide gas. It is highly toxic with an acrid and bitter taste that can be rapidly fatal if swallowed. While the gas released by KCN when dissolved in water has a distinctive odour of bitter almonds, a large proportion of people cannot detect it. So the odour does not provide adequate warning of hazardous concentrations[75]. Cyanides have many industrial applications, including dyeing and textile manufacture[76].

The use of potassium cyanide in hat making and its associated dangers were illustrated by a tragic accident that occurred in August 1927 at the R. C. Henderson Ltd dyeing and felting works in Rosebery. Roland Barford, a 28 year old senior chemist who had only been working there about two weeks, was about to have lunch one day when he went to get a drink of water. He was later found dead at his desk with a message written on a card: “K.Cn. – taken in mistake for water”.

Senior officials at the factory thought he must have seen two glasses of colourless liquid and drank one, thinking it was water. But it was potassium cyanide, which he possibly could not smell. Realising from the bitter taste what he had mistakenly drunk, he returned to his desk and quickly wrote the note before passing out, showing great presence of mind to essentially conduct his own inquest and record the findings for the Coroner. The unfortunate Mr. Barford had studied colour chemistry at Leeds University and had been engaged by Rolla Henderson from the English hat centre of Luton to work in Australia[77].

The recommended treatment for cyanide poisoning is usually CPR and supplementary oxygen given by the first respondent, followed by an injection of sodium nitrite and sodium thiosulphate by a qualified medical person[78]. Potassium cyanide was the go-to suicide drug for high-ranking Nazi officials at the end of World War II, such as Hermann Göring, who took a capsule the night before his execution, and Erwin Rommel, Eva Braun, Joseph Goebbels and Heinrich Himmler.

Coal tar dyes vs wood dyes

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, all the dyes used in hat making came from natural sources such as insects, roots and minerals. But these dyes were expensive, difficult to produce and also required a mordant or fixing agent[79]. Traditional materials for dyeing were madder (red), weld (yellow), woad (blue), sumach (lacquer), redwood (red), indigo (blue), and logwood (black). A common mordant was sulphuric acid in the form of green vitriol[80].

Coal tar dyes, also called aniline dyes, were serendipitously discovered in 1856 by the young English chemist William Henry Perkin while trying to create synthetic quinine to treat malaria. Coal tar is a by-product of the carbonisation of coal to make coke (a fuel) and its gasification to make coal gas. Perkin first created a purple dye he called mauveine, which took London by storm and quickly spread to Paris and North America[81]. Historically, purple dye had been so rare that it was extremely expensive and mainly associated with royalty.

When aniline could be produced in large quantities a few years later, German chemists created hundreds of colours and developed a huge synthetic dye industry for local use and export. But from the start of World War I, these dyes were almost impossible to obtain when German dye manufacturers turned their attention to munitions production. Some Australian hat makers reverted to vegetable dyes during the war, but with a very limited range of colours, mainly black, blue and a range of greys[82].

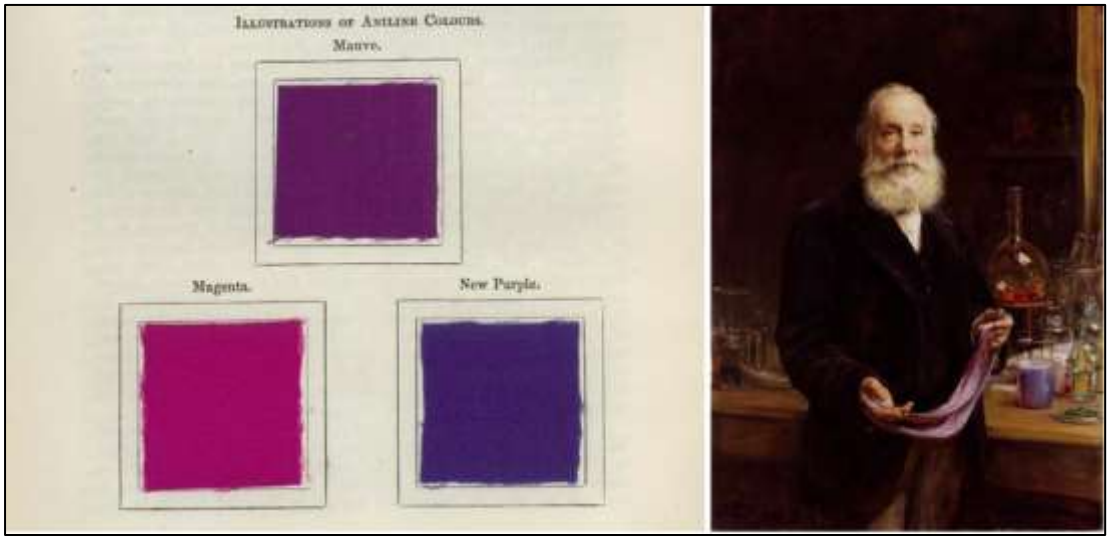


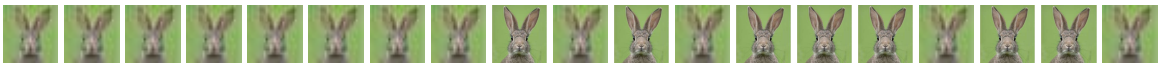
Figure 19 William Perkin & aniline dyes (Clare Marks WordPress site)

There was frequent discussion in the Australian press from 1915 to the end of the war about the impact of this sudden shortage of dyes at the outbreak of war. Wartime correspondents often expressed resentment that the almost limitless rainbow of coal tar dyes was originally a British invention, which the enterprising Great Enemy had developed to the point where it supplied 80% of the world's dyes (Switzerland produced 10% and England 3%)[83].

The Australian Government found that building a factory to produce dyes at the same low cost as Germany would cost an enormous amount of money, as well as training large number of artisans. Research was undertaken to find and produce vegetable dyes, using raw materials available in this country[84]. It was pointed out (no doubt with some outrage) that the even the colours of Union Jack flags were produced by German aniline dyes[85].

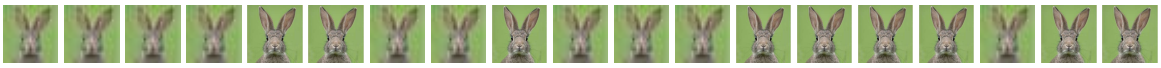
Possibly casting about for ideas in his own back paddock one day, a correspondent in Newcastle pointed out that Golden Wattle bark contains 35% tannin, making it very useful as a fixing agent, while several eucalypt leaf types produce excellent khaki and yellow on cotton and wool, all at a fraction of the cost of a synthetic dye factory[86]. In 1916, Thomas Clarke, principal dyer of the Union Hat Mills in Waterloo was credited with encouraging local dye producers to turn their minds to the production of plant-based dyes when the war broke out, because he realised they would need a substitute for German dyes[87].

But by 1921, British dye makers were admitting that the promising discoveries of new vegetable dyes had proved to be disappointing, and coal tar dyes returned to prominence when Germany restarted their dye-making factories[88]. Despite the widespread return to synthetic dyes, it was reported in 1916 that the John B. Stetson Company had always used wood dyes combined with



leaves for their famous hats. The company refused to use coal tar dyes because of the quality of natural dyes[89].

While the dyes used in the hat industry are not in the same league of lethal toxicity as mercury, arsenic or potassium cyanide, many are still hazardous. Dogwood is a significant poison whether inhaled, absorbed through the skin or ingested, and indigo is a skin, eye and respiratory system irritant[90]. In addition, coal tar was one of the first chemical substances proven to cause cancer from occupational exposure during research in 1775 on carcinomas in chimney sweeps, and coal tars are listed by the United States Department of Health and Human Services as known human carcinogens[91].



Free trade versus protectionism

Tariffs: raising revenue and protecting manufacturing

Since early colonial times, Australian governments have wrestled with the issue of the level and form of industry assistance. In 1800, Governor Philip King imposed tariffs on imports of spirits, beer and wine. Then in 1818, tariffs were imposed in New South Wales on tobacco, cigars and cigarettes. These early duties were for revenue-raising purposes. The goods subjected to tariffs expanded steadily in all the colonies through the nineteenth century. From 1850, responsible government for the Australian colonies was legislated in the British parliament, allowing each colony to determine its own tariffs.

Increasingly, some tariffs were introduced to protect industries, mostly in manufacturing. In 1866, Victoria added a wide range of goods to the list of dutiable items at 10% for this reason. Other colonies followed suit except New South Wales, which kept duties to a small range of goods for revenue-raising purposes, leading New South Wales to be known as the “free trade” colony while Victoria was the “protectionist” colony.

At Federation, the Australian Constitution stipulated that all tariffs had to be uniform across the nation and there would be no tariffs on interstate trade and commerce. But the difference in approach between New South Wales and Victoria led to the new Federal Parliament being formed with three parties: the Labour Party, the Free Trade Party and the Protectionist Party. Tariffs on imports of manufactured goods averaged 30.6% in 1908. Woollen goods were included as dutiable items. In 1910, the two non-Labour parties combined to form the Liberal Party.

Protectionism was the dominant sentiment for most of the twentieth century, but from the 1980s the world trading scene was altered dramatically by globalisation, and trade liberalisation is becoming more favoured.

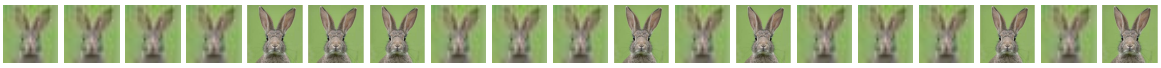
The pros and cons of protectionism

Protectionism is good - discuss

The protection of Australian industries against cheap foreign labour is a common justification for high tariffs. This argument suggests that countries with higher wage structures than Australia would also seek protection against our exports to them. But this does not happen, as countries export the goods they can produce relatively more efficiently.

For national defence reasons, countries may decide not to rely too heavily on imports of certain key commodities and manufactured products, in order to be self-sufficient in times of national emergency. This will involve an economic cost, but it may be thought to outweigh the risk of wartime isolation. An alternative strategy that is used extensively today is stockpiling of strategic goods.

Protection of the agricultural industry has been used in the past to ensure the survival of the farming sector of the economy. Finally, short-term protection of infant industries is used to encourage the long-term growth of new areas of manufacturing. But this argument assumes that politicians and public servants can judge future profitability better than the capital market, and global experience has shown that infant industries rarely grow up. But a successful Australian example is the cotton



industry that was established with infant protection, and now operates with virtually none of its earlier assistance.

Protectionism is bad - discuss

The arguments against protectionism are not as diverse as the arguments in favour of it. But there is considerable evidence that international competition caused by reducing protection has improved productivity in the traded goods sector. In a high labour cost economy like Australia, increased competition encourages improved management and concentration on the production of higher quality and more innovative products to offset labour costs.

In the end, there are strong arguments for both sides, but the balance of argument is heavily on the side of trade liberalisation. But both approaches have costs: in the case of protection, the cost is higher prices paid by consumers by effectively subsidising the protected industry. Lowering protection also has costs, although they are transitional and decline over time as the industry restructures itself[92].

The impact of tariffs on hat manufacturing

No tariff too high

Hat making in Australia was generally a protected domestic industry through the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century[93]. An early example of the impact of tariffs in the industry was on the hat making business of Charles Anderson. He started the Sydney Hat Manufacturing Company in 1894 when there was a 10% import duty during the government of George Dibbs' Protectionist Party, but went into liquidation two years later when George Reid's Free Trade Party removed the duty[94].

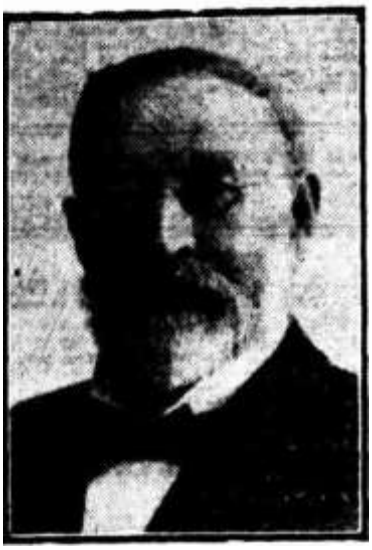
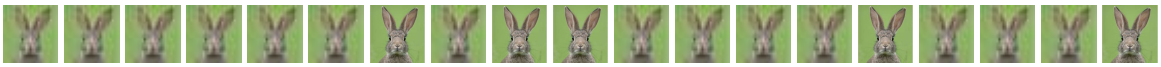


Figure 20 Charles Anderson

It was reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1905 that more than 50% of felt hats worn locally were imported, mainly from Italy, where the low cost of manufacture gave their hat makers a great advantage over Australian firms[95]. New South Wales governments typically favoured free trade policies, and in 1914 complaints from the leading hat manufacturers led to an Interstate Tariff Commission in Sydney to inquire into the condition of the straw hat industry.



William G Lewis of Lewis and Loney Ltd in Redfern employed 130 staff and told the Commission that factories in the hat industry were stagnant at the time, due to the great increase in competition from imported hats. Charles Henderson of R. C. Henderson Ltd supported an application for increased tariffs on straw hats. He said his factory of 150 employees had been less profitable over the last few years due to the market being flooded with imported goods. But Mr Lockyer, one of the Commissioners, pointed out that there were twenty straw hat manufacturers in New South Wales and seventy in the nation, so there was already very keen competition within the country[96].

In 1925, the United Felt Hat Company Pty Ltd was formed from an amalgamation of twelve Victorian hat manufacturers. The aim was to improve their position in the market by reducing overhead charges. It was hoped this would help them fight the competition from the overseas felt hat trade, mainly from Britain and Italy[97]. In 1926, two Sydney hat makers joined the new united company: the Langley Hat Mills of Waterloo and the felt hatting branch of Anderson's Industries (of Surry Hills).

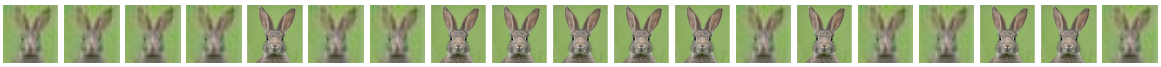
The Six Hatters affair

An unusual case of protection on the labour side of the hat industry occurred in 1902 when Charles Anderson tried to import several skilled British hatters to fill critical vacancies in his new and much enlarged Federal Hat Mills in Surry Hills. He had spent some £30,000 in premises and plant, and when in full production expected to need 72 skilled artisans to keep the remaining 200 or more employees fully occupied. Since August 1902, the company had been advertising in Melbourne for artisans such as bodymakers, plankers, finishers, framers and binders but by the end of the year could not find enough for their needs[98].

So Anderson contracted several artisans with the required skills from English factories and brought them to Australia. When the *RMS Orontes* landed at Sydney, six hatters were refused admittance on the grounds that as men under contract to perform manual work in the Commonwealth, they were prohibited under the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901. The Prime Minister Sir Edmund Barton said that the restriction does not apply to workmen with special skill required by Australia, but no such exemption had been applied for[99].

The case caused a sensation because it was the first time British subjects had been refused permission to land in a British colony. The Act (which became part of the notorious White Australia Policy) was intended to keep non-Europeans out of Australia. Even the *Otago Daily Times* put in their two bits' worth by asking: "If Englishmen are to be prohibited from landing and settling in an English colony, what are things coming to? What are colonies for, but to provide an outlet for the teeming population of the Mother Country?"[100].

The under-pressure Prime Minister eventually announced that while he was not sympathetic to the importation of labour under contract, it was clear that the men had special skill, and there was not enough labour to fill the vacancies in Mr. Anderson's factory. In this case he was bound to issue an exemption and allow the six hatters to land[101]. The celebrated sextet must have remained at the Federal Hat Mills for some years, as it was reported that when Governor-General Henry Northcote visited the factory in June 1905, he had the opportunity of seeing the six hatters hard at work[102].



Notable hat styles

The cabbage tree hat, the locally-made headwear of the nineteenth century, has already been described in detail. However, there are several other distinctive styles that were made or sold in Australia and are worth a mention.

Army slouch hat

The slouch hat, a rabbit fur felt hat, was first used in the Australian colonies by the Victorian Police Department in the mid-1880s. General Sir Harry Chauvel (1865-1945) traced the hat from the Tyrolean style first worn by the South African Police. The first Australian military unit to adopt the slouch hat into its uniform was the Imperial Bushmen's Corps, raised by public subscription in January 1900 to take part in the Boer War (1899-1902).

A shortage of the traditional helmets during this transition period of Federation meant that the hat was initially an emergency issue. However, once they received these hats, the Bushmen fought like devils to retain them. At one point, the Victorian contingent, led by Colonel "Tom" Price had their hats replaced by the original helmets, so he organised a mass raid on the lines of the (slouch hat-wearing) British Yeomanry Regiment, emerging with every man wearing a felt hat. The Poet Laureate John Masefield commented during World War I that "the idiotic cap that provided no shade, blew off in the wind and did not disguise the wearer from aerial observation was no match for the Diggers who wore comfortable soft felt slouch hats that protected in all forms of weather and always looked well"[103].

Figure 21 Sir Harry Chauvel's slouch hat (AWM website)

Colonel Price was instrumental in establishing much of the familiar identity of the Australian military: after establishing the Victorian Mounted Rifles, he cemented the concept of light horse units in the Australian Army, which achieved fame in both World Wars. He also obtained permission to dress his troops in khaki, instead of the more common red or blue uniforms of the time. The Colonel more than anyone instituted the slouch hat as a defining icon of the Australian Army to this day.

The name of the slouch hat comes from the upturned side. Initially the right side was turned up and pinned in place with a badge, probably to cater for rifle drill when the rifle was placed on the right

shoulder. However, by the time the Commonwealth troops arrived in South Africa, the left side was more commonly turned up, when the rifle must have been placed the rifle over the left shoulder (as is done today).

Figure 22 Victorian Mounted Rifles, 1889 (Wikimedia)

The first Australian slouch hats featured a three-piece puggaree (a Hindu and Urdu word for a turban) as a hat band. The *Defence Act* of 1903 combined the different colonial defences into a single Australian army, with the slouch hat as part of the uniform, turned up on the left side. The puggaree then had seven folds (one for each State and Territory). The most striking adornment for some units was the addition of the plumes of various birds, the best known of which was the emu feather, following the exploits of the Light Horse Regiments in the World War I desert campaign[104].

Campaign (lemon squeezer) hat

A campaign hat is a wide-brimmed felt hat with a high crown that is pinched symmetrically into a peak at the four corners, similar to a cook's lemon squeezer. Its origins can be traced to the 1840s when United States Army mounted troops posted to the far west sometimes wore wide-brimmed civilian hats rather than the less practical shakos or forage caps then being issued. The crease was copied from the sombreros worn by Mexican Vaqueros, a group of horse-mounted livestock herders. Major-General Robert Baden-Powell used the hat as part of the uniform he designed for the Boy Scouts in 1908, after serving in the 1890s with Canadian troops in South Africa who wore the hat as part of their uniform.

Figure 23 NZ lemon squeezer hats, 1915 (The National Interest)

The campaign hat became associated with New Zealand in World War I and remained in use by their military until 1960. When the New Zealand troops arrived at Gallipoli in 1915, they were easy to spot due to their unique hats. They wore the hat again a generation later in the deserts of North Africa. This style of hat is practical and stylish. It offers adequate protection from the elements by allowing rain to run off easily and also shield the sun.

New Zealand's mounted rifle brigades originally adopted the felt hat in 1891 to replace other forms of headwear, but it was first worn with the crown creased fore and aft and the brim turned up on one side, similar to the Australian slouch hat. New Zealand troops who then went to the Boer War reportedly saw the campaign hats worn by the Canadian troops, and many of them decided to adopt the four-dented unpinned style in their own hats. Each branch of service wore a different coloured puggaree, such as blue and red for artillery, khaki and red for infantry.

Apart from the Boy Scouts and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the Mounties), the lemon squeezer hat is worn in the United States by Army and Marine Corps drill instructors, and by National Park rangers[105].

Pith helmet

The pith helmet, also called the safari helmet, is a lightweight cloth-covered helmet made of sholapith (dried plant matter from the Indian shola plant, one of the world's lightest woods). The pith helmet was often worn by European travellers and explorers in South East Asia, Africa and the tropics. European military personnel were issued a pith helmet when serving overseas in hot climates from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the British Army in India started using locally-made helmets, acknowledging that the traditional tall leather hat called the shako was unsuitable in the hot climate. After some years, the version called the Foreign Service Helmet was universally adopted and became part of the British Army's dress regulations. English helmet makers found that cork, which comes from nearby Spain and Portugal, was easier to obtain than pith from the more distant Asian shola plant. So from the 1870s, they were being made of cork rather than pith.

The helmet was used throughout the British colonies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Foreign Service Helmet was replaced by the Wolseley Pattern helmet, which had a flatter and wider brim, giving greater sun protection[106]. In 1896, B. Mountcastle and Sons was advertising helmets and sun hats in their Brisbane store, saying that "the new Tropo shape is the most becoming sun hat yet introduced"[107]. A newspaper advert in 1907 stated that Mountcastle was the largest manufacturer of sun hats and helmets in the Commonwealth, including the Tropo, the Norma, and the Cintra. The shop was underneath their factory in Albert Street, Brisbane[108].

Figure 24 Wolseley Pattern helmet (Military Trader website)

Straw boater

The straw hat or boater became popular for men in the late nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. At first, it was used for summer holidays and summer sports, but soon was the favourite warm weather city hat for upper and middle class men. Generally, the boater was made of split straw with a straight narrow brim finished with fine silk trimmings and a calf leather sweatband. The ribboned hatband was mostly striped.

In *Manners for Men* (1897), Mrs C. E. Humphry informed her readers that "for a morning walk in the park in summer, the straw hat with tweed suit are as correct as the black coat and silk hat", but added the stern admonition that "a straw hat cannot be worn with a black coat of any kind. If he goes to a garden party in a frock coat and straw hat, he is condemned more widely than if he had committed some crime"[109].

The straw boater for women is called a sailor's hat, based on those worn by nineteenth century sailors before the sailor's cap became standard. It is very similar to the male boater, but those designed for women and children are usually adorned with a dark ribbon extending into streamers hanging off the brim. The sailor's hat was a key part of Coco Chanel's trademark "little boy" look that she popularised in the 1920s and then revived in 1954 for her comeback collection.

Figure 25 Women's sailor hat with chiffon (Wikimedia)

The historic Rouse Hill Estate in Sydney has in its collection a ladies' sailor hat once owned by Kathleen Rouse (1878-1932), a progressive young woman with little interest in conventional women's activities and who preferred travel and intellectual pursuits. The hat was made in England from finely plaited straw and dressed with a black faille ribbon. A padded silk label reveals it was made for G. H. Smith and Son of George Street Sydney, sole agents for Henry Heath, hat manufacturer of Oxford Street, London. B. Mountcastle and Sons advertised boaters for sale in the 1890s, calling them "Gents' straws" and "Ladies' sailors"[110].

Top hat

There has never been a more dominating hat in fashion than the top hat. When the first one was worn in 1797 by the English haberdasher John Hetherington, it caused a near riot, and a newspaper reported that "passers-by panicked at the sight, several women fainted, children screamed, dogs yelped and an errand boy's arm was broken when he was trampled by the mob". Hetherington was promptly arrested and taken to court for "wearing a tall structure having a shining lustre calculated to frighten timid people".

Hetherington had modified a riding hat of the day by widening the brim and lengthening the crown. In 1823, Antoine Gibus modified it again to a collapsible opera hat which was much easier to travel with and could be stored flat under the seat. The top hat took off in 1850 when Prince Albert began wearing it in public and it became a fashion rage. A frock coat and top hat became the widely-used city wear for the upper and middle classes in all urban areas of the Western world.

The top hat made a statement that the wearer was important and classy. Men wore top hats for business, pleasure and formal occasions – usually pearl grey for daytime and black for day or night.

Felted beaver skin was the preferred material because of its waterproof properties, but the great demand for beaver hats and coats practically wiped out the beaver population in North America by 1900. From this time, the top hat was being made with silk and only worn on special occasions, as is done today. However, Fred Astaire, Gary Cooper and Marlene Dietrich caused a resurgence of the style in the 1930s via motion pictures.

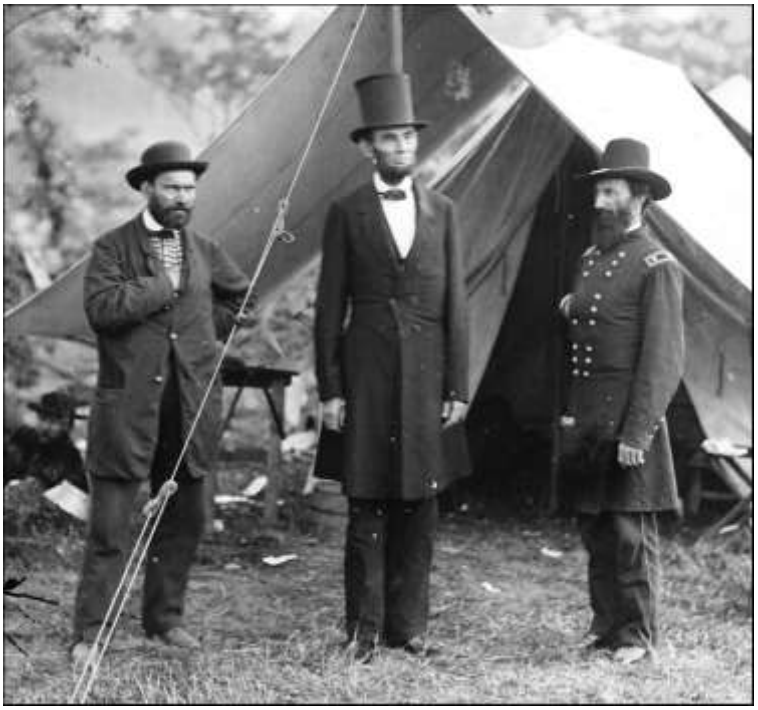


Figure 26 Abraham Lincoln's stovepipe hat, 1862 (Wikipedia)

Abraham Lincoln was famous for wearing a stovepipe hat, a particularly tall top hat. Being an imposing 6 feet 4 inches tall, Lincoln was hardly in need of a supersized top hat to be noticed. But when he was a lawyer he was known to tuck important papers, court notes and contracts into his hat[111]. Benjamin Mountcastle is credited with introducing the long silk hat to New South Wales, reputed to be "held by Englishmen to be the badge of respectability, and the finish of a gentleman's attire"[112]. In the 1840s, he specialised in making French hats, usually of imported silk[113].

Bell's Life in Sydney and Sporting Review published a whimsical article in 1848 claiming that to gain notoriety in the fashionable world, "it is indispensably requisite that you should dress uncommonly genteel, to effect which, you must patronise Dickinson's coats and trousers, Mountcastle's hats, Fletcher's boots, a tie, and wonderful hot-pressed cloths". Their final piece of social-climbing advice was to "borrow your father's or uncle's horse, be sure to swear it is your own, and be seen galloping along the streets at a desperate rate, ignoring the children and nursemaids at the corners"[114].

Headwear for Diggers, Coppers and Posties

The international conflicts that the Australian colonies and later the Commonwealth participated in from the end of the nineteenth century resulted in lucrative contracts for some clothing and equipment suppliers, in particular the larger hat factories. In addition, the expanding diversity of uniformed officials provided a steady market for hat and helmet manufacturing business.

Boer War

The Boer War from October 1899 to May 1902 was a conflict fought between the British Empire and the two Boer Republics in South Africa formed by Dutch-speaking inhabitants of Cape Colony. The six self-governing colonies in Australia sent their own contingents to serve on the British side from November 1899. After the Commonwealth of Australia was established in January 1901, the new Federal government sent a combined contingent in 1902. About 16,000 Australians went to South Africa with the official contingents, mainly serving in mounted rifle brigades[115].

Figure 27 Boer War pith helmet (Military Trader website)

By the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Anderson was probably the main supplier of official headwear to the New South Sales colonial Government. In March 1901, his Sydney Hat Manufacturing Coy, then in Ann Street Surry Hills, had just delivered 2,000 hats for the Federal Contingent when a fire partly destroyed its factory. At the time the company employed 100 to 125 staff and was preparing to move to much larger premises in Albion and Nichols Streets[116]. For some years, Anderson had been supplying apparel to the government from his Ann Street hat factory, including naval cocked hats and helmets. He also operated a large tailoring works in Oxford Street which supplied uniforms to the military[117].

Pre-World War I

In the early years of the twentieth century, B. Mountcastle and Sons (who had moved their factory to Brisbane by then) shifted their emphasis from silk hats for gentlemen to a wide range of military and other government headwear. In November 1904, they were supplying field service caps for four of the military districts in Queensland[118] and a few months later khaki peaked caps for the Royal Australian Artillery in Victoria[119].

By 1911, they had successfully tendered to make the headgear for the Royal Military College of Australia[120], and in 1912 were making accessories for military felt hats[121] as well as 1,000 khaki field service caps for the Commonwealth military forces[122]. In 1913, the *Brisbane Telegraph* reported that "B. Mountcastle and Sons has largely devoted its attention of later years to the manufacture of

military and official headgear. For military and naval caps the firm is in the front rank of Australian manufacturers"[123].

World War I

From a population of fewer than five million, almost 417,000 men and women enlisted in the Australian armed forces during World War I, and 334,000 of these served overseas[124].

Between April 1915 and August 1917, the major hat manufacturers in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide were awarded very large contracts to provide headwear for the Army. By May 1916, the Australia-wide orders were for 453,898 fur felt hats (as well as 863,600 pairs of military boots) for the Australian Imperial Force[125]. Details of the contracts accepted by the government were published frequently in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, from which most of the following information was taken. The total number of fur felt hats is shown in the newspaper extract. In addition, two Sydney hat factories made woollen hats for the AIF - Charles Anderson and Co Ltd (45,500 wool felt hats) and the Union Hat Mills (14,000 wool felt hats).

Details of the orders are as follows:—

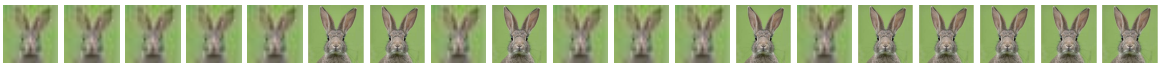
HATS.

Contractor	Total No.
John Bardsley and Sons, Sydney	43,200
M'Groban and Bardsley, Melb.	12,000
Union Hat Mills, Melbourne	40,000
Union Hat Mills, Sydney	45,000
Shelmerdine Bros., Melbourne ..	11,016
Austral Hat Mills, Melbourne ..	76,800
Dunkerley Hat Mills, Sydney ...	23,040
Northcote Hat Mfg. Co., Melb.	12,342
Adelaide Hat Company, Adelaide	10,500
Chas. Anderson and Co., Sydney	180,000
Total	453,898

Figure 28 WWI fur felt hat orders (*Border Morning Mail*, 16 May 1916)

Another hat maker, E. F. Coolahan and Co Ltd of Newtown, won a contract to make 7,800 fur felt hats in April 1915[126], 14,850 in September 1915[127], and 1,000 in November 1915[128]. But a disastrous fire at their factory in September 1915[129] meant that they were unable to deliver these hats, as they were not in the list published by *The Sun* in May 1916 that showed the total hats delivered to date[130].

The prominent hat maker B. Mountcastle and Sons Pty Ltd had a long history of manufacturing military headgear before the war[131 132 133], and of making accessories during the war. Despite the Heritage page in the company's website stating that Mountcastle supplied the Anzac Military Hat during World War I[134], the only references to their military contracts in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* were to supply 1,656 Geneva Crosses (Ambulance Service Red Crosses) in April 1915[135], 186 hat ribbons in November 1916[136] and 3,000 emu plumes (for Light Horsemen's slouch hats) in March 1917[137].



Apart from headwear, several other well-known firms provided supplies to the military during the war, as published in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* from 1915 to 1918. The following is a small sample of the vast range of clothing, equipment, food, medical supplies and everything else required to keep the Anzacs equipped, fed and reasonably healthy in the field:

- David Jones and Co, Sydney – 4,200 housewives (sewing kits)
- Anthony Hordern and Sons Ltd, Sydney – service dress jackets, Bengal razors, towels, cutlery, woollen singlets
- Harris Scarfe and Co, Adelaide – ropes
- J Blundstone and Son Ltd, Hobart – brown ankle boots (Citizen Forces)
- Dunlop Rubber Co, Melbourne – waterproof ground sheets
- Grace Bros, Broadway, Glebe, Sydney – woollen socks, singlets, drawers, Bengal razors, towels
- Metters Page Stove Coy, Richmond – 120 ovens
- Larke Hoskins and Co, Sydney – motor van
- Nock and Kirby Ltd, Sydney – razors
- Parke Davis and Co, Sydney – chloroform, morphine sulphate tablets, adrenalin chloride[138].

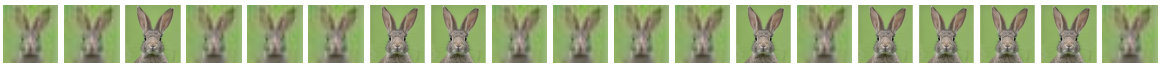
World War II

Australia's involvement in World War II began at its commencement in September 1939. As a close ally of Great Britain, when they declared war on Germany, we too were at war. But the army was not engaged in combat until early 1941, when three divisions of troops joined Allied operations in the Mediterranean and North Africa. The Japanese attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and the rapid advance of the Imperial Japanese Army through south-east Asia quickly brought the war close to home, and recruitment was accelerated by conscription from mid-1942. By the war's end in August 1945, almost a million Australian men and women had served in the three armed services[139].

Contracts were awarded for the supply of slouch hats (then called "hats, khaki, fur" in the Army's inimitable naming system) from January 1940[140] until June 1945[141], and details of the successful hat makers were published in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*. From the information available, only three Sydney hat manufacturers were contracted during this period: Dunkerley Hat Mills, John Bardsley and Sons Ltd and R. C. Henderson Ltd.

The number of hats per manufacturer was not listed, only the cost. The annual totals show the big jump in production from 1942, reflecting the increased Australian involvement in the war:

- 1940: £13,483.
- 1941: £2,658.
- 1942: £110,008.
- 1943: £107,064.
- 1944: £101,118.
- 1945: £40,168.



The wartime totals for each hat manufacturer (followed by the approximate amounts in today's money) were:

- Dunkerley Hat Mills £158,057 ($26 million).
- Bardsley and Sons £133,319 ($22 million).
- R. C. Henderson £83,123 ($14 million)[142].

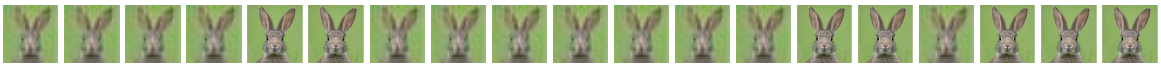
Wars do not come cheaply (even for the winners), and the $60+ million spent on slouch hats alone in World War II provides a small glimpse of the immense cost to the nation of its participation in international conflicts. A study by the Federal Treasury of the history of public debt in Australia records that during World War I, gross Australian Government debt rose from around 2.2% of GDP to around 50%, and in World War II the debt rose from around 40% of GDP to around 120%[143]. This sounds onerous, but the nation paid of these debts quickly enough by outgrowing them as the post-war economy expanded in the 1920s and 1950s.

Policemen and postmen

The first newspaper mention of official headwear after Federation was in January 1901, when Charles Anderson's Sydney Hat Manufacturing Company was contracted to supply 1,000 white police helmets[144]. But a much bigger customer was the Postmaster-General's Department (generally known as the PMG).

The PMG was a department in the Federal Government established at Federation in 1901 to take over all postal and telegraphic services from the states and administer them on a national basis. In its first 25 years, the PMG grew from 6,000 to 10,000 offices and from 18,000 to 47,000 staff[145]. As one of the new nation's largest employers of outdoor workers delivering mail and working on telegraph transmission systems, the PMG soon became a large and long-term customer for the larger hat manufacturers.

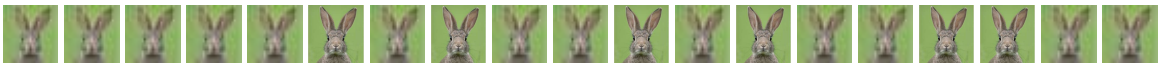
The first mention in the press of hat makers being contracted by the PMG was in October 1905 when Charles Anderson and Co won the tender to supply caps and hats to postal officers[146]. The following year, the Postmaster-General accepted tenders for helmets, caps, straw hats and felt hats from Charles Anderson and Co Ltd of Albion and Nichols Streets, Surry Hills, and Messrs B Mountcastle and Sons of Brisbane[147]. These two companies continued to be awarded major PMG contracts for caps, hats and helmets in the years up to World War I and afterwards. Mountcastle in particular seemed to specialise in postal workers' headwear by then. As an example, in July 1913 they undertook their largest contract yet, for the whole of the headgear required for the Post and Telegraph Department in Victoria[148].

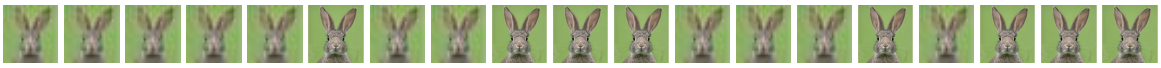


In October 1913, the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* listed the wide range of PMG occupations catered to by B. Mountcastle and Sons:

- 600 cloth caps for letter carriers.
- 35 cloth caps with gold lace for mail guards.
- 3 cloth caps with gold lace for mail officers.
- 600 winter cloth caps for telegraph messengers.
- 600 summer cloth caps for telegraph messengers.
- 150 felt hats for mail drivers.
- 600 helmets of various sizes[149].

By the end of 1913, Mountcastle held contracts for the entire headgear required by Post and Telecommunication Departments in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and a portion of the New South Wales headgear[150]. Even as World War I progressed, Mountcastle was contracted for the supply of 600 helmets to the PMG's Department[151]. Being kept busy making other government headwear probably explains why Mountcastle was not one of the Army hat manufacturers during the war.





Hat makers in Sydney

Large hat factories

Sydney Hat Manufacturing Company (later Federal Hat Mills then United Felt Hats Ltd)

Address: 49 Ann Street, then Albion and Nichols Streets, Surry Hills.

Sydney Hat Manufacturing Company

In September 1894, Charles Anderson opened the Sydney Hat Manufacturing Company in Elizabeth Street, Redfern. In two months the premises proved to be too small for the increasing demands, and the premises were changed to 49 Ann Street, Surry Hills. The company slowly expanded under the protection of a 10% duty on imported hats. At the time, the felt hat industry was still in its infancy in New South Wales, but making significant progress.

By contrast, in Victoria a higher protective duty of 3 shillings per hat kept the industry in a healthy and prosperous state. The hat industry was established in that State more than twenty years earlier, but only made rapid strides in recent years, thanks to increased import duties. In the mid-1890s, there were seven hat factories in Victoria, employing upwards of 2,500 people. By July 1895, Charles Anderson's company employed forty staff, and made hard and soft felt hats, mostly from the fur of rabbit skins which were sent abroad to England to be treated then sent back again. This factory produced 150 dozen hats per week[152].

But early in 1896, the abolition of the 10% import duty by the free-trade Reid Government saw the hat factory go into liquidation[153]. However, the factory was back in business by February 1899, and was contracted make hats and caps for the Government[154].

Disaster struck in March 1901 when a fire partly destroyed the Ann Street factory. Fortunately, a large batch of 2,000 hats had just been delivered to the Federal Contingent troops that were preparing to depart for the Boer War. The damage was extensive, including imported specialist machinery and material. 100 to 125 hands were employed in the factory at the time, and Charles Anderson was intending to move to a new building behind Durham Hall in Albion Street, Surry Hills[155].

Federal Hat Mills

The factory in Albion Street, renamed to the Federal Hat Mills to commemorate the recently established Federation of the six Australian colonies, was operating in the new premises by August 1902[156]. The mills contain the most up-to-date machinery, capable of treating the raw material to the finished hat, and its expert staff were mainly gathered from the manufacturing centres of Europe and America. Charles Anderson's motto was "Australian hats for Australian heads"[157].

In a few months, the weekly output was 3,600 woollen hats, 2,400 fur hats, 3,600 straw hats, 1,200 helmets, 1,200 caps, in addition to silk hats and most other types of headgear, including the naval cocked hat. 300 hands were employed to produce this large and diverse output[158]. In 1907, there was a long strike when the Felt Hatters Union objected to the employment of 42 hatters that the company wanted to import to fill a local skill shortage[159]. Press reports at the time show that the company was plagued by industrial action, and managing director John Joseph Anderson (son of Charles) was kept busy dealing with this, both in court and on the shop floor.

By 1912, hats made of rabbit fur (sometimes called "imitation beaver") were outselling all other classes of men's hats, and Australia had the raw material hopping around in abundance. The company, by then the largest hat maker in Sydney, started making rabbit fur hats as soon as it realised how popular they were. The operation used nearly 1.5 million rabbit skins annually, mainly purchased in winter when the rabbits had a thicker coat of fur. In the factory, the outside hair was removed from the skins leaving the soft fur which was separated from the skins in another machine. The furless skins were then cut into small thin strips and exported to England where they were used to manufacture gelatine for sweets[160].

The Federal Hat Mills building was quite imposing: three floors and a basement built of brick on a sandstone foundation. It had a floor surface area of over 50,000 sq. feet. The cellar was specially constructed for the cool storage of the fur while waiting for initial treatment[161]. By 1912, the company was employing 450 to 500 staff[162]. In December 1920, the parent company, previously known as Charles Anderson and Co Ltd, changed its name to Anderson's Industries Ltd[163]. Charles Anderson died in 1924, by which time the business was being managed by his sons William and John Joseph[164].

United Felt Hats Ltd

By the 1920s, Victoria was the centre of hat making in Australia, but the industry had suffered for some time from cheaper imports from Italy and Britain, despite the high 50% import tariff. In order to improve their market position, the United Felt Hat Company Pty Ltd was formed in 1925 to amalgamate and co-ordinate the larger Victorian hat factories[165]. By the following year, the amalgamation was so successful that the Sydney firms the Federal Hat Mills and Henry Langley's Union Hat Mills were also in negotiations to join the amalgamated company[166]. From 1927, the Albion Street factory started advertising for staff under the United Felt Hats Pty Ltd banner[167].

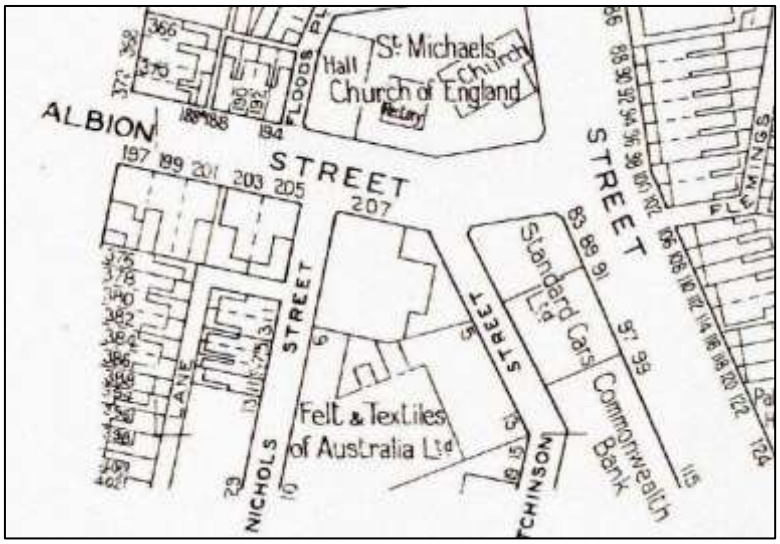


Figure 29 Felt & Textiles Ltd, c1972 (City of Sydney Archives)

The company apparently wound down the manufacture hats in the Albion Street factory from 1935, when 18,000 square feet of the site was advertised to lease[168], and then another 4,058 square feet in May 1940[169]. By 1935, Felt and Textiles of Australia Ltd was leasing 6-10 Nichols Street from Anderson Industries, and by 1939 the company had purchased it[170]. Anderson Industries retained ownership of the adjacent site 12-14 Nichols Street.

Apart from Feltex Carpets, this company also made a variety of footwear via its subsidiaries. Among these were Australian Slippers Pty Ltd, and the romantically-named Iolanthe Slipper Company and Cinderella Shoes Pty Ltd (maker of shoes for children). By 1949, the company had 65 factories in Australia[171]. Other companies leased part of the site until all the buildings were eventually demolished in 1983 to make way for a block of 75 apartments known as Durham Village.

Dunkerley Hat Mills Ltd (later Akubra Hats Pty Ltd)

Address: 556a Crown Street Surry Hills, then 494-498 Bourke Street, Waterloo, then 89 South Street, South Kempsey.

Hat maker and inventor in Hobart

Benjamin Dunkerley (1840-1918) came from a family of cotton weavers and had experience working as a hatter in Stockport Cheshire, before migrating to Australia in November 1874. Before leaving England he had arranged to work for the hat maker Joseph Bidencope in Hobart, and brought some hatmaking machinery with him[172]. Bidencope advertised his firm as the "Tasmanian Hat Manufactory and Naval and Military tailoring establishment, 86 Murray Street"[173]. Dunkerley left the firm in June 1875 after a disagreement with Bidencope[174].

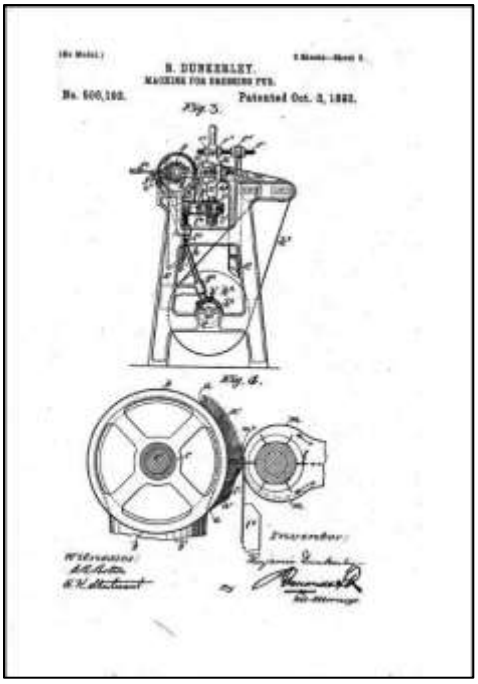


Figure 30 Dunkerley's fur dressing machine, 1893 (Google Patents)

About a year after his arrival, Dunkerley sent for his wife Harriet and six children. In 1876, he and David Glenhill established the Kensington Hat Mills at O'Brien's Bridge in Glenorchy, now a suburb of Hobart. The business expanded rapidly and was soon employing 30 workers and producing 750 hats per week. The business was declared bankrupt in 1878[175], but a few years later Dunkerley re-established the Kensington Hat Mills in partnership with J. H. Hull.

Apart from being a skillful hat maker, he was able to invent useful machinery, and he developed a mechanical method of removing the hair tip from rabbit fur so the soft under-fur could be used in felt hat making. Previously this was a tedious and difficult job that was always done by hand. He registered the invention in 1892 and in August 1893 was granted a patent in England[176].

Ending his partnership with Hull after a decade working together, he relocated with his family to Melbourne in June 1895[177]. But when a business slump hit the city he moved to Sydney in 1900. On arrival, and in conjunction with the Sydney hat maker Charles Anderson, Dunkerley applied to patent his fur dressing machine in New South Wales while he was living in Albion Street (now Avenue), Paddington[178].

Launching a family dynasty in Surry Hills

It is not known where Benjamin Dunkerley worked when he first arrived in Sydney, but in 1902 he met the young English hat maker Stephen Keir, who was working for Charles Anderson at the Federal Hat Mills. Dunkerley may also have been working there as well, because he already knew Anderson. Then in about 1904, Dunkerley established a small hat factory at 556A Crown Street in Surry Hills, and Stephen Keir moved there to work for him.

Figure 31 Dunkerley Hat Mills, Surry Hills (Akubra website)

Dunkerley's children all worked at the new hat factory, attending to the dyeing process, blocking the felt hats, sewing in the headbands and the external trimmings on the hats[179]. Keir married Ada, Dunkerley's second daughter and an experienced hat former in December 1905 at Paddington[180]. This was the start of a long dynasty, and since then the firm has been owned by the succeeding generations of the Keir family. The current Chairman, Stephen Keir IV, was appointed in 2010[181].

In 1911, the business was registered with the name Dunkerley Hat Mills Ltd when there were only 19 employees. The directors were Arthur Pringle Stewart, Benjamin Dunkerley, Stephen Keir and James Arthur Dunkerley[182]. Arthur Stewart was a wholesale merchant with a store in York Street. All the hats produced in the factory were sold in his store or by him distributed to other retailers in the city. In August 1912, Stewart registered the brand name Akubra for promotional purposes, apparently using an Indigenous word for a head covering[183].

Like many other Australian manufacturers, World War I saw the Dunkerley Hat Mills turn much of its production to the war effort, fulfilling a contract for 23,040 slouch hats for the Australian Imperial Force[184]. This forged a relationship with the armed forces that continues to this day. The Army's slouch hats are currently supplied by Akubra and Mountcastle[185]. Benjamin Dunkerley died in 1918 at his residence 582 Bourke Street, Surry Hills[186], and ownership was transferred to Stephen Keir I.

Expansion in Waterloo

With the increased business generated during World War I, Keir decided to construct a much larger factory in Bourke Street, Waterloo, which was opened in 1919[187]. The firm made great progress, and two years later Keir erected new mills next door, allowing the output to double[188].

Figure 32 Dunkerley Hat Mills, Waterloo (Akubra website)

Akubra hats were prominently displayed at the Australian Manufacturers' Exhibition in Sydney in 1927. Their product range, modelled by eager Fort Street schoolboys, is captured in an exuberant photograph at the Exhibition. The schoolboys were learning about the whole manufacturing process from hopping bunny to stylish hat. By the 1930s Great Depression, the company had over 220 employees. The factory's capacity at this time was 12,000 hats per week, or 624,000 per year, utilising some 500 bales of wool and three million rabbit skins[189].

When hat sales declined during the Depression, the staff decided to take a 10% pay cut (including management) so no one was made redundant[190]. This strategy allowed the company to survive while most other hat makers folded[191]. In World War II, Dunkerley Hat Mills again turned most of their production over to the government's requirements. The workforce peaked at about 500 employees during this war, when 80% of its production was Army slouch hats[192].

Figure 33 Fort Street schoolboys at 1927 Exhibition (SLNSW)

The American hat maker John B. Stetson (1830-1906) moved west to Colorado in the 1860s to help his failing lungs, and while there he made felt from beavers and rabbits, turning them into waterproof tents. He also made for himself a felt hat with a broad brim and a high crown. When a passing cowboy bought it and declared it to be the perfect headwear for his work, Stetson got the idea to make more hats in that style.

Back home in Philadelphia he started producing the hat, calling it the Boss of the Plains. The first American cowboy hat could stand rough treatment and all weathers and was an immediate success. Stetson's success story essentially mirrors Akubra's own, and the link between the two companies was cemented in 1951 when Akubra signed a licensing agreement with the Stetson Company to produce their hats in Australia[193].

Figure 34 Akubra and Stetson at Rosebery, 1977 (City of Sydney Archives)

Over the years, Stephen Keir I succeeded in developing a type of fur felt hat so closely attuned to its market that Akubra became a familiar part of national life[194]. It had an endearing flexibility that appealed to bushmen: you could "water your dog and fan the fire" with an Akubra, in the words of a 1972 R. M. Williams catalogue[195]. Production was at a record high when Keir retired in 1952 and his eldest son Herbert succeeded him as Managing Director. By the 1960s, production was 60% city hats and 40% country styles. Recognising that regional Australia was becoming their main market, Akubra took advantage of decentralisation subsidies and lower land prices in 1972 to relocate to a purpose-built factory in South Kempsey, where about 85 local workers are employed. With the move, the company changed its name to Akubra Hats Pty Ltd.

Akubra: Australian for hat

Akubra have stayed in the public eye by creating several famous hats over the years. In 1956, the firm supplied the Panama hats worn by the Australian team at the Melbourne Olympics. *The Man From Snowy River* film, released in 1982, inspired a hat called the Snowy River that became a staple in the Akubra range. By this time, more than 21 million hats had been made.

Other notable Akubras were the Aussie Gold hat made for the Australian Team at the 1984 Olympics, The Croc for the release of *Crocodile Dundee* in 1986 (Akubra advises that this hat cannot

be exported due to the genuine crocodile band with teeth), the Great White Shark made for the golfer Greg Norman in 1987, and the Spirit of Australia for the 2000 Sydney Olympics. By 2015, Akubra had also produced two million hats for the military[196].

As at 2014, Akubra hats were being sold in nineteen countries and exports accounted for 10% of its production. The company's success in surviving the ups and down of business cycles is due in part to prudent operating practices such as careful financial management and profit retention. The core values of the business have been passed on by family leaders from generation to generation: a family work culture, always giving priority to quality, maintaining good relations with customers and suppliers as well as good customer service. These values have enabled Akubra to become the dominant hat producer in Australia when others have folded[197].

B. Mountcastle and Sons Pty Ltd

Address: Originally George Street Sydney, currently 95-103 Hyde Road Yeronga, Brisbane.

Russell and Ray, hatters of Hobart

Benjamin Such Mountcastle (1806-1891) was born in London and worked in the hat trade there. He migrated to Sydney in April 1841[198], and immediately started working at the hat factory established in the 1835 by Alexander James Russell on the corner of George and Bridge Streets. Russell, his wife Helen and fellow hatter George Ray had arrived at Hobart in late 1833, bringing a large quantity of fancy drapery from England, which they advertised for sale in the newspaper in January 1834[199].

Russell and Ray dissolved their partnership in November 1834[200]. George Ray remained in Hobart and advertised his wares in the Hobart press for some time, but Alexander and Helen Russell moved to Sydney in 1835 and established a store on the corner of George and Bridge Streets[201]. Alexander Russell died in September 1838, aged 42[202], and the business was carried on by his widow. Trade must have been good, because in February 1839 she opened a second store in Market Street adjoining the Royal Victoria Theatre[203].

Benjamin Mountcastle worked for Helen Russell until October 1842 when he opened his own hat warehouse in George Street and began to advertise a select stock of hats, including military and navy caps[204].

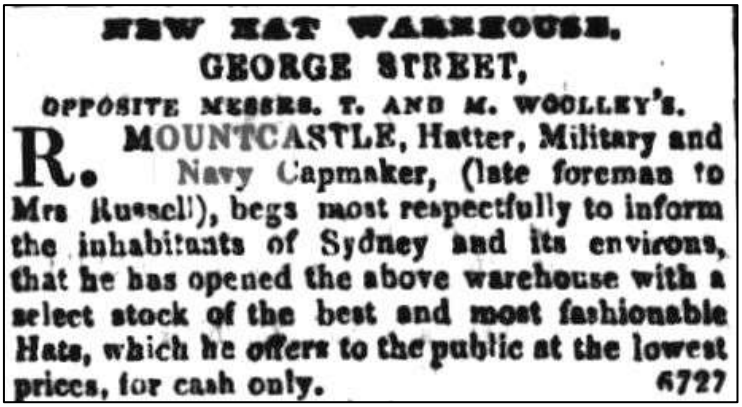
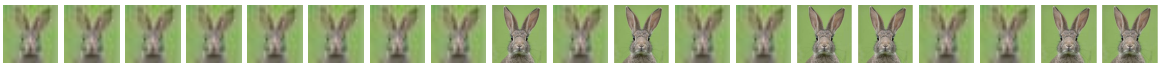

NEW HAT WAREHOUSE,
GEORGE STREET,
OPPOSITE MESSRS. T. AND M. WOOLLEY'S.
R. MOUNTCASTLE, Hatter, Military and Navy Capmaker, (late foreman to Mrs Russell), begs most respectfully to inform the inhabitants of Sydney and its environs, that he has opened the above warehouse with a select stock of the best and most fashionable Hats, which he offers to the public at the lowest prices, for cash only. 6727

Figure 35 Mountcastle opens for business (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Oct 1842)



A hat warehouse for the fashion conscious

By March 1843, Mountcastle was advertising his hattery as the London and Edinburgh Hat Warehouse[205]. In January 1844, he moved the business to 82 Pitt Street[206]. The colony suffered a severe economic depression in first half of the 1840s that caused the ruin of many businesses, and in May 1844 Mountcastle became insolvent[207]. The fittings and stock of his shop were offered at auction, although there was no hat-making equipment for sale. The hats on sale were black, drab and felt hats, cloth and velvet caps. The store address at the time was 258 Pitt Street[208].

But Mountcastle was quickly back on his feet, and in June 1844 was advertising a newly arrived batch of men's beaver hats at the London and Edinburgh Hat Warehouse. Also advertised were Paris, beaver and silk hats[209]. In August 1844, the business moved to 77 Market Street and was then called B. Mountcastle and Co, hat and cap makers[210].

By March 1846, Benjamin Mountcastle was specialising in manufacturing and selling French-style hats, calling the firm the French Hat Manufactory and advertising for hat trimmers and crown makers[211]. He was importing the material to make French hats, including beaver felt to make drab and black Shell hats[212] catering for the wealthier members of the colony (and those with ambitions to join them). A whimsical article in *Bell's Life in Sydney* in 1848 dispenses helpful advice to the socially-climbing Sydneysider, listing the requirements to attain notoriety in the fashionable world, and to be invited out every evening:

> "Point one is that it is indispensably requisite that you should dress uncommonly genteel, to effect which, you must patronise Dickinson's coats and trousers, Mountcastle's hats, Fletcher's boots, tie, and wonderfully hot-pressed cloths. The next point is to borrow your father's or uncle's horse, be sure to swear it is your own, and be seen galloping along the streets at a desperate rate, ignoring the children and nursemaids at the corners"[213].

Benjamin Mountcastle was long involved in musical pursuits, and in 1854 he helped establish the Sydney Philharmonic Society for the performance of vocal and instrumental music. Sydney music lovers were invited to join the Society, which was supported by annual subscriptions. Mountcastle was the treasurer[214]. The inaugural concert in August that year featured Haydn's Surprise Symphony, the Overture from the Marriage of Figaro, and the Largo Al Factotum from the Barber of Seville[215].

Mountcastle was also an enthusiastic advocate of temperance, and attended meetings of the Sydney Total Abstinence Society in 1854[216]. In Sydney and elsewhere, temperance societies were formed but broke up after a few months or years. The New South Wales Alliance for the Suppression of Intemperance was established in 1857 as yet another attempt to create a successful complete abstinence society[217]. Benjamin Mountcastle was closely involved in the formation of this group, he chaired fundraising soirees[218] and sold tickets for them in his George Street shop[219]. He was also involved in the campaign to construct a Temperance Hall in Pitt Street, and was present when the foundation stone was laid in July 1858[220]. A posthumous article on Mountcastle in 1920 mentioned that he was a cold water fanatic, and that anyone who bought a hat from him was presented with a temperance tract for their contemplation[221].

Alas, poor Ben! I knew him, Horatio

An unexpected experience for Benjamin Mountcastle was to be called as an expert witness in 1854 to help identify a skull claimed to be that of Ben Boyd (1801-1851). He was a Scottish-born

entrepreneur who arrived in New South Wales in July 1842 with grandiose plans to establish a system of coastal steamships travelling between the various colonial settlements, along with suitable harbours and coaling stations. He also established enormous pastoral rights over more than 2,500,000 acres in the Monaro and Riverina, all with the blessing of Governor Sir George Gipps.

But by 1846 Boyd had overreached himself in his investments and was in financial trouble. His own Royal Bank was exposed as largely a front to finance his ambitious schemes. In 1849, he cut his losses in New South Wales and sailed to the Californian goldfields to try his luck at the diggings. He was unsuccessful, and decided to cruise the Pacific and explore opportunities there. In October 1851, he disappeared in the Solomon Islands, and his body was never found. Rumours in 1854 that he was alive and still living there led to a search party being sent to Guadalcanal in the *Oberon,* led by Captain Lewis Truscott[222].

Truscott ascertained that Boyd was first taken prisoner and then executed in retribution for the large number of villagers killed by his departing crew. His head was cut off and his skull kept at a ceremonial house. Truscott decided to purchase the skull and take it back to Sydney. In Sydney, a meeting was held to discuss the claim that the skull was at one time attached to the body of the hapless Ben Boyd. Some doctors who knew Boyd thought that the skull, "though of a Caucasian adult male, was very small, whereas Boyd possessed a very large head like all Scotchmen, who physiologists knew to be a very large-headed race".

This was all fairly vague and stereotypical, but the clincher came when Benjamin Mountcastle informed the assembled worthies that he had frequently supplied Ben Boyd with hats, and that he was a large-sized 7 3/8 inches. The skull before them was much smaller than this, so the meeting concluded that the skull before them was not that of Ben Boyd[223].

Figure 36 Mountcastle's hats, 1895 (*The Bulletin*, 15 June 1895)

B. Mountcastle and Sons Ltd

By 1861, Mountcastle had two shops in the city, at 319 George Street and 64 Market Street, which he advertised as the Australian Hat Warehouse[224]. Having a well-established hat business by this time, he was able to spend more time on his two main interests: music and temperance. He was by then on the committee of the Sydney Philharmonic Society[225]. In 1864, became an officer of the Sons of Temperance[226], and by 1870 was one of two joint secretaries of the New South Wales Alliance for the Suppression of Intemperance[227].

In 1885, Benjamin's son Sidney and Joseph D'Arcy Quaid (c1856-1938) travelled to Brisbane to establish a branch of the business there[228], to be managed by Quaid. In 1886, they advertised themselves as B. Mountcastle and Sons of Sydney with a store at 57 Queen Street, Brisbane[229]. Benjamin Mountcastle died at his residence in St Leonards in April 1891[230], fifty years to the day after his arrival in Sydney. His sons took over the company and operated it in Sydney and Brisbane for some years.

A long article in the venerable *Sydney Stock and Station Journal* in December 1899 provides a good description of the company's activities at this time. The Tropo helmet (a variation on the pith helmet), first advertised in the same journal in April 1896, was first manufactured by Mountcastle, and was popular enough to be widely imitated by then. The real thing (Mountcastle's) is sun and rain proof, but cheap imitations (the English models) were made of brown paper and wouldn't stand up to Australian weather. The firm was especially strong in silk hats of several brands, and also sold a great assortment of straw hats: gents' boaters, panama straws, pedal straws, and other styles[231].

Figure 37 The Tropo helmet, 1899 (Sydney *Stock & Station Journal*, 15 December 1899)

By 1904, the firm was beginning to make headwear for the Postmaster-General's Department[232] and for the military forces[233], as described in an earlier section. The last advertisement for their Sydney store at 299 George Street was in February 1907[234], so the complete operations must have been moved north of the border after that. By 1913, the office and business premises were in Kent's buildings in Albert Street Brisbane and the factory was in Musgrave Road, Red Hill[235].

Mountcastle and Sons devoted most of its attention in the years leading up to World War I to making headwear for the military and official services[236]. After World War I, the firm responded to the large post-war price increases in fur felt hats by offering a restoration service for old hats. The company claimed that their special department that dealt with blocking, cleaning and retrimming of pre-loved hats of good quality could restore felt hats to as-new condition[237].

When the Brisbane store moved from Albert Street to the Inns of Court building in Adelaide Street in 1924, an article in the *Brisbane Telegraph* referred to them as "hat manufacturers and bullion and silk embroiderers". The newspaper thought there was no other instance in the nation of a single family name being connected with an existing business for over a century[238].

B Mountcastle and Sons still operates in Brisbane today, and is (along with Akubra) one of two manufacturers of the army's slouch hat. As at 2012, Mountcastle was importing the slouch hat felt shells from the Czech Republic. The firm is regarded as the second oldest registered company in Australia[239]. Australia Post is considered to be the oldest still-running Australian company, having been established in 1809 in New South Wales with just one man (the emancipist Isaac Nichols) sorting incoming mail in his home[240].

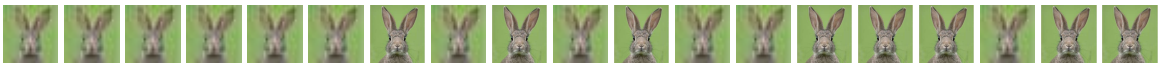
J. Bardsley and Sons Ltd

Address: 111 Moore St, Leichhardt.

John and Hannah Bardsley grew up in Stockport, Cheshire, one of the early centres of fur felt hat manufacture in England. When they were both aged 24 they migrated in Sydney, arriving in November 1881 in the immigrant ship *Northampto*n. John was recorded in the passenger list as a gardener, born in Lancashire[241]. They travelled to Melbourne, where they settled and worked for some years before moving to Adelaide in about 1890.

Figure 38 Bardsley's hat factory (Woodwind Group Ltd)

The Bardsley family moved back to Sydney and in 1905 established a hat factory in an old tobacco factory in Short Street, Leichhardt. The building had been owned by John Henry Mayer, tobacco manufacturer[242]. Mayer occupied the Short Street factory from about 1894[243] until putting the business up for sale in 1903 due to his continuing ill health[244].



In 1909 John Bardsley constructed a new factory in Leichhardt at 111 Moore Street[245] and operated his hat manufacturing business there for many years, trading as John Bardsley and Sons Pty Ltd. Later, his sons George B. and J. Ralph Bardsley took over from the founder and the factory building was extended[246]. In December 1912, the company won a contract to supply 5,000 hats for the citizen military forces[247]. The business must have grown rapidly, because during World War I Bardsley fulfilled a very large order of 43,210 slouch hats for the Defence Department[248].

By 1938, Bardsley was one of the big four hat makers in Sydney (the others being the United Felt Hat Company Co, R. C. Henderson Ltd and the Dunkerley Hat Mills Ltd) that, along with the Denton Hat Mills in Melbourne, made up 85% of the nation's hat production at the time[249]. In 1941, the firm had opened an extension of the factory in Moore Street[250]. Online heritage stores still sell slouch hats manufactured by John Bardsley and Sons as recently as 1991 (some reportedly manufactured in Picton)[251].

The firm does not operate today: the website Creditor Watch records that John Bardsley and Sons Pty Ltd was originally registered in New South Wales in September 1909 and deregistered in July 1991[252]. It seems that the company did not operate a retail outlet, because it never advertised in the newspapers, so it must have sold all their products to wholesalers. Ironically, while Bardsley did not market its products directly to the public when it was in business, its pre-loved slouch hats are now being advertised to the world on sales websites such as eBay and the Albion Antique Auction Centre.

Nowadays the ground floor of the building is occupied by Flute Tree and the Woodwind Group Pty Ltd. This is the first flute specialist company in Australia and was started in the late 1970s by John Lehner. He started the company in his own name to repair and retail quality instruments at every flute level. Later he established Flute Makers of Australia to handcraft flutes and flute head joints[253].

R. C. Henderson Pty Ltd

Address: 7-9 and 11-13 Randle Street, Surry Hills and 1-11 Hayes Road, Rosebery.

Fashionable ladies' hats

Rolla Crosby Henderson (1879-1949) was born in Sydney in April 1879, son of Charles Alfred (1850-1945) and Frances Ann[254]. Rolla acquired an interest in hats when he was employed in a warehouse that stocked them, and was later a hat salesman before moving into manufacturing[255]. His first hat factory in 1904 was in the Wynyard Building at Wynyard Square[256].

In March 1905, Henderson moved to a factory at 189 Clarence Street[257] and was soon making straw hats and chiffon hats[258]. By October, his factory was located at 50 York Street[259], and in January 1908 it moved to Barlow Street, opposite Central Station[260]. In late 1909, Henderson was advertising for a "smart young lady with inventive ideas to design distinctive millinery styles"[261], so by then he was exploring the creative side of ladies' fashion.

Rolla Henderson had always run the family hat-making business from its commencement in 1904, while his father Charles seemed to have just a titular role. In October 1909, the partnership was formally dissolved and Rolla managed the firm of R. C. Henderson Ltd by himself[262]. In March 1910, he advertised for hat trimmers and improvers for a new factory in Parker Street, Haymarket[263].

A large-scale hat factory

The area around Randle Street in Surry Hills was developed with terraced housing in the 1880s. But much of this was resumed by the State Government in November 1901 and completely demolished as part of the large project to construct Central Station. After the buildings were cleared, Randle Lane was formed, Randle Street was realigned and the cleared land was re-subdivided into industrial-sized lots. The land reverted to the Crown and all previous titles were extinguished. The resumed land in Randle Street was offered for sale by the State Government in May 1904.

The precinct had been predominantly residential prior to the 1901 resumption, but development after 1904 was commercial. The opening of the new Central Station in 1906 revitalised the southern fringe of the city, as commuters changed from a train to a tram for their final destination in the city and elsewhere, and there were commercial opportunities for shops, theatres and eating places. Many of these opened around the station, especially to the north and south along George Street[264].

This included many old retailers, who invested heavily in new buildings in the vicinity: Grace Brothers in Broadway (1904), Anthony Hordern at Brickfield Hill (1905), Marcus Clark (now the TAFE Ultimo campus) in George Street (1906), and Mark Foy's in Liverpool Street (1908)[265]. This in turn presented retail opportunities for millinery firms, and new factories were constructed nearby[266].

Figure 39 Henderson Hats behind the Dental Hospital, 1940s (COS Archives)

In the 1910s, R. C. Henderson Ltd was doing a very good trade and employing about 150 workers, about 144 of them women[267]. Business increased 35% from 1910 to 1912, although the firm was not making a profit due to having to match the cost of cheaper imported hats. In later years, reimposition of tariffs on imported hats helped the local manufacturer to eventually make a profit[268].

In 1912, Rolla Henderson was ready to expand the business, and put the two-storey Parker Street hat factory up for sale[269], although he was still hiring tweed and leather hat makers there in March

1913[270]. Meanwhile Charles Henderson purchased the land at 11-13 Randle Street from the contractor William Gulliver in April 1910[271].

The firm submitted a development application to Sydney Council in May 1912 to erect a large six-storey factory building plus basement[272] and construction commenced. The building is a good example of a multi-storey warehouse-style factory from the Federation period. The design differs markedly from the later single-storey sawtooth-roofed factories of the inter-war and post-war periods located in southern Sydney. Evidence of the original painted letter signage remains at the top level[273].

Figure 40 Henderson advert, 1946 (*Australian Women's Weekly*, 9 March 1946)

The large scale of the building reflects the success of this firm and the Sydney millinery industry during the early twentieth century, when hats were an important part of women's attire[274]. In May 1913, R. C. Henderson Ltd was registered as a company in New South Wales with £20,000 in £1 shares to finance the construction of the Randle Street factory and to continue trading as hat and millinery manufacturers. The company directors were Rollo Crosby Henderson and his parents Charles and Frances[275].

From 1913, the firm was importing cases of straw plait for making straw hats[276]. In 1914, R. C. Henderson was one of twenty straw hat manufacturers in Sydney, but seemed to dominate the national market for fashionable women's hats. This was a difficult market because the hats had to be kept up to date with contemporary styling, which changed frequently, and a local manufacturer needed to respond accordingly[277].

Expanding the hat business

In February 1920, the Rosebery Dyeing and Bleaching Works Ltd was started by R. C. Henderson in a newly constructed building at 1-11 Hayes Road Rosebery. This was a dye works and felt mill for the dyeing and bleaching of straw hats. All the locally-made fabric and materials were manufactured there[278].

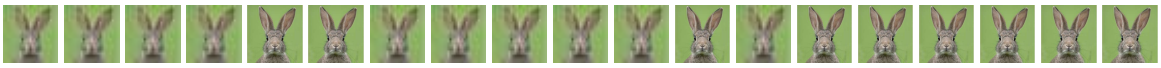
An article in *The Sun* in May 1921 mentioned that by then the firm employed about 200 workers, who were kept in constant work. From the factory in Randle Street hats were sent to the smallest bush stores as well as the smartest millinery showrooms in the cities of Australia and New Zealand. In the near future, the brand would be established in the markets of South Africa and the East. All materials were being imported (except gelatine and flowers), including straw braids, wire, ribbon, velvet, silk and other fabrics. A few years earlier the low rate of duty on imported millinery produced regular periods of unemployment, but by 1921 the demand was exceeding the supply[279].

Figure 41 Henderson dyeing works Rosebery, 1968 (State Library of NSW)

In August 1927, the company's young chemist Roland Barford died in the Rosebery factory after accidentally drinking a glass of potassium cyanide[280]. This incident is described in more detail in the section on poisonous dyes in the hat industry. To expand the business further, in 1927 R. C. Henderson purchased the adjacent three-storey building at 7-9 Randle Street. The land for this building had been purchased from the government in Jun 1907 by the Anglican clergyman the Reverend Hoo Soo Ten. He constructed a factory building which was completed in 1908. The first tenant was Go Kee Brothers, cabinet and furniture makers[281].

Reverend Ten sold the building in 1920 to a saddlery and leather good manufacturer[282]. Other companies owned the building for short periods until it was damaged by a large fire at a nearby printing works in July 1927[283]. Henderson purchased the building cheaply and repaired the fire damage. By 1933, the 7-9 Randle Street building was Henderson's showroom and an extension to its main factory next door, used as a hat block moulding workroom[284].

In the 1930s the company sent its designers overseas to study and copy the latest fashions, which were then introduced to the Australian market[285]. But Henderson's did not aim at the top end of the market, and their slogan was "Henderson's hats for the thrifty"[286]. By 1940, Henderson was making felt hats, panama hats and straw hats as well as ladies' millinery[287]. Their hats were made from Australian wool felt and sold under the brand name Platypus[288].



During World War II, the company offered a reduced range of hats by mutual agreement[289]. R. C. Henderson was one of the three large hat makers (along with Dunkerley Hat Mills and Bardsley and Sons Ltd) who supplied the Army with slouch hats between 1940[290] and 1945[291].

The end of an era

During the war, no apprentices were taken on, resulting in a skilled labour shortage after 1945, as well as a general shortage of unskilled labour[292]. The company's post-war problems were compounded by the sudden death in 1949 of its founder, Rolla Henderson, aged 70. He was visiting his farm at Mittagong when he suffered a heart attack on the steps of the Bowral Post Office[293].

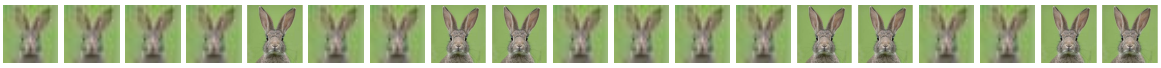
He left an estate of £107,531 (about $6.4 million today)[294] to his wife and children, including property at Bowral and Darling Point. His will contained a couple of very unusual stipulations: that his children should not come into contact with nursemaids, attendants or others employed to care for them unless they were British or Australian born, and that none of his children were to leave New South Wales until they were adults. He also directed that his children continue to be educated at school, as he disapproved of tutors and governesses. At the time of his death, the children were Rolla Charles 21, Elizabeth Frances 19 and James Frederick 16[295].

Henderson's will had been made in 1947, and the reasons he gave for the restrictions on this children were that because of his pride in his Australian birth, parentage and his country, he did not want his children to become foreigners or be imbued with foreign ideas[296]. Apart from this rather xenophobic attitude imposed on his children for a few years, Rolla Henderson's life was widely admired as one of the outstanding success stories of Australian commerce. He started his career virtually from scratch, scaled the heights of his field of enterprise and made a large fortune. He shunned ostentation, and went about his business entirely unaffected by wealth he had amassed[297].

In November 1950, R. C. Henderson Ltd became a public company[298]. The sale of shares helped pay the death duties on Henderson's deceased estate[299], which amounted to £54,000, about half the value of the estate[300]. The large hat manufacturing business started by Rolla Henderson in 1904 only survived his death by a few years. In 1952, the firm made a loss of £18,369, made a small profit of £1,964 in 1953, and then suffered a crippling loss of £33,359 for the year to May 31, 1954[301]. These financial problems were consistent with the contraction of the hat industry after World War II as hat-wearing became less popular. The company was placed into receivership by its creditor the Bank of New South Wales at the end of 1954[302], but were able to continue trading for a few years.

The main building at 11-13 Randle Street was sold to B. B. and B. Ltd in April 1957[303], and the adjacent 7-9 Randle Street sold to the same company in Jun 1958. A variety of clothing manufacturers leased the building during the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Burke Clothing Coy and Eva Dery Fashions[304]. In October 1978, both buildings were transferred to Hanave Investments Pty Ltd[305].

Hanave is a provider of accommodation services, and in 2016 it applied to the City of Sydney Council to convert three buildings 7-9, 11-13 and 15 Randle Street to a hotel[306]. The proposed hotel, containing 114 rooms, has been designed by architects Tonkin Zulaikha Greer and will add two stories to the building[307].



Union Hat Mills Ltd (later United Felt Hats Ltd)

Address: 193 Phillip Street corner of Young Streets, Waterloo.

Union Hat Mills in Melbourne

Henry Langley was born in 1858 in Stockport, Cheshire, one of the great felt hat-making centres in nineteenth century England. He married Hannah, who was a hat trimmer and also from Stockport[308]. It is not known when he migrated to Australia, or when he began to manufacture hats, but in April 1895 *The Age* published an announcement that Henry Langley and Charles Hoelter were dissolving their partnership as the Union Hat Mills, and that Langley would continue the business alone[309].

The hat factory was located at 90 (later 84) Amess Street, North Carlton[310]. It was advertised for sale in March 1903[311] when Langley planned to expand his business into Sydney. But it was not closed for long, and reopened in mid-1905[312], managed by Arthur Langley[313].

Expanding to Sydney

In November 1903, Henry Langley and Charles Anderson combined their hat making companies, Langley's Union Hat Mills in North Carlton and Anderson's Sydney Hat Manufacturing Company in Surry Hills into a limited company called Charles Anderson and Company Ltd. Capital of £50,000 was raised by selling shares to finance the construction of Langley's Sydney factory[314].

In September 1908, Langley leased premises in Holt's Place, Elizabeth Street, where he planned to install hat making machinery that was on its way from England. Some 200 to 300 workers would be employed in a new factory, which he expected to be in full swing by January 1909. Felt hats and hard hats would be the chief output, using the best rabbit skins. His hat factory in Melbourne was employing over 300 workers at the time[315]. The Union Hat Mills commenced operation at 482 Elizabeth Street in 1910[316], which must have been a temporary location, because later that year the Union Hat Mills was advertising for staff in a large building on the corner of Phillip and Young Street, Waterloo[317].

Langley told a Labour Commission in July 1911 that he erected the Sydney factory the previous year for £40,000, but had been short of labour since then. The machinery he installed was capable of turning out 700 dozen hats a week, but his output in 1911 was only one-third of that[318].

At an Interstate Commission into clothing prices in July 1918, Langley said that he was employing about 250 workers at his Waterloo factory. He was making more hats than before the war, but at a lower profit because the Government was purchasing the contracted hats at a fixed profit of 10%. His business partner Charles Anderson told the Commission that he employed 500 workers, and also experienced a turndown in profits since the war started, despite the increased amount of work. Anderson pointed out that in 1917 the Government commandeered the whole of the rabbit skin market and sold them to manufacturers at a set price[319].

Joining United Felt Hats Ltd

It was reported in April 1926 that Langley and the felt hatting part of Anderson's businesses would be joining United Felt Hat Company Ltd, which was formed in Melbourne the previous year to improve the position of the local hat manufacturing industry in the face of cheaper imports[320]. Henry Langley's Waterloo factory had closed by October 1926 and Palmer's hat shop in Park Street advertised Langley's unsold hats[321]. The factory's machinery was advertised for sale in 1929[322].

Meanwhile, the Melbourne factory of the Union Hat Mills continued to operate, and by 1932 William and Arthur Langley were the proprietors[323].

A heart-warming story of connections across the seas was reported in the Melbourne *Herald* in August 1946 involving a girl who worked in a Manchester hat factory some years earlier. She made silk braid, which she wound onto reels and sent to the Union Hat Mills in Melbourne, to be used for making the tiny bows inside men's hats. One day, she decided on a whim to write her name and address on one of the reels before dispatching it to Melbourne.

The Melbourne hat workers kept the reel, and when they were sending post-war food parcels to Britain they remembered it, and decided to send a parcel of scarce delicacies and a note to the address on the reel. By then the girl had moved house and was working in an aircraft factory, but a relative whose home had been bombed was living at the girl's former address and forwarded the parcel to her. In her letter of thanks, the girl mentioned that she had been preparing for her wedding and told her mother she wished she had some candied peel for the wedding cake. The parcel arrived from Australia a week later, and to her delight and amazement it included candied peel[324].

The Union Hat Mills was still in operation in North Carlton in April 1951 when it was contracted to produce khaki hats for the Government[325].

Jones Bros Pty Ltd

Address: 111-113 Campbell Street, corner of Smith Street.

A steel-making family

Joseph Benyon Jones (c1851-1923) arrived in Australia in 1900 with his wife Margaret and eleven children[326]. His Welsh family had worked in the iron manufacturing business for generations[327], and he had been contracted by William Sandford of the Eskbank Ironworks at Lithgow to help install the first open hearth steel furnace in the country. The parts for the furnace had been sent out from Britain in a number of batches, and they were assembled and the furnace opened at the end of April. This allowed scrap metal from all over the country to be melted down and rolled out in a steel mill for other uses[328].

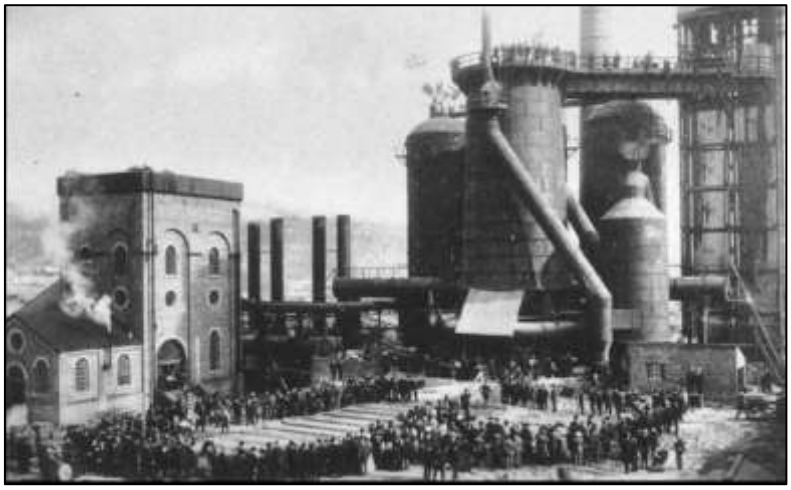
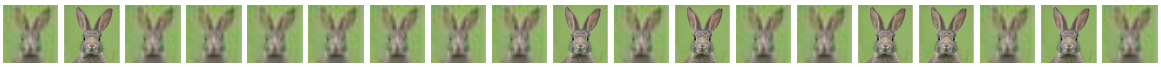


Figure 42 Opening of Eskbank blast furnace, 1900 (Lithgow.com website)



Sandford was expanding his ironworks in anticipation of greater opportunities in the industry after Federation. This was the first time steel had been made on a commercial scale in the Australian colonies, despite the Bessemer process being used in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. This process was the first inexpensive industrial-scale method for the mass production of steel from molten pig iron, and was invented by the Englishman Henry Bessemer in 1856. Bessemer later said that his invention was inspired by a conversation with Napoleon III who told him he needed steel rather than iron for better artillery.

Until then, steel was only affordable for small items, so Bessemer resolved to find a way to produce it in massive quantities. The method took him and other inventors some years to become usable, because of the difficulty in controlling the amount of carbon left in the iron and the sensitivity to nitrogen in the air. When it had been perfected, the Bessemer process revolutionised steel production and helped to kick-start the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the United States, partly because railways could be expanded into remote parts, leading to new settlements and new markets. Steel rails lasted ten times longer than iron rails.

The open hearth furnace (the type imported to Australia in 1900) was first developed by German engineer Carl Wilhelm Siemens in the 1850s. It improved on the Bessemer process by not exposing the steel to excessive nitrogen, thus avoiding brittleness in the steel. Oxidation to decarbonise the pig iron is instead achieved by the oxygen in iron oxide (rust) and other impurities, rather than by blowing air (which is 78% nitrogen) through the furnace. The French engineer Pierre-Emile Martin licensed the furnace from Siemens in 1865 and successfully used it to produce steel, so it is now known as the Siemens-Martin process. It is much slower than the Bessemer process, which means it is easier to control and sample for quality assessment, and the process can be terminated once the required amount of carbon has been achieved in the molten steel (normally less than 1%).

A modest start to hat making

One of the Jones sons, Joseph Gordon (always referred to as J. Gordon in the press) started work in a store in Sydney, but was more interested in manufacturing. One day, while he and his brother Rowland were operating a business as manufacturers' agents, he visited a small hat factory in Riley Street, Surry Hills that was struggling. Curious about how hat making was done, he decided that it was an industry he could do well in, so he decided to purchase the company[329]. This hat-making firm had been established by Laurence McGee in 1914 in two cottages at 297-299 Riley Street, Surry Hills[330] on the former Enterprise Confectionery Company site[331]. But it was not a success, and by March 1915[332] it had become J. R. Jones and Co and was advertising for milliners and hat improvers[333].

The "J. R." in the company name was presumably Joseph Gordon's brother John Rowland. Gradually the business expanded and the two other brothers joined the firm, Ebenezer Benyon and William Richard. Ebenezer had been working on the land at Ulmarra, and William was working for a newspaper after serving in the Army during World War I[334]. In January 1920, the four brothers changed the company name to Jones Bros Ltd and raised £25,000 in £1 shares. Their father Joseph Benyon Jones was also an investor in the company[335].

The firm began operations as a wholesale manufacturer, selling its products to retailers[336], and manufacturing straw, velvet and silk hats[337]. In October 1923, their father Joseph died at Moree,

aged 72[338]. Jones Bros Ltd was thought to be the first company to reduce its working week to 38¾ hours in 1924[339].

The biggest in the Empire

By early 1924, the Jones brothers had outgrown their small premises in Riley Street, and a large factory building was erected on the corner of Campbell and Smith Streets in Surry Hills, with 40,000 square feet of floor space[340]. By then, Gordon Jones was the managing director and the public face of the business. He gave evidence before a Tariff Board inquiry into imported hats in June 1934 to say that the millinery manufacturing industry was in grave danger from Japanese and other low wage countries if import duties were lowered (echoing what all his fellow hatters were saying)[341].

Figure 43 Jones Bros Ltd, 1929 (City of Sydney Archives)

In about 1928, Jones Bros Ltd imported machinery to make knitted woollen berets, which were then very popular. But headwear fashions are fickle, and when the demand for berets faded, the brothers wondered what to do with the imported plant. Experiments were carried out with the knitted woollen shape from which berets were made, and it was found that with certain adjustments to the equipment the same process could be used to manufacture felt hats for both men and women.

This opened up the possibility of using a knitted shape as the base for a felt hat, instead of the traditional thick felt sheet or "slab", which was a revolutionary idea. Equipment was devised which produced a felt of superior wearing quality, with the basic texture of woven wool, and required only three processes compared to the eleven of the old method. Instead of working on an article over four or five days, each hat was completed in one day and produced a better hat. This new process of felt manufacture was patented in nearly all manufacturing countries, revolutionising the slow and tedious process of felt making.

In the early 1920s, women's hats were mainly made of straw imported from Europe and the East, but the research into the utilisation of wool in hat making resulted in striking changes in the whole

industry. Orders of five tons of Australian-spun wool yarn at a time were being placed to meet the new demand.

Jones Bros Ltd was the first hat manufacturer in the industry to maintain its own analytical chemists, and constant research yielded improvements in the manufacturing method and the final product. An additional discovery was that rabbit fur could be woven into thread and so could be made into hats by the same simplified process as wool. The Jones brothers invested heavily in inducing British spinners to experiment with rabbit fur, and the first supplies of rabbit yarn were eventually sent to Australia. By 1940, Jones Bros Ltd was reportedly the largest hat manufacturer in the Empire[342].

Figure 44 J. Gordon Jones, 1940 *(Yass Courier*, 18 April 1940)

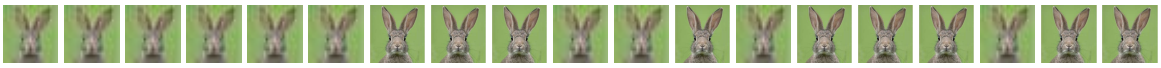
Taking over the block

The 1949 City of Sydney Building Surveyors Map of Surry Hills shows that the hat factory occupied some 60% of the northern part of the block bounded by Campbell Street, Batman Lane, Reservoir Street and Smith Street[343]. The southern part of the block was occupied by terrace housing and the Surry Hills Hotel on the south-east corner. This hotel was constructed in 1877[344] by Gerald Heavey (Reservoir Street was called Gipps Street at this time). It remained in the Hervey family until the late 1930s[345].

The pub's life seemed to be fairly uneventful until November 1920 when the Licences Reduction Board cancelled its licence[346]. The establishment of this board was a result of pressure on the New South Wales Government by the powerful temperance movement to clamp down on the excessive number of hotels when other methods like local option referendums had failed.

The fatal flaw with referendums was that when voters were given the choice of keeping the same number of hotels, fewer hotels or none at all, the districts deemed (by the temperance movement) to have too many pubs always voted to keep all of them. Of the 62 hotels operating in Surry Hills in 1920, 25 (that is, 40%) were closed down by 1924. Most of the former hotel buildings are still standing, but none ever regained a liquor licence. The majority accepted their fate and soon became boarding houses or a mixture of retail and residential use[347].

Jones Bros Ltd purchased the former pub building between 1945[348] and 1948[349] and set about acquiring all the residences in the block. The brothers leased the building to the Brisby Furnishing Co



Pty Ltd in the early 1950s[350]. Then in 1955 the old buildings were demolished and the hat factory was extended to Reservoir Street, occupying the whole block in a development that cost £350,000[351].

J. Gordon Jones died in July 1959 at the family home "Pen-Y-Craig" in Rae Street Randwick[352]. Despite the ambitious expansion in 1955, the firm seemed to suffer from the downturn in hat-wearing at this time, and closed in the early 1960s. So a family born into the iron manufacturing tradition of their Welsh ancestors decided on a change of direction in Australia, moving into a field they knew absolutely nothing about, and succeeding in pioneering a great new industry[353].

In the mid-1960s, the Criminal Investigation Bureau of the New South Wales Police moved into the old hat factory. Then in 1999, 105-113 Campbell Street was converted to a block of 139 New York-style apartments, known as The Carlisle. The former hotel site is now a park, the Reservoir Street Reserve, managed by the City of Sydney Council[354].

Not so large hat factories

Australuton Straw Hat Factory Ltd

Address: 19-23 Dixon Street, then 111-113 Foveaux Street Surry Hills

A partnership of high achievers

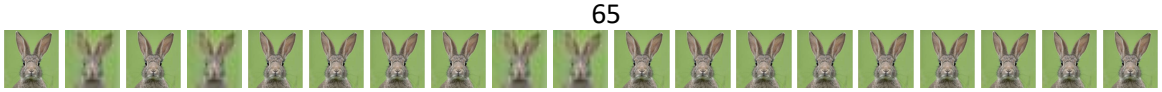
The Australuton Straw Hat Factory Ltd was established in 1910 by Jacob Fotheringham (1865-1924), Oswald George Henry Merrett (1883-1925) and their sons[355] in a factory at 19-23 Dixon St in the city[356]. They operated under the business name of Fotheringham and Merrett Pty Ltd[357].

Jacob Fotheringham was born in Ballarat[358] and moved to Footscray in Melbourne with his family as a boy. In about 1898, he opened a straw hat factory for his firm at Collingwood[359]. In June 1901 he was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly as the Member for Footscray[360]. In his spare time, he served as the secretary of the Victorian Football Association[361]. His job frequently took him to Sydney, where he had taken charge of the millinery department of Messrs W. and A. McArthur Ltd[362]. He resigned his seat in the Victorian parliament in May 1902 after acknowledging that as he was living in Sydney he could no longer serve his constituents[363].

Oswald Merrett grew up in the Sydney beachside suburb of Manly, and was a leader in amateur sport, especially swimming, surfing and surf-lifesaving. He became the honorary secretary of the Australian Olympic Federation, and vice-president of the New South Wales Olympic Council[364]. Their straw hat business must have been doing well, because in December 1911 they began the erection of a four-storey factory at 111-113 Foveaux Street, Surry Hills[365]. Provision was made to waterproof the first floor, where the hats would be pressed by hydraulic power[366].

Big ambitions in Surry Hills

The smaller Dixon Street factory was in use until June 1912[367] and the new Foveaux Street premises commenced operation the next month[368]. Fotheringham and Merrett Ltd also opened a small millinery warehouse on the ground floor of a five-storey building at 36 York Street in July 1913[369]. A fire broke out in the upper floors of this building the next month, occupied by Mr F. H. Read, a hat, cap and umbrella maker. His three floors were badly damaged, but Fotheringham and Merrett only suffered some water damage[370].



However, worse was to come the next year when the entire Foveaux Street factory was completely gutted by a very large fire in February 1914. The efforts of firemen were hampered by poor water pressure in the local area until water was diverted from other mains to the fire zone. More than 40 workers were employed in the factory at the time. The top floor contained over £1,000 worth of finished hats, the second was occupied by the ironing machines, the first by the blocking and forming rooms and the ground floor contained the offices and the plait stock[371].

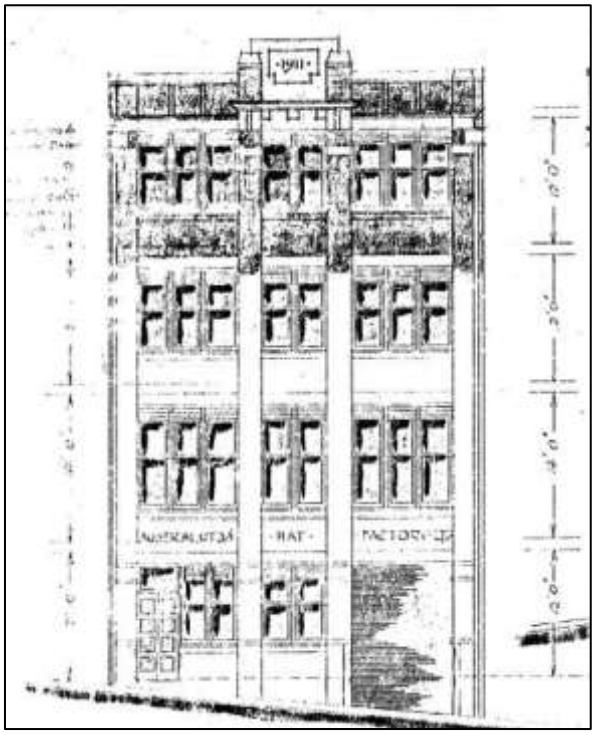


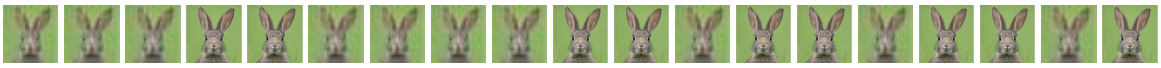
Figure 45 Australuton Hat Factory, 1914 (City of Sydney Archives)

The fire was a major financial setback for the firm, as Jacob Fotheringham estimated the damage at some £20,000 or more, and admitted they were only insured for £14,000[372]. One aspect of the fire that generated some interest in the press was the fire-resistant qualities of the interior ironbark timber. Despite the entire contents of the building being reduced to a smoking ruin of ashes and twisted metal, the pillars and rafters were only scorched, which was hailed as a triumph for Australian hardwood. In addition, the wire-netted glass windows did not even crack in the inferno[373].

The Australuton Straw Hat Factory established temporary premises on the corner of Carlton and O'Connor Streets, Chippendale while the Foveaux Street factory was being repaired[374]. By July 1914, the factory was again in use[375]. The same year, Oswald Merrett told the Interstate Tariff Commission into the condition of the straw hat industry that he favoured an increase in import duty on hats made of straw, velvet, silk and satin (presumably that was his factory's range)[376]. In August, the firm claimed in an advertisement that it paid the highest wages in the hat trade[377].

The impact of war

World War I impacted the firm of Fotheringham and Merrett, as it did the whole nation in one way or another. When recruitment for the Army slowed in the second half of the war (possibly as a result of reports coming back of the horrendous casualty rate on the Western Front), organisations such as



the Win the War League were formed to organise recruitment drives to find reinforcements for the Front. A branch of the League was formed at the Australuton Straw Hat Factory in July 1917[378].

But the most dramatic impact on the firm was an incident in February 1917 when Jacob Fotheringham was traveling on the mail steamer *RMS Laconia* from New York to England. Late one evening in the Irish Sea, the ship was torpedoed in the rear by a German submarine. Passengers and crew were quickly loaded into lifeboats and put off the damaged ship. A second torpedo hit the ship, but all the survivors had been off-loaded before the ship sank 45 minutes after the first hit. There were 73 passengers and 216 crew on board.

Fotheringham found himself with 21 other passengers and crew completely drenched in high seas on a cold night in a damaged lifeboat that was slowly taking in water, a terrible and frightening experience for them all. Half a dozen of his companions died from exposure before the others were rescued at dawn, ten hours after leaving the *Laconia*[379]. The ship's wireless operator had contacted the Admiralty as soon as the attack occurred, and three British patrol ships were sent out, including the *Crocus,* which found Fotheringham's lifeboat. The survivors were taken to Bantry Bay in Ireland, then to London. Fotheringham returned to Sydney in June via the United States and Canada[380].

The sinking of the *Laconia*, coming two years after the sinking of its sister ship the *RMS Lusitania*, contributed to the entry of the United States into World War I. On board the *Laconia* was the *Chicago Tribune* journalist Floyd Gibbons, who wrote a graphic account of the incident that was read aloud on the floor of the United States Congress, and helped crystallise American opinion that Germany had committed an overt act of war. The previously neutral America entered the War five weeks later[381].

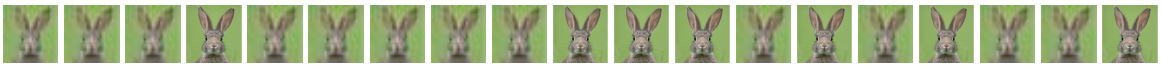
The wartime conditions for the straw hat trade had not been good when Jacob Fotheringham gave evidence before the Interstate Commission into the price of straw hats in July 1918. He said that he was then employing 110 workers, considerably more than before the war, but his overall rate of profit had decreased, even though his output had increased[382].

Fotheringham told the Commissioners that between 1913 and 1915 it was impossible to manufacture straw boater hats, his largest line, for less than 30/- per dozen. But they were sold to the wholesale trade for 28/- a dozen, then retailed to the public for 4/6 each (that is, 45/- a dozen), a profit of 93% for the warehouseman and retailer, while he lost 2/-[383]. This loss was a result of the high rate of internal competition, while Sydney hat makers were also up against tariff-protected Melbourne manufacturers[384].

The partners go their separate ways

The partnership of Fotheringham and Merrett was formally dissolved in July 1920[385], and the two men continued in the hat trade separately. Oswald Merrett remained at 111-113 Foveaux Street and 36 York Street as the firm Merrett's Ltd[386], while Jacob Fotheringham established a two-storey hat factory at 578 Harris Street in Ultimo, near the Sydney Technical College, and advertised for a range of workers[387], calling the firm J. Fotheringham and Sons Ltd. He also set up a factory in the ground floor of 433 Kent Street in the city in late 1920[388].

In June 1921, the Harris Street factory of Fotheringham and Sons was completely burnt out. The firm was re-established at 73-75 George Street in Redfern the next month[389]. Then in early June 1924, the



business suffered yet another disastrous fire at the George Street factory, causing considerable damage[390]. Jacob Fotheringham died at his Mosman home the same month, aged 58. The incident on the high seas in 1917 affected his health, and he never fully recovered from the effects of the exposure he suffered[391].

After the fire, Fotheringham's was back in business at 73-75 George Street by October 1924 and advertising for staff[392]. In April the following year, Oswald Merrett also died at the young age of 41. Apart from being managing director of Merrett's Ltd, his other great achievement was as the manager of the Australian Olympic team at the Paris Olympic Games in July 1924. At these games, the Sydney swimming champion Andrew "Boy" Charlton won the gold medal for the 1500 metres, as well as a silver and bronze medal in other events. Much of the success of the team was attributed to Merrett's management[393].

In March 1927, Jacob's son Lyndsay Gordon Fotheringham raised capital of £5,000 to create a new company L. G. Fotheringham Ltd to manufacture hats, caps and helmets[394]. The new firm established a factory at 348 Oxford Street, Bondi Junction, and advertised for machinists in the straw hat trade[395]. Unfortunately, Lyndsay Fotheringham died in October 1928 at age 36. He had served in the Australian Army in New Guinea in the early part of World War I, then in France with the 5th Machine Gun Company of the Australian Imperial Force[396], where he was wounded twice[397].

L. G. Fotheringham Ltd ran at a loss during the Great Depression from 1929, and the members of the company decided to voluntarily wind up the firm in September 1930[398] due to its liabilities. Merrett's Ltd, on the other hand, did well during a craze for straw panama hats and boaters in 1932, prompting them to put on an extra sixty staff, according to the manager Eric Leslie Merrett. Mr A. S. Thurlow of Akubra also said they also put on additional staff to handle the big business in straw hats at the time[399]. Merrett's continued making hats in Foveaux Street until the 1940s, suffering an inevitable fire along the way in March 1934[400] when 100 women were working there, until the partnership was finally dissolved in December 1944[401].

Since the 1940s, the original Fotheringham and Merrett building at 111-113 Foveaux Street has housed a variety of owners and occupiers. From 1945, the clothing manufacturer Archer and Laing Pty Ltd and its subsidiary Fashion Robes Store Pty Ltd occupied the building[402]. In 1957, the Sydney Trade Union Club converted the building for its use, sharing it with the Sydney Bridge Club[403].

Then in 1990, the Global English Language Centre applied to Sydney Council to use the building as a language school for foreign students[404]. In March 1995, 111-115 Foveaux Street was subdivided into strata lots[405] and was used by wholesale and retail ladies' wear businesses[406]. By 2010, the building had been converted into the Daton Lofts, a New York-style apartment building.

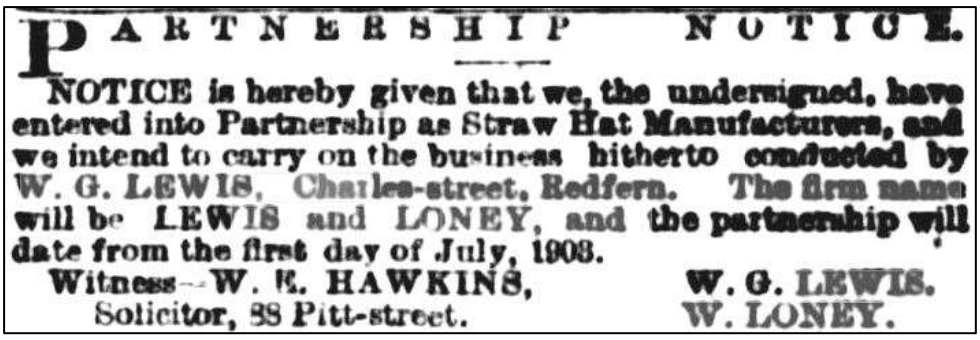
Figure 46 Sydney Trade Union Club (City of Sydney Archives)

In the end, an ambitious straw hat manufacturing enterprise commenced by two very able men in 1910 did well enough until a split in 1920 and their untimely deaths some five years after this. Their sons did their best to navigate difficult economic times, but the Fotheringham family barely survived the 1920s in the hat trade and the Merrett family did not quite survive World War II. One of the major hazards of the hat making trade was the constant threat of fire caused by highly flammable dyes and solvents in close proximity to large quantities of dry straw, as demonstrated by several conflagrations endured by the Fotheringham and Merrett families during their time in the business.

Lewis and Loney Ltd (Luton Hat Factory)

Address: Lachlan Street, Waterloo, then Charles Street, Redfern.

William Garrett Lewis (c1869-1936) was born in 1869 at Prahran, in Melbourne[407]. A Luton Hat Factory was operating in this suburb by 1896, and this may have been his first venture into hat making[408]. In a few years, he moved to Sydney and established the Luton Hat Factory in Lachlan Street, Waterloo in September 1900 to manufacture straw hats[409]. In early 1902, Lewis decided to expand the business and build a large hat factory in Charles Street, Redfern[410], which was completed by mid-1902[411].



PARTNERSHIP NOTICE.

NOTICE is hereby given that we, the undersigned, have entered into Partnership as Straw Hat Manufacturers, and we intend to carry on the business hitherto conducted by W. G. LEWIS, Charles-street, Redfern. The firm name will be LEWIS and LONEY, and the partnership will date from the first day of July, 1903.

Witness—W. K. HAWKINS, Solicitor, 88 Pitt-street.

W. G. LEWIS.
W. LONEY.

Figure 47 Lewis & Loney partnership, 1903 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1903)

In July 1903, Walter Loney joined the firm as a partner and its name was changed to Lewis and Loney Pty Ltd[412]. In January 1906, a fire broke out in the first floor storeroom where five tons of plaited straw were located. The fire was caused by a spark from a plumber's fire pot getting into some shavings while repairs were being carried out[413].

The factory imported straw plait from Victoria and Britain[414]. Another fire occurred five months after the first one in a building adjoining the main factory. It was thought the fire was caused by a spark from a furnace falling among the inflammable material inside the building[415]. Business must have been good, as extensive additions were made to the factory at the end of 1907[416].

Lewis and Loney were plagued by yet another large fire in Jun 1908 when 400 to 500 bales of dressed straw were destroyed in the storeroom when a lamp fell on the floor. Anticipating a big job, fire trucks raced to the narrow street from Redfern, Alexandria and Waterloo branches[417].

In September 1911, William Lewis was appointed as the employers' representative on a newly constituted board that would deal with the conditions of straw hat makers and millinery workers in factories of more than five employees, to be known as the Hat Making (Cumberland) Board. Lewis would negotiate with the employees' representative and other board members to decide on wages for all positions in the trade and other matters such as the length of apprenticeships[418].

At the Interstate Tariff Commission into the straw hat industry in June 1914, William Lewis gave evidence, saying he employed 130 workers, including 100 women, but that the number fluctuated. The factory made straw and textile hats. He said factories in the hat industry were stagnant at the time, due to the great increase in imported hats, and that the Straw Hat Association had discussed how much increase in import duty they would like[419].

The company evidently struggled during World War I and the business went into voluntarily liquidation in August 1916, after which the plant and stock were sold[420]. Walter Loney may have retired after this, as he was not mentioned in the press until he died five years later in December 1921[421].

William Lewis joined the milliners Staniland and Vaile Ltd by 1920[422], who were called Staniland and Sandell Ltd until August 1917[423], makers of crinoline and silk hats[424]. This company was wound up in September 1920[425], but raised capital of £15,000 in £1 shares, in order to carry on the business of manufacturing hats, clothing and millinery at Carlton House, York Street. The company directors were Frederick Harry Staniland (managing director), Hugh Stafford Vaile, and William Garrett Lewis[426].

Figure 48 Lewis & Loney's building today (realestate.com.au)

In 1923, William Lewis was the company secretary of the firm Essanvee Ltd, which was also wound up[427]. This firm was not mentioned elsewhere, and Essanvee may have simply been a subsidiary of Staniland and Vaile ("S" and "V"). William Lewis died in September 1936, aged 67[428]. He was an energetic man who took an interest in his trade by helping to improve the pay and conditions for its workers, and by participating in inquiries into the state of the industry.

The only other mention of the short-lived firm of Lewis and Loney was in *Smith's Weekly* in August 1935, when Henry Alfred Wood was standing as the United Australia Party candidate for Glebe in the upcoming State election. Wood claimed to have set the hat-making speed record for Australia while completing a rush job for Lewis and Loney many years earlier. He recalled that he had closed his factory when L. and L. wanted a large order fulfilled in a hurry, and he turned out 53 dozen babbettes (children's hats) in 5¾ hours[429].

William Lowe and Co

Address: 25-27 and 31 Oxford St, and George Street.

William Lowe (1874-1936) was born in Ireland and migrated to Melbourne in 1889 where he learned the trade of tailor. In 1893, he moved to Sydney to work in the department store Mark Foy's and then with Gowings . By 1898, he had saved enough to open his own shop in Oxford Street, where he first specialised in hats, then added a tailoring and clothing department[430].

William Lowe began to advertise his stores at 25-27 Oxford Street in early 1900, when he claimed to have the largest straw hat trade in Sydney, advertising hand-blocked sailors' straw hats[431]. The firm also advertised itself as a hat importer[432]. Hats were made and sold at number 25 and clothing at number 27.

In April 1901, the firm was selling so many hats that a new shop was opened nearby at 31 Oxford Street to specialise in the hat trade[433]. Boys' and girls' white cabbage tree "man-o-war" hats with ribbons were soon being advertised from this new shop. As a publicity gimmick, William Lowe said that he had a very large hat in the shop that would be given away to anyone it would fit[434]. At this time, Lowe's advertised a range of made-to-measure straw hats: black and white straw hats, single brim straw sailor's hats, and double brim hats[435].

Figure 49 Lowe's advert, 1900 (*The Dawn*, 1 November 1900)

A news article on William Lowe and Co in December 1901 mentioned that the new shop at 31 Oxford Street could carry a stock of 4,000 dozen hats, and was six times the size of the original hat department at 25 Oxford Street. Ladies' sailor hats were a big seller and a lot of space was devoted to them in the shop[436]. William Lowe had achieved his objective of providing "the largest, longest, brightest and lightest of hat shops with a huge stock to select from" in just three years. He also said that he hadn't had to pay any of the new Federal import tariff as yet, so his prices had not risen[437].

Until 1902, all the advertisements for Lowe and Co were for their hats, both manufactured and imported. There were really no advertisements for hat manufacturing workers (such as blockers, trimmers, improvers and so on), so the main business seemed to be selling imported hats rather than making many of their own. From April 1902, adverts began to appear for ready-to-wear clothing, such as men's overcoats for the coming winter[438]. The only advertisement for hat making staff was for an improver for trimming men's felt hats, suggesting Lowe's was importing partly-completed felt hats and then finishing them in the store[439].

In 1903, William Lowe and Co opened a new store in George Street, near the markets, which was initially called Lowe's City Advertising Depot. By this time, hats had become a lower priority than clothing, as one advertisement said they were "tailors, mercers and the big hattery" (presumably in that order)[440]. The advertisements for workroom staff from this time are virtually all for clothing trade jobs. The firm gradually adopted the new trend toward ready-to-wear products and away from made-to-measure hats and clothing.

William Lowe promoted the early hotel closing and the Saturday half-day movements, the former achieved in 1916 and the latter in 1910. The George Street store became the headquarters of a chain of shops selling men's and boys' wear. Always a smart dresser, he was often considered the "best dressed man" at the Royal Easter Show. This and other publicity were designed to promote his stores. By 1923, he controlled a business empire with a thousand employees. From the 1950s, the company changed hands several times, and no longer has any connection with the family[441].

Bedford Hat Company Ltd

Address: Corner Cleveland and Elizabeth Streets, then 33 Wells Street, Redfern.

Ernest Langley (1881-1973) was born in Dunstable in Bedfordshire, one of the early straw hat making centres in England. He lived there until he migrated to Australia sometime after 1891[442] and married

Minnie Sturman (or Sturmun) (1882-1958) in Sydney in 1901[443]. He may be related to Henry Langley (1858-1942) of the Union Hat Mills in Waterloo, but there is no family history evidence in the Ancestry.com.au website that links them. Both came from Dunstable, although Henry was a generation older.

Ernest Langley established the Bedford Straw Hat Company on the corner of Cleveland and Elizabeth Streets in 1911, and advertised for straw hat machinists[444]. By the next year he was in larger premises at 33 Wells Street, Redfern, and the firm was called the Bedford Hat Company Ltd[445]. At this time, he went into partnership with Harriet May Paine (1880-1965), and in February 1915 the company was registered as a ladies' hat manufacturer in both of their names[446]. Harriet Paine is recorded as a hat manufacturer in the Sydney Electoral Rolls between 1933 and 1963[447].

The Bedford Hat Company continued to advertise for machinists until February 1938[448], after which the factory may have closed. However, a firm called the Bedford Pressing Service operated from the same address in 1951 and 1952, advertising an ironing service for clothing manufacturers who were preparing their products for retail[449]. In 1963, the old factory at 33 Wells Street and a second building fronting 118 Redfern Street were converted into an apartment block[450].

Edward L Brooks Pty Ltd

Address: 164-166 Wilson Street, Newtown.

The building known as the Old Hat Factory at 164-166 Wilson Street was constructed in about 1909[451], and by 1912 number 164 was called The Demon Depot[452], operated by Plucknett and Biles, manufacturers of rabbit destructors[453]. Their advertised bunny-eradication product was the fearsome "Demon Destroyer"[454]. The pattern maker Emil W Lundberg used the whole building in the 1920s[455], and in the 1930s various small businesses operated there, such as a battery repair company[456] and an automotive spare parts firm[457].

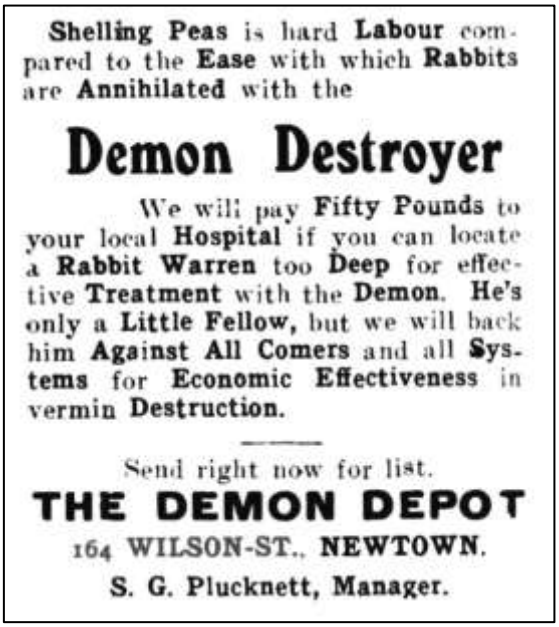


Figure 50 The Demon Destroyer, 1912 (*The Land*, 16 August 1912)

Edward Leslie Brooks was born in 1907 in Sydney. In February 1928, when his occupation was "hat blocker", he married Annie Alice Miller, a milliner[458]. Brooks must have worked for other hat makers until 1946 when he established his own straw hat factory in the building[459], operating it until about 1972[460]. The firm's advertisements for staff sometimes contained extra incentives, such as one in October 1946 for a 15-16 year old girl offering the idyllic-sounding "good wages and conditions, music, morning and afternoon tea"[461]. Another advert in February 1948 highlighted post-war staff problems by stating that "this trade is very short of labour"[462].

Figure 51 Edward L Brooks Ltd building, 2009 (Google Maps)

From 1972, the building was used for printing purposes[463]. The company Edward L. Brooks Pty Ltd was wound up in February 1974[464]. The building was largely vacant for the last thirty years until 2018 when an extra level was added and it was converted into two three-storey townhouses[465].

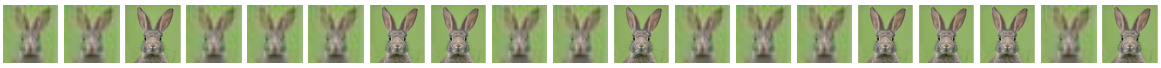
The old hat factory name "EDWARD BROOKS" is still faintly visible on the front of the building and was retained during the conversion as a heritage feature. Little more is known about this hat factory, but it was unusual in that it was established towards the end of the main hat-wearing era and remained in business until the early 1970s, despite many other hat makers closing down in the 1950s and 1960s.

Keedle's Hat and Bonnet Manufactory (the Cabbage Hat Depot)

Address: Initially 595 George Street in 1859, and finally 337 Sussex St in 1890.

George Keedle (1824-1906) was born in Quainton in Buckinghamshire, England[466]. After completing his education, he learned the business of straw-goods manufacturer[467]. He was living in Luton in 1844 when he married Sarah Clark, who died in 1849. He then married Jane Tilford in London in 1850. In 1851, he was working as a bonnet maker in Cripplegate, London[468].

In 1855 migrated to Sydney in the ship *Bangalore* with his wife and two children[469]. He established a straw hat manufacturing business, initially in 595 George Street, then moving to Pitt Street South in 1857[470]. In August 1858, he advertised the sale of a newly erected shop and residence in Botany Street, close to Parramatta Street, known as Keedle's Hat and Bonnet Manufactory[471]. While he



advertised other types of straw hats such as panamas[472], he continued making cabbage tree hats all of his working life[473].

In 1859, he was working at the Cabbage Hat Depot in 481 Brickfield Hill when he announced that since the building had been pulled down, he was moving to 9 Botany Street, near the railway terminus (to the west of present-day Prince Alfred Park)[474]. His hat making business was expanding at this time, and he was exporting cases of cabbage tree hats to Melbourne[475]. His working address changed a number of times for a few years, to 539 Brickfield Hill[476] and 513 Brickfield Hill[477].

He became insolvent in December 1864, but continued working[478]. His second wife Jane died in 1864 at his home in 704 Brickfield Hill[479] and in 1866 he married Eleanor Pawley (nee Carlin), the widow of George Pawley[480]. By 1884 he had moved to 24 Lower Fort Street[481] and a year later to Engine Street, Haymarket[482]. In September 1886, his straw hat factory which was then at the rear of the Golden Fleece Hotel in Castlereagh Street suffered one of the frequent fires that plagued the industry, when a spark fell from a fireplace in the workshop[483].

The fire caused some £500 damage to stock and equipment, but Keedle was back in business a couple of weeks later and advertising for staff at (possibly temporary) premises at 296 Sussex St near Bathurst St[484]. In August 1887, he had moved to permanent premises at 337 Sussex Street[485], on the corner of Liverpool Street[486]. By 1889, he was prominent enough in his field to be listed in the biographical book *Australian Men of Mark* in 1889, at which time he had eight employees working for him[487].

By the end of the nineteenth century, locally-made cabbage tree hats were superseded by local or imported straw hats in various styles, but newspapers were still being asked about them, and in 1890 the *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser* referred a reader who could not find any cabbage tree hats in Sydney to George Keedle, as he was still making them[488]. He died at Parramatta in August 1906 and is buried at Rookwood Cemetery[489].

George Keedle had one of the largest and most enduring cabbage hat manufacturing businesses in Sydney at a time when this was largely a cottage industry, one that had faded out by the late nineteenth century. His business was small enough to not have a permanent name, or a registered business name. His many moves around the city indicated that his hat making equipment was small enough to be easily transportable when he needed to move on.

Wragge and May Ltd

Address: 50 Wentworth Avenue (Griffiths Bros Teas building), then 114 Goulburn Street, then 109 Bathurst Street.

Frederick Edward Wragge (1872-1955) was born in the English felt hat making centre of Stockport, Cheshire. In April 1901, he married Annie Warburton in Stockport, and they migrated to Sydney, departing London in November 1904[490]. He found work as a hat maker, and by 1913 was the secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Federated Felt Hatting Employees' Union of Australasia. He represented the employees in a court case against the large Denton Hat Mills over pay and working conditions[491].

After Central Railway Station was completed in 1906, a wide-ranging project was undertaken to industrialise the neighbourhood around the station, and to widen the main roads leading away from

it. Part of this project was the resumption and demolition of Wexford Street the construction of Wentworth Avenue from Elizabeth Street to the start of Oxford Street. In 1913, the Melbourne tea, coffee and cocoa merchants Griffith Bros Pty Ltd constructed a seven-storey late Federation warehouse and factory building on a prominent corner of Commonwealth Street and Wentworth Avenue[492].

Figure 52 Griffiths Teas building, 2012 (Michael Wayne website)

Frederick Wragge went into partnership with fellow hat maker and renovator Albert Victor May (c1883-1950) and in late 1914 leased the second floor of the building as a hat factory[493]. They registered the firm of Wragge and May Ltd, felt hat makers of 50 Wentworth Avenue, in January 1919[494]. The partnership continued until July 1922 when it was dissolved by mutual consent. May retired from the business and Wragge continued it, still using the name Wragge and May[495].

Frederick Wragge, who called himself a hat renovator in the Electoral Rolls of the 1940s and 1950s[496], remained in the Griffith Bros building until 1935, when he relocated to 114 Goulburn Street[497]. In 1941, he moved to 109 Bathurst Street[498], where the business remained until at least 1952[499]. Wragge died in September 1955[500] at his home in Pennant Hills[501]. Albert May died in 1950 at Bexley[502]. It is not known how long the firm of Wragge and May continued to make hats, but after both founders died and hat-wearing was on the wane by the 1950s, it is likely the company closed down at this time.

The Griffith Bros building is today a block of 37 apartments known as “Griffith Teas”, while the Chin Chin Restaurant occupies the ground and lower ground floor levels.

Standard Hat and Cap Factory Ltd

Address: 54 City Road Darlington, 822 George Street, 433 Kent Street, then 410 Elizabeth St.

Henry Alfred Wood (1872-1956) and Emily Gardiner (1872-1961) were born in the English straw hat making centre of Luton[503]. They were married in 1892 in Luton, and in 1900 migrated to Sydney in the liner *Oruba*[504]. They lived in the Newtown area in the early years where a son was born in 1901[505].

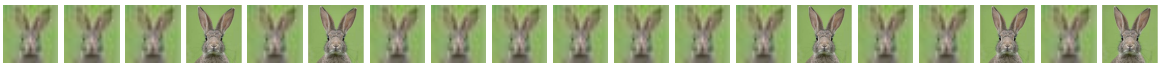
Henry Wood started the Standard Hat Factory at 54 City Road Darlington in July 1906 and advertised for straw hat finishers, improvers and apprentices[506]. By 1907 he was calling it the Standard Hat and Cap Factory[507]. The company did not do well in the early years, and in May 1911 he filed for bankruptcy[508]. This was only a temporary halt to Henry Wood's career as a hat maker, and by March 1916 he had established a new factory in the Canada Buildings at 822 George Street (opposite the Glaciarium), and began to advertise for machinists to make men's, ladies' and boys' hats[509].

Figure 53 Henry A. Wood (Briggs family, ancestry.com.au)

In about 1914, the family moved into Margaretta Cottage in Leichhardt Street, Glebe Point[510]. This historic residence was built during the period 1828-1836 in the Post-Regency style, and was remodelled in the 1860s[511]. The house is used nowadays for classical music concerts during the Glebe Music Festival[512].

Wood was steadily making his way in Sydney society, and in July 1916 was one of those appointed to the Commission of the Peace as a Justice of the Peace[513]. In 1918, his manager Thomas Reay gave evidence at the Interstate Commission inquiring into the price of hats and clothing, in which he said trade was good and improving, despite other hat makers saying they were running at a loss at the time. Profitability had been improved in recent years by selling their hats directly to retailers and cutting out the warehousemen[514].

In October 1923, the Standard Hat and Cap Factory announced that they were planning to expand the business by leasing their 3,000 square feet of factory space at 822 George Street[515] and looking for about 6,000 square feet of floor space to rent near Central Railway Station[516]. In October 1924, the firm was operating at 433 Kent Street[517]. A few months later, the business name Standard Hat Factory Ltd was registered with a nominal capital of £10,000 in £1 shares, to carry on the business of hat and cap manufacturers. The directors were T. Reay, R. A. Saul, O. L. Johnstone and H. Wood[518].



The name was soon changed to the one they had been advertising with for years, the Standard Hat and Cap Factory Ltd[519]. In February 1928, the factory moved to 410 Elizabeth Street[520].

In the 1930s, Henry Wood tried get into politics, and stood for the seat of West Sydney in the 1934 Federal election, representing the United Australia Party[521], but came a distant second to the Labor Party candidate[522]. Undeterred, in August 1935 he was an independent candidate for the seat of Glebe in the State election[523], but again came second to Labor[524]. The Standard Hat and Cap Factory, Swans Buildings, 410 Elizabeth Street was still advertising in January 1951[525]. Henry Wood died in 1956 and Emily Wood in 1961[526]. The firm remained in operation until March 1965 when it was voluntarily wound up and liquidated[527].

Dozman Hat Mills (formerly W. Trinder Ltd)

Address: 2-4 Short Street Redfern, then 79 Abercrombie Street Chippendale, then 10 Taylor Street Darlinghurst.

William James Trinder (1882-1959) was born in Norwich, England, and migrated to Sydney with his parents in the *Roslyn Castle*, arriving in March 1883. In June 1900, he married Sarah Ann Nunn at Redfern[528]. In 1903 they were living in Hurstville and William Trinder was working as a hatter[529].

In January 1912, Trinder registered the business name W. Trinder Ltd with capital of £5,000 to acquire the business of straw hat manufacturers at 2-4 Short Street in Redfern that he previously operated with Walter James Grant and Charles Jardine[530]. The company directors were William and Robert McEnnally and William James Trinder[531].

In April 1914 he moved the factory to 79 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale[532], and advertised for trimmers to work on boaters and panama hats[533]. But he did not stay long at this location, and in June 1917 he advertised the stock and machinery for sale, including his supply of straw boaters, tweed hats and caps, boys' and girls' straw hats, as well as blocking and sewing machines[534]. In September 1922, he combined with Mr. Dawson to form Trinder and Dawson, a hat factory at 10 Taylor Street, Darlinghurst[535]. This was probably Harry Dante Dawson (born Nannelli), who established the hat factory Dawson Bros Ltd in 1908 with his brother Albert Edward (who died in 1915)[536] and operated it until going into liquidation in 1921[537].

After three years in Taylor Street, Messrs. Trinder and Dawson advertised the business for sale, and it was taken over by Carl Alexander Zimmerman and Henry Gray Osborne and renamed the Dozman Hat Mills, felt and straw hat manufacturers and renovators[538]. Osborne was a hatter who was living in North Bondi in the 1930s[539], while Zimmerman was a hotel licensee in the lower North Shore[540]. The next year, the partnership between Osborne and Zimmerman was dissolved by mutual consent and Henry Osborne carried on with the hat factory[541].

In March 1929 there was the almost-inevitable fire at the Dozman Hat Hills, severely damaging the goods inside the building[542]. In July 1930, Matthew J. Cosgrove assumed ownership of the factory from Henry Osborne[543]. The Dozman Hat Mills continued to operate until December 1936, when the entire plant and stock were sold. This was the last newspaper mention of this business, so it must have closed down at this time.

William Trinder, the originator of the business, seemed to leave the hat trade after selling out to Zimmerman and Osborne, because by 1930 he was living to the south of Sydney at Heathcote,

where he was a storekeeper[544]. He remained in this area until he died at Engadine in 1959[545]. Henry Osborne was still a hatter in 1958, living in East Sydney[546]. He died in 1963[547].

Dawson Brothers Ltd

Address: 9 Barlow Street Haymarket, then 206 Clarence Street, then 13 Fitzroy Street Newtown.

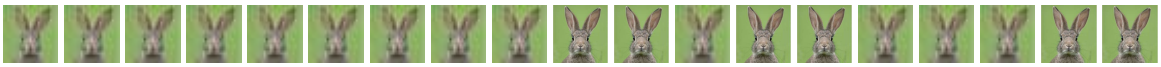
Angelo Nannelli (1850-1918) was born in Florence in Italy and at some point moved to the straw hat making centre Luton in England and became a hat maker[548]. Three of his sons, who were all born in Luton, also became hat makers: Albert Edward (1870-1915), Victor George Virgilo (1881-1924) and Harry Dante (1884-1934)[549]. Albert and Harry migrated to Sydney in the early 1900s and established a small hat factory at 9 Barlow Street in Haymarket, registering it as Dawson Bros Ltd in July 1908[550]. The brothers changed their surname to Dawson at about this time, although it is not known why they chose this name.

Victor may have migrated with his brothers, and their parents migrated to Sydney in 1911[551]. Within a year, the brothers moved to the second floor of a six-storey building at 204-206 Clarence Street[552]. A fire in the building caused severe damage to the stock and machinery[553]. To keep themselves in business, the brothers imported six cases of straw hats from Italy[554]. In January 1912, the hat factory was re-established in a two-storey building at 13 Fitzroy Street, Newtown[555] and the brothers advertised for straw hat machinists.

Figure 54 Dawson Bros Ltd building, Newtown (realestate.com.au)

In January 1913, Dawson Bros Ltd raised capital of £25,000 to continue the business, possibly to finance the new building. The directors were Albert Edward Nannelli (Dawson), Harry Dante Nannelli (Dawson), and their father Angelo Nannelli (Dawson)[556]. Another fire plagued the Dawson brothers in December 1916 when the factory was severely damaged[557]. A sale of goods ordered by the fire assessor showed their range of products: Ecuador panama hats, Tokyo panama hats, velour felt hats, Cura hats, raffia and China chip straw hats, Columbian Cayos and OK hats[558].

Albert Edward Dawson died in 1915 and their father Angelo in 1918[559]. The business expanded rapidly after World War I, so the hat factory was extended on adjoining land, more than doubling their capacity. They were referred to as manufacturers of every kind of gentlemen's, ladies', girls'



boys' and children's hats in both felt and straw, while there was also a dyeing and bleaching section of the business. Their showrooms were in Market Street, Sydney[560]. Despite this initial post-war success, by 1921 the business was in financial trouble, and in April went into voluntary liquidation[561].

That was the end of the rather short (thirteen year) life of Dawson Bros Ltd. One of the surviving brothers (presumed to be Harry Dante) joined William Trinder at his new premises at 10 Taylor Street Darlinghurst in September 1922 to form Trinder and Dawson Ltd.

A. H. Hundt Ltd, Hundt and Andrews Ltd

Address of A H Hundt Ltd: 38 Glebe Road, then 13 Fitzroy Street Newtown, then Rose and Ivy Streets Darlington, then 22 City Road Darlington.
Address of Hundt and Andrews Ltd: 189a St John's Road, Glebe.
Address of the Reliance Hat Coy: 131 Queen Victoria's Markets, George Street.
Address of Hundt and James Ltd: 60 Wentworth Avenue, then 492 Crown Street, Surry Hills.

A. H. Hundt Ltd

Two Sydney-born brothers, Archibald Henry Hundt (1881-1947) and Victor Clarence Hundt (1889-1959)[562] established separate straw hat factories in Sydney (in 1903 and 1920 respectively), as did other members of their family for brief periods. Archibald Hundt registered the firm A. H. Hundt Ltd in July 1903 at 39 Derwent Lane in Glebe, to conduct the business of straw and felt hat manufacturing[563]. In partnership with William Frederick Ross[564], Archibald Hundt began to advertise for straw hat machinists for "fancy work" in May 1904, located at 38 Glebe Road[565]. By March 1908, the factory had moved to 13 Fitzroy Street in Newtown[566] and in a few months were advertising for workers to make artificial flowers for their straw hats: practical mounters, improvers and apprentices[567].

In August 1911, A. H. Hundt Ltd raised capital of £20,000. Signatories to the newly constituted company were Archibald's wife Alice and his brothers Frank and Herbert Rudolph. Archibald Hundt was managing director and William Ross the chairman of the board[568]. The capital raising was probably to finance the purchase of a new building, because a few months later the business moved to the corner of Ivy and Rose Streets, Darlington, and advertised for workers in millinery and velvet work[569]. The Dawson Bros Ltd hat factory moved into the vacant 13 Fitzroy Street building in January 1912[570].

A falling out between William Ross and Archibald Hundt resulted in Ross petitioning the courts for the liquidation of the factory in August 1919, on the grounds that he did not agree with Hundt's management of the company's funds, and that they were in financial trouble[571]. Archibald Hundt opposed the winding up of the company, claiming that it could easily to pay its debts, and that it should be allowed to continue. He claimed that a number of the firm's creditors endorsed this view[572].

A. H. Hundt Ltd continued manufacturing hats and was soon advertising for staff in its ready-to-wear department[573]. But during the Great Depression in 1933 the firm was placed into receivership and sold all of its machinery and stock[574]. However, Archibald Hundt was not finished in the hat trade, and a few months later he re-established himself as A. H. Hundt and Company on the first floor of Winslow House at 22 City Road[575]. This six-storey building was constructed in c1913 by Grace

Brothers Ltd to serve as a warehouse for its homeware building in Broadway (constructed c1909), and was later occupied by manufacturers and merchants[576].

Figure 55 A. H. Hundt Ltd, 22 City Road (Pinterest.com)

While Archibald Hundt continued working at 22 City Road, he announced in October 1934 that A. H. Hundt and Co had acquired the hat business of Eileen Hundt and J. F. Leitch, and would be trading as the newly registered name Hundt's Millinery Ltd[577]. Then in March 1938, the company Perks and Hundt Pty Ltd was registered with a nominal capital of £2,000 as manufacturers and merchandisers of millinery. The subscribers were Warwick Sydney Perks and his wife Phyllis Betty Perks[578].

Archibald Hundt had probably stepped back from an active role by this time, as the order of names in the company title suggests that the Perks couple were the main managers. However, Perks and Hundt Ltd did not prosper and was in receivership by January 1940[579]. The receiver advertised the sale of all equipment and a small amount of stock the next month. The newspaper advertisement for the sale provides a comprehensive list of the equipment used in a straw hat factory[580]. A. H. Hundt (Australasia) Ltd was struck off the register of companies in November 1939[581] and in January 1955 the later company Hundt's Millinery Ltd was also deregistered[582].

At the Factory Premises of
PERKS and HUNDT PTY., LTD.,
Winslow House,
22 CITY ROAD, GLEBE (near Grace Bros.).

2 Singer Straw Machines, 24-33.
2 Dresdenia Straw Machines.
1 Wilcox and Gibbs Box Machine.
1 8-hole Machine Bench and Undercarriage.
5-pot Steaming Bench.
18ft Cutting and Packing Tables.
Reslau Steaming Outfit, Complete.
3 Copper Tank Dyeing Outfit.
30 Aluminium Hat Block Pans.
1 Straw Clipping Machine.
1 Brass Drum and Brush.
Factory Tables, Benches, and Chairs.
40ft 3-ply and Glass Partitioning.
Machine Spare Parts and Scrap.

SMALL STOCK.
Straws, Braids, Hoods and Flowers.
Quantity of Sundry Small Lots.

Figure 56 Sale of Perks & Hundt factory (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 Feb 1940)

Hundt and Andrews Ltd

In May 1920, Archibald Hundt's younger brother Victor Clarence in partnership with Henric Andrews registered the company Hundt and Andrews Ltd for hat manufacturing, initially at 81A St Johns Road, Glebe[583]. By July 1923, the factory had moved to 189A St John's Road, Glebe[584]. The factory remained in operation until at least February 1950, when they last advertised for staff[585].

Other members of the Hundt family ventured into hat making in the early twentieth century. In June 1909, The Reliance Hat Company was registered for hat manufacturing at 131 Queen Victoria's Markets in George Street, by Rose Agnes Hundt (mother of Archibald and Victor), Violet Rose Hundt (her daughter), and Arthur John Landon (Violet's husband)[586]. The firm only advertised for staff in May 1910[587], so apparently it didn't last long. Coincidentally or not, there was a company of the same name at Howard Street in West Melbourne (now North Melbourne) from January 1910[588] to when it was sold in July 1921[589].

Hundt and James Ltd

The final venture of the extended Hundt family of hatters was established by Harry Alexander Hundt (1910-1983) (son of Archibald) as Hundt and James Ltd on the third floor of 60 Wentworth Avenue to make ready-to-wear hats[590]. In June 1942, the factory space of 2,000 square feet was advertised for rent[591], and Hundt and James Ltd reappeared in 1946 at 492 Crown Street Surry Hills, "between the Women's Hospital and Cleveland St"[592].

In May 1947, Harry Hundt went into partnership with Margaret M. Carroll to re-establish Hundt and James Ltd, to carry on the business of manufacturers, wholesalers and/or retailers of hats, millinery and clothing at 492 Crown Street, Surry Hills[593]. This firm was still active in 1954[594], but was struck off the register of companies in August 1977[595].

The extended Hundt family was unusual in that the members did not come from a straw hat making family tradition (that is, none of them came from Luton), but several of them operated separate hat making firms in Sydney throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

NSW Felt Hat Factory (E. F. Coolahan and Co Ltd)

Address: 71 Watkin Street, Newtown.

71 Watkin Street in Newtown was a factory building hidden down the narrow lane between houses at numbers 69 and 73. In about 1903, an unnamed straw hat factory was established there and began to advertise for workers[596]. Meanwhile, the States Felt Hat Company started in about 1907 at 192 George Street West[597], operated by Charles Clarke and John Stafford. From April 1908[598] until September 1909, the owners advertised for a business partner to buy into the firm, as Charles Clarke apparently wanted to leave[599].

The business was advertised for sale in September 1908[600]. In June 1910, the States Felt Hat Company moved to 71 Watkin Street, Newtown[601] and in December Clarke and Stafford dissolved their partnership in the States Felt Hat Company and Clarke left the company[602].

Edward Francis Coolahan (c1857-1938) worked for the piano manufacturers Beale and Co from about 1888, and by 1905 he was their chief inspector in New South Wales[603]. In 1909, he was reportedly planning to take over the management of the company in Victoria[604], but decided to stay in Sydney and move into the hat trade instead.

In February 1911, Coolahan bought the States Felt Hat Company from John Stafford for £500 and employed him as manager, renaming the company to the New South Wales Felt Hat Factory. There must have been a mass exodus of staff at this point, because the new firm immediately advertised for an almost complete range of felt hat workers to staff the new enterprise: felt bodymakers, proofers, dyers, blockers, finishers, shapers, trimmers, binders and boys[605].


HATTERS.—Wanted, Felt Bodymakers, Proofers, Dyers, Blockers, Finishers, Shapers, Trimmers, and Binders, and Boys. Apply New South Wales Felt Hat Factory, 71 Watkin-street, Newtown, Sydney.

Figure 57 NSW Felt Hat Co advert, 1911 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 February 1911)

But the old boss and the new boss did not get on, and in March 1911 Stafford took Coolahan to court for assault, while Stafford claimed he should have been paid more. After listening to the two men sledge each other in court for some time, the magistrate declared that as far as he could see one litigant was no worse than the other, so he dismissed the case [606].

In April 1914, Edward Coolahan raised capital of £12,000 in £1 shares, probably to expand the factory. Between April and November 1915, the expanded business was contracted to supply almost 24,000 felt fur hats for the Army. This was a major achievement that showed that Coolahan was aiming to be in the big league of the Dunkerley Hat Mills, John Bardsley and Sons and Charles Anderson and Co.

But in September 1915, a disastrous fire at the hat factory burned out much of the contents of the building, and the company didn't operate after that. They must have withdrawn from the Army contract, as they were not in the list published by *The Sun* in May 1916 showing the total hats delivered to date[607].

Edward Coolahan gave the hat trade away soon after the fire, and by 1918 was selling real estate in the eastern suburbs of Coogee and Clovelly, in conjunction with the auctioneers Hardie and Gorman[608]. He remained in real estate through the 1920s[609] until retiring from business. He died at his home in Randwick[610] in 1938[611]. His company E. F. Coolahan and Co Ltd was struck off the register of companies in May 1939[612].

It is not known why Edward Coolahan decided to switch careers in 1911 from pianos to hats, but the move did not go well, despite ambitious plans to expand the hat factory and undertake a large contract to supply Army hats during World War I. The fire on the eve of a big contract for the Army seemed to dash his hopes for success in the hat trade, although most other hat makers took this occupational hazard in their stride and were back on their feet in a few months. A few years after the fire, he was working in the less hazardous field of real estate in the eastern beaches until his retirement.

W. and A. McArthur Ltd (later Adamson and Wilkinson Ltd)

Address: 22-24 Junction Street, Forest Lodge.

The general mercantile firm W. and A. McArthur Ltd was established in 1850 by the Irish-born brothers William and Alexander McArthur. William (later Sir William) (1809-1887) was born in the village of Malin in Donegal, and after completing his education worked in the drapery business in Dublin and Londonderry. Alexander (1814-1909) was born in Enniskillen in County Fermanagh and in 1830 was apprenticed to a merchant in Omagh. After suffering severe fevers, Alexander migrated to Sydney in January 1842 to improve his health[613]. William sent goods from England to Alexander, who commenced business as an export agent in Sydney.

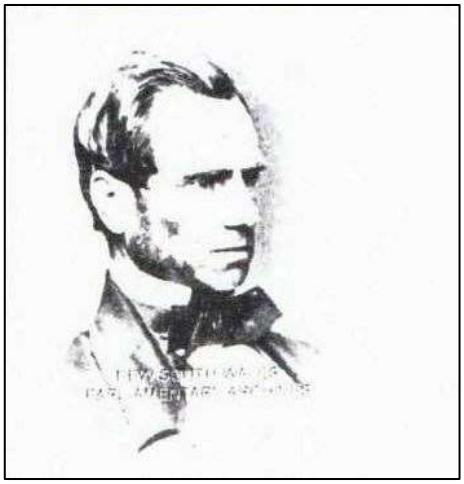


Figure 58 Alexander McArthur, 1861 (Ancestry.com.au)

W. and A. McArthur Ltd grew rapidly after the gold discoveries of the 1850s, branches were opened in various parts of Australia and the brothers became wealthy. William settled in London and was elected Member of Parliament for Lambeth in 1865. He visited Australia during a world tour in 1878-

79 but never lived here. He was elected Lord Mayor of London in September 1880 and during his Mayoralty was a founder of the London Chamber of Commerce in 1881. He died suddenly while travelling on the London Underground Railway in November 1887[614]. Alexander moved to England in 1863 and remained there until his death in 1909[615].

In July 1900, W. and A. McArthur Ltd opened a straw hat factory in a newly-constructed three-storey building in Junction Street, Forest Lodge. The factory was managed by Mr and Mrs Wooding, who had been hired from Luton, Bedfordshire. They would also train new workers[616]. The natural straw was mainly imported from Japan in bundles of plaits, each fifty to sixty yards long. But thinner straw was obtained from Italy[617].

Figure 59 W & A McArthur, Forest Lodge, 2017 (Heritage Assessment)

The factory did well in the protectionist environment of the time. In 1903, it was reported that the machinery was duplicated to double the output in order to keep up with demand. The factory was then producing 500 dozen hats a week[618]. In 1908, the factory advertised for chiffon and crinoline hat workers[619] and staff to make artificial flowers and "leaf stickers" for decorating women's straw hats[620].

In 1925, Wilfred Vivian Wilkinson became the factory manager[621], and in August 1926, he and James Percival Adamson purchased the hat factory and it became Adamson and Wilkinson Ltd[622]. By 1927 the factory was making fur felt hats for women[623] while continuing to make a variety of straw hats. Wilfred Wilkinson gave evidence to the Tariff Board in 1927 saying that Australian hat manufacturers could not keep up with the demand at the time[624].

Adamson and Wilkinson Ltd did not survive the severe economic Depression of the 1930s and dissolved their partnership in February 1934[625] before going into receivership and selling the plant and stock[626]. James Adamson registered the new company J. P. Adamson Pty Ltd in May 1934 to carry on the business of silk mercers, cloth manufacturers, furriers and hosiers at the same address[627].

While the new firm had broadened the range of output beyond millinery, James Adamson was still making straw hats and soon advertised for staff to make hat styles called Pedalines, Fedoras and Neoras[628]. Straw and felt hats were manufactured into the 1950s[629]. In 1968, J. P. Adamson Ltd sold the hat factory to A. G. Campbell Pty Ltd, a wholesale grocer who already owned the adjacent building at 14-20 Junction Street[630].

The original hat making firm on the Junction Street site (W. and A. McArthur Ltd) had the distinction of being the only known hat maker in Sydney whose eponymous founders had either left the country (Alexander) or shuffled off this mortal coil (William) before a hat factory was established in their names. The unusual decision to sell the factory in 1926 when the hat trade was doing well may not have happened if the founders were personally involved in the business, as was the case with its rivals.

G. H. Smith and Son Ltd

Address: 297 Kent Street then 302 George St.

George Henry Smith (c1827-1900) was born in New Jersey in the United States[631]. He migrated to Sydney where he started working as a hat maker in the 1840s[632], and by 1858 was operating his own small hat shop in a single storey building at 297 Kent Street[633]. In early 1860 he moved briefly to 558 George Street, opposite St Andrew's Cathedral. In the first newspaper advertisement he called himself a practical hatter and importer who had commenced business opposite the cathedral. He offered a large assortment of English and French hats, as well as colonial hats and caps manufactured under his supervision[634].

Figure 60 G. H. Smith ad, 1891 (*Illustrated Sydney News*, 6 June 1891)

The following year he moved to a much larger three-storey building at 316 George Street, three doors south of Hunter Street, where he remained for the rest of his career[635]. In 1870, he was advertising black felt hats in Milan, Tyrolese and Alpine styles, and black silk and drab shells in the latest fashions[636]. In about 1880, this building was renumbered to 302 George Street[637].

An article in the *Australian Star* in April 1895 (or what would be called an advertorial today) claimed that George Smith was catering for "the fashionable man about town, the dandy from the back blocks, the ordinary everyday man of business, or the gentleman needing a serviceable article for ordinary wear". A new fashion item was the sportsman's cap for shooting, fishing, yachting and other outdoor amusements. It was made of Harris Tweed with a cape that turned down to keep the neck from wind and rain. The firm was the sole agent for the prominent London hat maker Harry Heath, milliner to the Royal Family[638].

Figure 61 G. H. Smith felt hat, 1894 (*Sydney Mail*, 24 February 1894)

G. H. Smith and Son was still making the "everlasting" cabbage tree hat in 1895, as well as selling accessories such as walking sticks and umbrellas[639]. In 1897, an advertisement mentioned that the firm was the local agent for J. B. Stetson Ltd of Philadelphia, maker of the famous Prairie hat[640]. George Smith died of a heart attack aged 73 in September 1900[641] and the business was carried on by his son. The last mention in the press was an advertisement for ties in March 1949, still at 302 George Street[642].

While George Smith may not have been one of the largest hat makers in Sydney, the company he founded lasted for the better part of a century, longer that most of his competitors. A top hat with his logo that was owned by the architect Edmund Blacket in about 1860 has survived and is located in the Eugowra Historical Museum and Bushranger Centre[643]. Blacket was the colonial architect from 1849 to 1854, and designed St Andrew's Cathedral, the first buildings in the University of Sydney and numerous churches, specialising in a mid-century Gothic style[644].

Figure 62 Edmund Blacket's top hat, c1860 (Eugowra Museum)

Another early G. H. Smith and Son Ltd hat that has survived is a straw boater owned by Kathleen Rouse (1878-1932), a young woman whose family gave their name to the Sydney suburb of Rouse Hill[645]. This hat and its owner have been documented in more detail in the section on the straw boater.

Imperial Cap Company

Address: 311 Kent Street, then 360-362 Kent Street, then 453-455 Kent Street, then 180 Elizabeth Street, then 111 Campbell Street.

Morris Aaron Rosalky (1867-1925) was born in Plock, Poland and migrated to Melbourne in January 1891 in the ship *Elbe*[646]. A month later, he established a cap factory at 252 Brunswick Street in Fitzroy and advertised for staff[647]. He married Rose Silverman in Melbourne in 1895[648], but she died in 1899 at the age of 25[649]. Morris was naturalised in Melbourne in 1900, giving his occupation as carpenter[650]. In 1903 he married Rose's younger sister Annie Silverman (1884-1964) in Melbourne[651].

A few years later Morris and Annie moved to Sydney, and in November 1908 he established the Imperial Cap Factory at 311 Kent Street[652]. By 1910 the factory was operating in the fourth floor of Bromley House at 360-362 Kent Street, and was run by Lewis and Rosalky[653]. In November 1912 a large fire at Bromley House caused smoke and water damage to the hat factory, which was then operated by W. Morris and Morris Rosalky[654]. The fire assessor held a sale of some 1,300 dozen caps of all types, including golf caps (serge, black, white and tweed), travellers' caps, serge varsity caps, Peter Pan and boys' Peter Pan caps, Varsity piping caps and Pullmans[655].

The Imperial Cap Factory returned to Bromley House after repairs were completed, and by 1915 Morris Rosalky was listed in *Sands' Directory* as the sole proprietor[656]. He died suddenly in January 1925 and was buried in the Jewish section of Rookwood Cemetery[657]. He had been very active in Jewish cultural activities in Sydney and was widely respected throughout the Jewish community.

At the end of 1925, another serious fire occurred at Bromley House, again damaging the stock of the cap factory[658]. In January 1926 the factory was being run by E. Phillips[659], at which time the operation moved to the second floor of Spicer's Buildings, 453-455 Kent Street (corner of Druitt Street)[660].

The Imperial Cap Coy continued to advertise for staff until 1936[661]. In October 1937 the company was wound up[662] and reregistered in April 1938 by new owners Harry Kass and William J. Lane after raising nominal capital of £2,000[663]. In July 1938 the factory moved to 180 Elizabeth Street and advertised for a range of staff at the new location[664].

Figure 63 Imperial Cap Co forage cap, 1940s (Victorian Collections)

During World War II, the Imperial Cap Coy won several government contracts for caps between 1940 and 1946, such as field service caps for the Ordnance Stores[665], white duck caps for the Victualling Store[666], cooks' caps for the Department of the Air[667], and various caps to the Department of Supply and Shipping[668]. In August 1945, the cap factory moved to 111 Campbell Street, on the corner of Commonwealth Street[669]. By 1947, the firm was joining the trend to improve working conditions by advertising jobs with "morning and afternoon tea breaks and music while you work"[670]. The factory operated until at least 1954[671], but the company was finally deregistered in December 1984[672].

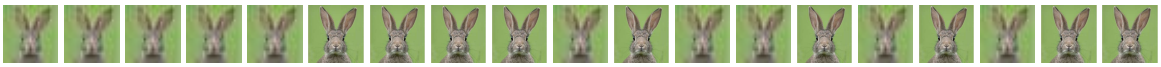
It is not known how many workers were employed at the Imperial Cap Company throughout its peripatetic history at various city locations. But a factory that was established by a Polish immigrant with no known experience of cap making managed to survive for the first half of the twentieth century, becoming one of a select few hat and cap manufacturers to win a series of wartime contracts in the 1940s. A Women's Air Training Corps (WATC) forage cap manufactured by the Imperial Cap Co Pty Ltd in the 1940s is held in the history collection of the Geelong Returned Services League Sub-Branch[673].

Small or short-lived hat makers

Many other companies called "hat makers" or "hatters" were listed in *Sands' Directories* or in newspapers, but I could find little or no more information about them, so I assumed they were fairly small businesses or did not last long. Some of those called "hatters" may have only sold hats and not manufactured them, as the term was broadly used for both. The following list is not complete, but is included to give a picture of the importance of the hat trade in the wider clothing industry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

1860s:

Abraham Matchett, Wellington St, Newtown, hatmaker of Wellington St, Newtown[674] [675].



1870s:
J. Mahony, straw hat maker, 487 George Street[676].
John Bulmer, 317 Macquarie St west side, corner Macquarie Lane, hatmaker[677].

1880s:
Mrs Dora Wenzel, 75 (and 70/72) Oxford St, hatmaker[678].
Lambert Little, 38/32 College St, hatmaker[679].
John Whitton (cabbage tree), Comber Street, Paddington[680].

1890s:
Solomon Davis, cap manufacturer, 256 Pitt St[681].
Jasper Green, hat maker, Gladstone St, Burwood[682].
Frederick N. Goodman, hat maker, Inglewood Terrace, Marion Street east side, Newtown[683].

1900s:
Mrs C. Judkins, straw hat maker, 16 Bellevue Street[684].
Robert Squires, 140 Young St, Redfern, hatmaker[685].

1910s:
Commonwealth Hat Co Ltd, 44 Carrington St and Bridge Rd, Stanmore[686].
Austral Knitting Hat and Cap Factory was established at 54 Bay Street Ultimo in 1912[687], moved to 6 Small Street in 1914[688]. In 1920 it became the Austral Knitting Mills and continued making hats and caps[689] until 1926 when it became the Cropley Knitting Mills Ltd and ceased the manufacture of hats and caps[690].

1920s:
Keepshape Hat Works, 778 Parramatta Road, Petersham[691] [692].

1930s:
Miss A. Lynott, cap maker, 10 Rawson Place[693].
Decent and Hutchison Ltd, 52-54 Bay Street[694].

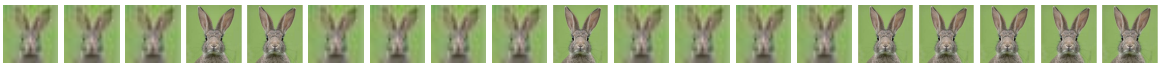
Modern times

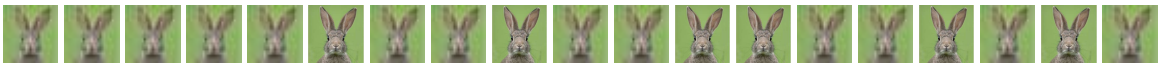
In the 1960s, hat-wearing became a casualty of two trends: women's hair was coiffed into exotic works of sculpture by hairdressers, and more casual dress came into vogue. But from the 1980s, hats have enjoyed a slow revival, thanks to members of the Royal Family such as Queen Elizabeth and Princess Diana and Princess Catherine being enthusiastic hat-wearers.

Figure 64 1960s hairstyles (Vintag.es website)

Akubra moved to Kempsey in 1973 to be closer to their rural customer base, and Akubra and Mountcastle continue to make slouch hats for the Army. Campaigns to raise awareness of skin cancer from the early 1980s have seen a return to wide-brimmed hats for sun protection.

Figure 65 Royal hats (Harper's Bazaar website)





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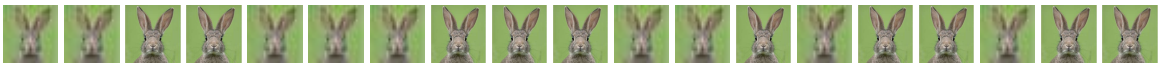

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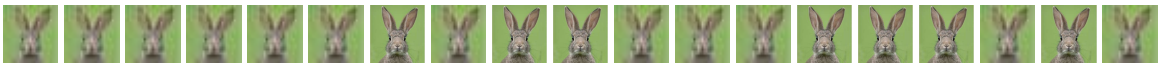

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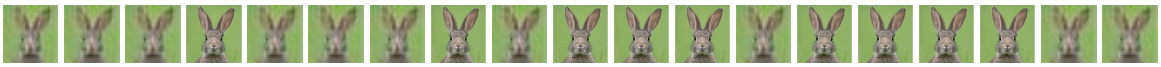

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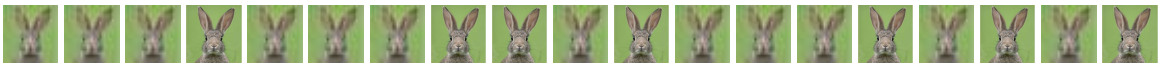

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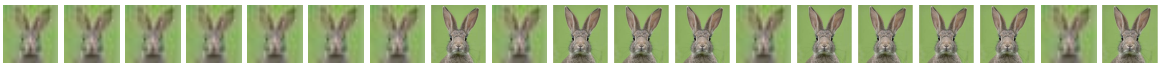

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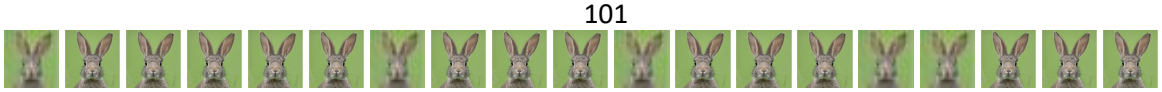

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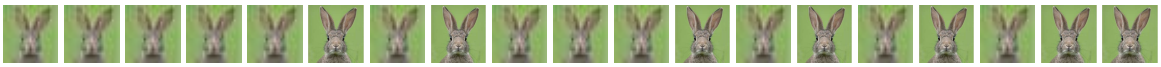

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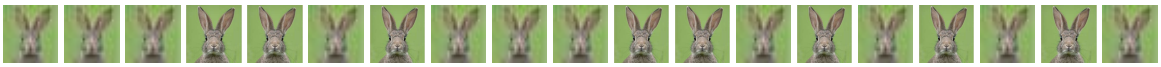

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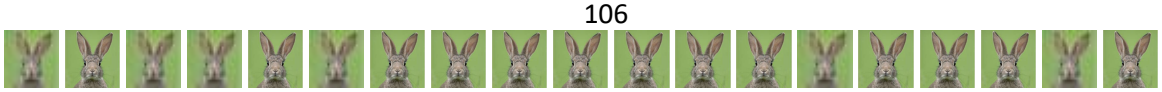

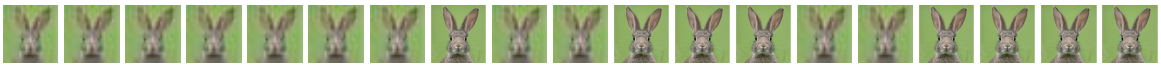

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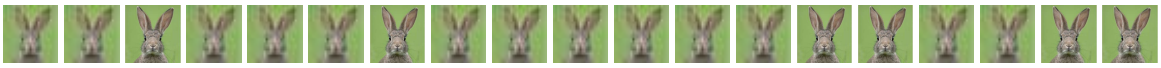

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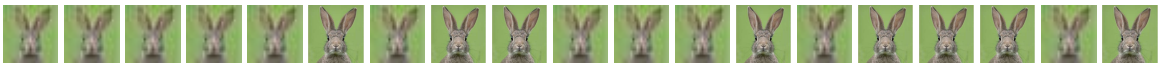

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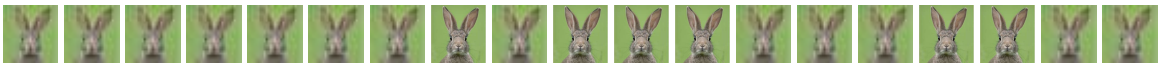

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