

# Alexander Mackie

AN ACADEMIC LIFE



Geoffrey Sherington

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

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# Prologue

Alexander Mackie is recognised as one of the most significant figures in twentieth-century Australian education. Previous accounts of Mackie's life have concentrated on his years at Sydney Teachers' College, where he was the founding principal – an office he held for over thirty years – and his term as the inaugural professor of education at the University of Sydney.<sup>1</sup> This study of Mackie is more transnational and focuses on the emergence of education as an academic discipline associated with the profession of teaching.

Mackie's career as an academic began in Scotland and continued in Sydney. He was part of a Scottish diaspora seeking to influence the Empire. Frustrated by the Australian bureaucracy, he became attached to American progressivism and the belief that classroom teachers should initiate educational change. These beliefs influenced Mackie's own family; he and his wife, Annie, homeschooled their children, Margaret and John, who also became academics.

The intellectual tradition and ideal of the academic arises from the Academy of Plato, founded in the fourth century BC to educate the young in Platonic doctrines. The original academy disintegrated in 87 BC, but the prestigious title of 'academic' lived on in the intellectual and religious traditions of the West.<sup>2</sup> In *Epistles*, Horace is quoted as stating 'Seek Truth in the groves of Academe'.<sup>3</sup> In *Paradise regained*, John Milton wrote 'Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts ... See there the olive grove of academe'.<sup>4</sup> The idea of the academy as a centre of scholarly engagement has persisted over the centuries. The British Academy was founded in 1900 to recognise the many scholars in the humanities and social sciences who had contributed new knowledge to their fields.

The academic ideal has become entwined with the concept of the university.

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- 1 Boardman et al. 1995; Spaul and Mandelson 1983.
  - 2 Hornblower and Spawforth 2003, 2.
  - 3 Horace, book 2, no. 2, line 45, quoted in Knowles 1999, 381.
  - 4 Milton, book 4, line 240, quoted in Knowles 1999, 518.

In Europe, universities emerged in the Middle Ages as communities of study and learning. Academics became scholar–teachers in this new institutional setting. Universities were associated with professions such as the law and provided support to the Church and state. From the thirteenth century, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in Britain were collegiate in form, with liberal humanist curricula educating the elite on how to govern through Church and state.

From the eighteenth century, universities were transformed in various ways. In particular, under the influence of the European Enlightenment, they became increasingly secular; religious orders gave way to lay teachers.<sup>5</sup> Progressively, universities became associated with the study of and training for old and new professions. While older disciplines were reframed, new academic disciplines, such as education, emerged as foundations for professional practice. Research became just as important in the education of professionals as in the ‘pure’ disciplines of the sciences and humanities. While professional accreditation differed depending on local contexts, the ideals and practices of research created and united transnational academic and professional communities.

In Britain, Scottish universities were at the forefront of the engagement between universities and the professions, extending opportunities for men and women in teaching and other areas.<sup>6</sup> Universities in Scotland were particularly important due to their longstanding relationships with European universities and their focus on professional education and training in areas such as medicine – a focus that extended into fields such as engineering and education. Scotland was also instrumental in finding ways for universities to co-operate with teachers’ colleges – a foundation for the professionalisation of teaching. Closely aligned with European intellectual traditions, Scotland adopted the German ideal of the research scholar and incorporated the American aim of transforming teaching into a university-based profession. As part of the British Empire, Australia slowly embraced these changes, particularly under the influence of members of the Scottish diaspora such as Alexander Mackie.<sup>7</sup>

Born into an age that was redefining academic life, Mackie saw his mission as promoting teaching as a profession and education as an academic discipline. His views on how this could be achieved were formed in late nineteenth-century Edinburgh. His efforts to promote change took place in Sydney, but his influence spread across Australia and into the Empire. Mackie’s academic life encompassed both the public and private domains. In the public domain, he was an aspiring young academic before becoming principal of Sydney Teachers’ College and professor of education at the University of Sydney. In private life, his family

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5 Rüegg 2005.

6 For a recent summary of these changes, see Anderson 2006.

7 Forsyth 2014; Pietsch 2013; Sherington and Horne 2012.



was shaped by his academic values. His wife, Annie Duncan, was his student and a lecturer at Sydney Teachers' College; she resigned after their marriage to become a mother and co-teacher of their children. Through their daughter, Margaret, and son, John, Alexander and Annie passed on specific academic values.

Intended principally as a study of Mackie's academic life, this book is divided into three parts. Part one examines how a young Alexander Mackie was attracted to academic life. Part two illuminates his strategies for implementing changes in teaching and incorporating education as an academic discipline in Sydney. Part three describes the Mackies as an academic family located in Sydney but linked to a transnational community. It also details Alexander's private and family life, including his passion for walking and climbing and his exploration of nature.

Research for the book was principally based upon the extensive papers of the Mackie family held in the University of Sydney Archives. The papers were deposited there by Margaret Mackie. I never met any of the Mackie family, but I am indebted to them for this rich archival source. Originally catalogued by the Archivist Tim Robinson, the Mackie papers are an important holding of the University of Sydney Archives. I am grateful for the friendship and collegiality of the archives' staff in making this project work. In particular, I thank Tim Robinson, Nyree Morrison and Karin Brennan for helping me to undertake my journey into the Mackie family's past.

Other colleagues have helped in various ways. John Hughes and Bill Green supported the project by providing perspectives on Mackie as a philosopher and progressive educator. Ruth Watts in Birmingham kindly read early parts of the typescript, providing commentary on aspects of teacher education in Britain. Joyce Goodman asked me to include the study in a wider project. Tom O'Donoghue in Perth encouraged me to continue the project to the end. In Sydney, Julia Horne, Tamson Pietsch, Deryck Schreuder and Hannah Forsyth have all been sources of encouragement and ideas for improvement. I appreciate the contributions of the members of the History of University Life seminar, which has met at St Paul's College at the University of Sydney since 2007. I have also enjoyed regular meetings of an academic lunch group – Ros Pesman, Peter Cochrane and Douglas Newton – whose conversation and ideas kept me going throughout this project. Chelsea Sutherland's assistance has been invaluable, and Jenny Browne compiled the index. Publication of this book was funded from the Gerald and Gwenda Fischer Bequest.

I began writing books in the 1970s, while living at Austinmer, south of Sydney, and working at the University of Wollongong. My wife, Lisa, was looking after our three-year-old son, Gregory, who is now married to Philippa – and they have Lucinda and Henry. I thank all my family for their love and support over four decades. And I promise them that this will be my last publication.

Geoffrey Sherington  
Emeritus professor  
University of Sydney  
2019

PART ONE  
The young academic



*Alexander Mackie upon graduation from the University of Edinburgh in 1900. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/23.*

Alexander Mackie was born on 25 May 1876 in the heart of Edinburgh. His family lived at 9 Dean Terrace, overlooking the Leith River. The residence was in the Georgian New Town, which had been built in the eighteenth century as part of the city's urban improvement. Alexander's father, William, was a 'master grocer' in Leith Road, a position that signified his status in Edinburgh's commercial life.<sup>8</sup>

The son of a Presbyterian minister, William Mackie had grown up in a manse and attended the local parish school in the 'dark stone' town of Huntly, not far from Aberdeen in North-East Scotland. Forty years later, he retained his copy and workbooks from when he was a fourteen-year-old schoolboy. With practical knowledge drawn from his schooling, William had gone into commerce.<sup>9</sup> His two sisters remained in Huntly, living in a cottage with two attic bedrooms, a fuel stove and no bathroom plumbing.<sup>10</sup>

Two years after Alexander's birth, his mother, Margaret (nee Davidson), died giving birth to his sister, Maggie. According to his daughter, Margaret, Alexander's mother's family blamed his father for his mother's death because, despite warnings, she had become pregnant for a second time. His father became depressed and almost a recluse. A devoted housekeeper, Elizabeth Murray, raised both children. Neither Alexander nor Maggie ever met their mother's family.<sup>11</sup>

His mother's early death and his father's partial withdrawal from the household may have helped to shape young Alexander's identity. As an adult, he would write to his father with a mixture of intimacy and formality, opening with 'My dear Papa' and closing with the endearment 'yours affectionately', but ending his letters with the formal signature 'A. Mackie'. In his mid-teens, Alexander was already developing a sense of personal style. Maggie wrote to her father in 1892, when she was on holiday with her brother: 'Alexander will be a great masher with his pot hat & stick up collar you will look quite little beside him.'<sup>12</sup>

Alexander and Maggie spent holidays with their aunts in Huntly, where in 'spring the scent of gorse from the laird's estates drifted over the workers' cottages'.<sup>13</sup> The Mackie family had connections with a local wool mill, but Aunt Maggie and Aunt Jim (Jemina) lived a frugal life, committed to the traditional values of the local kirk. Alexander spent his days in Huntly cycling through the

8 USA: Biographical file 862/868; Alexander Mackie.

9 USA: Alexander Mackie personal archives P169/1; School exercise books of William Mackie.

10 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie; USA: A. Mackie P169/40 Family history; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

11 USA: Margaret Mackie personal archives Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 16.

12 USA: A. Mackie P169/2 Letters received by William Mackie; Maggie Mackie to William Mackie, 20 September 1892. In late nineteenth-century Scotland, a 'masher' was a 'dandy' dressed up to attract the opposite sex.

13 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 1–10.

beechwood, fishing for trout in the local Bogie and Deveron rivers and going for long walks in the custom of his father. During a visit in 1899, he travelled to Aberdeen. He was impressed by the large number of churches in the city; they seemed ‘very conspicuous’ and clean with the ‘new appearance of the granite’. Equally outstanding was the library of King’s College at the University of Aberdeen.<sup>14</sup>

## THE CITY OF EDINBURGH

Despite his family’s history in North-East Scotland, Alexander’s principal upbringing was in Edinburgh – an urban setting experiencing social and educational change. The city is associated with the foundation of the Scottish nation and its monarchy. Edinburgh is a hybrid name drawn from an Anglian and Celtic past; ‘edin’ implied ‘hill slope’, with Celtic antecedents, and ‘burgh’ was Anglo-Saxon for fort.



*Deveron Bridge, Huntly – the site of fishing for young Alexander Mackie. USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023.*

The royal burgh of Edinburgh was created in 1130. The union of the English and Scottish crowns in 1603, followed by parliamentary union in 1707, helped to place Edinburgh within a wider British culture. By the early nineteenth century, Edinburgh was a centre of literary culture and political and social reviews

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14 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, August 1899.

that influenced the British Empire, Europe and North America. Authors sought publishers in Edinburgh, which was increasingly recognised as a ‘city of the intellect’. While Glasgow’s wealth was mainly built on manufacturing and ship-building, Edinburgh was associated with ‘learned professions’ such as law and medicine. Of particular significance was the large, well-educated middle-class population in the city.<sup>15</sup>

Education differentiated Scotland from England, even after 1707. Scottish universities emphasised the role of professors as the primary authority in teaching; their approach was similar in many ways to German universities. At Oxford and Cambridge, tutors in residential colleges taught a curriculum based on the classics and mathematics. Most of the students were drawn from elite English public schools, where they had been educated in the formation of character. In contrast, Scottish schools and universities emphasised merit and intellect. Unlike pupils in the colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, most students in Scotland did not reside at the universities. They attended classes during the day, listening to teachers and professors delivering lectures.

The University of Edinburgh was an important part of Scotland’s national educational profile. In 1582, King James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) had granted a royal charter to the Edinburgh town council sanctioning what was originally known as Tounis College. Edinburgh now had a university to match the three other Scottish universities established at St Andrews, Aberdeen and Glasgow in the medieval period.<sup>16</sup> While these other universities were in decline, Edinburgh’s new institution prospered. Initially, students followed a four-year course in arts, focusing on the classics and philosophy. Many then proceeded to study divinity as a step to entering the Church. Most of the original teachers were ‘regents’, teaching all subjects in the curriculum. But increasingly, specialised professors were appointed to oversee the curriculum in arts, divinity, law and medicine.<sup>17</sup>

What had been a ‘prosperous Arts College, with a small but respected Divinity school attached to it, became in the middle of the eighteenth century one of the leading universities in Europe’.<sup>18</sup> Edinburgh’s international reputation came principally from its medical school. A chair of medicine was established in 1685. By the 1720s, candidates for medical degrees were being examined in written tests, ensuring that appropriate standards were maintained. This approach would later be emulated throughout the university.<sup>19</sup> Students now enrolled not just from Ed-

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15 Fry 2009, 283–84.

16 Horn 1967, 1–4.

17 Horn 1967, 6–9.

18 Horn 1967, 40.

19 Horn 1967, 41–43.

inburgh and the Scottish ‘borderlands’ but also from England, Europe and even the Americas.

Edinburgh was not only the leading European university in the field of medicine; its alumni also became pre-eminent in the Church and in fields such as law, teaching, science and literature. Given the size of the university, the achievements of its graduates compared favourably with Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>20</sup>

## DEMOCRATIC INTELLECT AND MIDDLE-CLASS MERITOCRACY

North-East Scotland, the ancestral home of the Mackies, was supposedly the birthplace of the ideal of the ‘democratic intellect’ in Scottish education. The Presbyterian Church in Scotland advocated education for all Scottish people. This helped to create the idea that the future of the nation lay in schools and universities – including those in remote rural parishes – identifying and supporting intellectual talent. In the North-East, these educational principles were embodied in parish schools and in a faith in the knowledge of university-educated schoolmasters. These traditions lasted into the nineteenth century. The North-East continued to have the highest proportion of its population attending university, compared with the rest of Scotland.<sup>21</sup>

Arising out of the Reformation, Scotland had developed a system of ‘public’ schools that embraced both parishes and local towns. By the late eighteenth century this ‘national’ system included about 900 parish schools and eighty to ninety burgh grammar schools, all maintained and supported by the Church of Scotland, in partnership with town councils and landowners.<sup>22</sup> The spread of schools gave rise to the view that Scotland, unlike England, provided opportunities to almost all men – and even some women.

The foundations of Scottish education lay in the parish system, including both kirk and school. The ‘dominie’ or local school teacher, who was often educated in philosophy, held almost equal status to the minister of the church; both sought to educate their young flock in Christianity and provide knowledge of the world. Bright students, usually male – sometimes ‘lads o’ pairts’ from the rural peasantry – would be encouraged to go to the local burgh or grammar school, or straight to university, to extend their knowledge in areas such as philosophy. They could then make their way in the world, often as teachers or ministers of God’s word.<sup>23</sup>

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20 Allan 2015, 114–32.

21 Anderson 1983, 9–10, 123–26, 299.

22 Myers 1983, 76.



An example of the progress of a talented Scottish student from the parishes to the metropolis was seen in the life of the nineteenth-century philosopher Thomas Carlyle. Coming from a devout family of farmers, he was sent from the local parish school to the nearby grammar school with the expectation that he would eventually enter the ministry. In 1809, at age thirteen, he walked to Edinburgh to become the classic impoverished student – living in lodges, sending his laundry home, eating oatmeal in the morning and trying to make sense of lectures delivered by his professors. Eventually, he abandoned his planned career in the Church to enter the literary and intellectual world, establishing his reputation as a man of letters.<sup>24</sup>

The ideal of the democratic intellect persisted throughout the nineteenth century. In 1834, *Aberdeen Magazine* published the following ‘Remarks on parochial education in Scotland’:

It is a system of which Scotland has just reason to be proud ... Of silver and gold she has but ever possessed a trifling share; nor has nature bestowed on her the warmth of unclouded sun and rich products of luxuriant soil ... yet her moral atmosphere has been generally serene and unclouded. While the benefits of knowledge in other countries have been, comparatively speaking, locked up from all those whose fortunes have not raised them above the lower or even middling ranks of life, the son of the most humble peasant in our native land has in his power to approach the fountain of learning and to drink unmolested from its pure and invigorating and enriching stream.<sup>25</sup>

It has been argued that even in North-East Scotland the democratic intellect was a cultural ‘myth’ that emerged as a literary tradition, rather than a reality of life for most children, who continued to leave school early to work on the land.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the rural parish became less foundational in Scottish education. The population of Edinburgh grew fourfold, giving rise to a new urban middle class.<sup>27</sup> In place of rural parishes sending poor boys to universities, urban centres became a focus, leading to institutional adaptation and a new relationship between schools and universities.

By the early nineteenth century, private secondary schools had emerged, often offering modern curricula, in contrast to the classical curriculum of the burgh schools. Edinburgh High School, founded in medieval Edinburgh, was still seen

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23 Anderson 1983, 1–26, 358–61. See also Davie 1964.

24 Anderson 1983, 6.

25 Northcroft 2015, 176.

26 Northcroft 2015, 171–89.

27 Fry 2009, 283.

in 1825, on its 500th anniversary, as ‘open to boys of all ranks and circumstances’, proving the ‘use of a school in a free state’ for ‘talent, perseverance and industry’.<sup>28</sup> With this claim, Edinburgh High School restated the values of a public school open to talented students from all social classes. In contrast, Edinburgh Academy, founded in 1824, offered a wider curriculum, while still including the classics, and promised higher academic standards leading on to university. Private shareholders owned the academy, which had higher fees than the high school. The academy was situated in the New Town, where many of the professional classes had relocated.<sup>29</sup>

Increasingly, secondary schools in Scotland were catering for the urban middle class, providing a way into the professions. As in England, even philanthropic bequests were reconstituted to serve such ends.<sup>30</sup> A significant example in Edinburgh was the Merchant Company, which was created through royal charter in 1681 to protect its trading rights in the city. Over the next century and a half, the company administered trusts and bequests, many of which established ‘hospital schools’ for the poor and schools for girls. By the mid-nineteenth century, at least four of these impressive institutions could be seen from the banks of the River Leith. But many in the Merchant Company regarded these philanthropic institutions, which had relatively few residents, as no longer fit for purpose. Instead, the company decided to reform and transform them into institutions for the children of the middle class.<sup>31</sup>

In 1868, the Merchant Company designed a scheme to remove all the charity children and convert the four standing buildings into ‘great day schools’, admitting students by ‘merit in open examination’, and to establish bursaries and open scholarship.<sup>32</sup> Many opposed this proposal on the grounds that it would deprive poor children of opportunities.<sup>33</sup> Despite such reservations, legislation was passed by the British parliament. By 1871–72, four schools had been established – two for females and two for males – with names reflecting the original beneficiary or bequest: the Edinburgh Ladies College, George Watson’s Ladies College, George Watson’s College for Boys and Daniel Stewart’s College for Boys. Overall, 4,000 students enrolled in these institutions, reflecting the general demand in Edinburgh for schools that provided education based on the principle of establishing merit through examination.<sup>34</sup> Some complained that these new

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28 Anderson 1983, 20.

29 Anderson 1983, 21.

30 Anderson 1983, 162–202.

31 Harrison 1920, 33.

32 Harrison 1920, 28.

33 Anderson 1983, 174–79.

34 Anderson 1983, 44.

schools were undercutting Edinburgh High School and Edinburgh Academy by setting their fees too low.

The 1880s marked a significant phase in the development of secondary schools in Scotland. Following the 1873 Act that established state funded elementary schools, the new government Department of Education turned its attention to creating credentials for attending and completing different levels of schooling. Among other changes, regulations established a ‘certificate of merit’ for students leaving elementary school and a ‘leaving certificate’ for those completing secondary school.<sup>35</sup> The Merchant Company schools soon supplanted the older private schools and provided easier access to the University of Edinburgh. By 1880, more than thirty per cent of students entering the University of Edinburgh had attended one of the Merchant Company schools; within a decade this figure would be almost forty-five per cent.<sup>36</sup>

Alexander Mackie’s father had attended the local parish school in Leith, but there were different expectations for his son. As newcomers to Edinburgh, the Mackies took advantage of the new social context and adapted to the urban environment in ways similar to other migrants from outside the city. In 1916, looking back on the new arrivals of the nineteenth century, the Edinburgh lawyer J.H.A. Macdonald – elevated to the bench as Lord Kingsburgh – reflected that ‘there was no city anywhere in which parents of the middle class can more easily obtain good school education at a very moderate outlay ... Very many persons possessed of a fixed but not high income migrate to Edinburgh, because of teaching facilities which the schools of the city provide’. To Lord Kingsburgh, such persons ‘are the best citizens a town can have. They give stability to a community.’<sup>37</sup>

The Merchant Company schools would probably have appealed to William Mackie as a ‘master grocer’. Access to higher education was also an important consideration for Edinburgh’s middle-class families. In 1884, at the age of eight, Alexander entered Daniel Stewart’s College. Occupying a site on the western outskirts of Edinburgh, it was some distance from the centre of population but close to the Mackie home. Daniel Stewart’s was one of the four new or transformed secondary schools that could be viewed from the banks of the Leith – buildings described by a recent historian of Edinburgh as ‘sober or swaggering’.<sup>38</sup> Alexander could easily walk the cobblestones alongside the Leith from his home to his new school.

Daniel Stewart’s for Boys was established in 1848. Initially, it had a technical bias to attract the working class, but it was soon charging fees comparable

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35 Anderson 1983, 206–8.

36 Anderson 1983, 306–7.

37 Fry 2009, 103.

38 Fry 2009, 298.

to its brother school, George Watson's<sup>39</sup> – George Watson's offered a more academic curriculum for students bound for university. Along with other schools in the emerging private sector, Daniel Stewart's had a 'preparatory' department that provided entrance to the full secondary school. From the 1870s, the school's physical facilities were improved and much was made of the qualifications of the staff. Increasingly, the school focused on competitive exams designed to prepare students to enter university and, ultimately, to proceed to the professions.<sup>40</sup> There was also attention to physical education and sport, including cricket. This reflected the emergence of English public school influences in Edinburgh through schools such as Glenalmond, which was founded by Episcopalians in 1847, and Fettes, which was also funded through the Merchant Company and opened in 1870.<sup>41</sup>

Daniel Stewart's was 'meritocratic' in aim and purpose. In his first year, Alexander won a certificate of merit for proficiency in reading and writing. As he progressed through the school over the next six years, he was awarded certificates for attainments in subjects across the curriculum, including English, Latin, history, French, arithmetic, geometry and algebra, and Greek.<sup>42</sup> Daniel Stewart's was moving towards organising the school into age-based departments – primary for boys under twelve, intermediate for those over twelve who passed the 'qualifying' exam and were preparing to complete the state Intermediate Certificate at age sixteen, and post-intermediate for those preparing for university.<sup>43</sup>

Alexander left Daniel Stewart's in 1890. In 1951, he told a gathering at Sydney Teachers' College that by age sixteen the 'selection of a job was becoming important. Medicine, law, business were considered by my father but rejected. At the time I had no definite interest.'<sup>44</sup> Meeting a school friend in the street, Alexander learned that friend was intending to take the state pupil teacher examination. Alexander decided to join him. According to Alexander's daughter, Margaret, 'one of them, they never knew which, was top in this test, the other second'.<sup>45</sup> Alexander and his friend had, in effect, embarked on a journey towards teaching careers in a new climate of professionalisation.

39 Anderson 1983, 180–81.

40 Harrison 1920, 40–48.

41 Anderson 1983, 20, 175–76.

42 USA: A. Mackie P169/5 Educational certificates and results of Alexander Mackie; Daniel Stewart's College certificate of merit, 1884.

43 Harrison 1920, 47.

44 USA: A. Mackie P169/10 Drafts of talks by Alexander Mackie; Alexander Mackie's speech on Ivan Turner's inauguration as the new principal, 1951.

45 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie.

## TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

Historian Harold Perkin has suggested that nineteenth-century Britain was shaped by contrasting ideals: the ‘entrepreneurial’, associated with men of business such as Alexander’s father, and the ‘professional’, attached to ideas of merit that were increasingly associated with credentials gained through university education – the path on which Alexander was embarking.<sup>46</sup> Scotland had long celebrated the talents and expertise of professionals. Robert Louis Stevenson, born in Edinburgh in 1850, came from an extended line of lighthouse engineers. His passion lay with literary pursuits, leading his father to comment that literature was ‘no profession’ but that his son ‘might be called to the Bar if [he] chose’.<sup>47</sup> Stevenson studied law and considered an academic career, even while his fictions of adventure and travel were becoming known throughout the world.



*Alexander Mackie in 1894. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/18.*

Born in 1850, a generation before Alexander Mackie, Stevenson’s sympa-

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46 Perkin 1969b.

47 Simpson 1898, 188.

thies lay with the ‘old’ University of Edinburgh, where ‘all classes rub shoulders on the greasy benches. The raffish young gentleman in gloves must measure his scholarship with the plain clownish laddie from the parish school.’<sup>48</sup> For Stevenson, the ‘old university’ had disappeared by the late nineteenth century: ‘the most lamentable change is the absence of a certain lean, ugly, idle, unpopular student whose presence was for me the gist and heart of the whole matter.’<sup>49</sup> Progressively, universities in Scotland were focusing more on preparing students for the professions. This was the world Alexander Mackie came to know.

The middle-class ideal of professionalisation had specific effects on teachers and teaching in Scotland. The parish ‘dominie’ had long held a position of influence, particularly in rural areas. Through their connection with the Presbyterian Church, they had some official status. But they also had independence and the security of tenure. Some parish schoolmasters attended university, though few completed formal degrees.<sup>50</sup> Just as urbanisation and industrialisation helped to transform schooling in Scotland, the traditional idea of the teacher was also reshaped in the nineteenth century. Teaching was increasingly viewed as a profession based on extended education.

The professionalisation of teaching took place over almost a century. Initially, Scotland undertook local and school-based experiments to find new ways to teach large numbers of children. The clergyman Andrew Bell was partially responsible for introducing the ‘monitorial system’ in 1812, whereby older children acted as monitors, helping to teach younger pupils. The idea was introduced at Edinburgh High School by its rector, leading to a class of 250 students instructed by monitors.<sup>51</sup> The monitorial system led to ‘model schools’ or ‘normal schools’, which were designed to offer examples of how to teach, often experimenting with new methods of teaching. By 1826, a sessional or ‘normal’ school had been established in Edinburgh under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. This school brought together teachers from across Scotland for further education and training.<sup>52</sup>

The constitutional union of England and Scotland in the eighteenth century imposed uniformity. Gradually, the London-based administration used the power of the purse to enforce a new system of teacher training. From 1833, throughout the United Kingdom, state grants were provided to Church elementary schools. By 1846, a system of ‘pupil teachers’ was instituted, whereby young men and women were apprenticed to teachers. These pupil teachers studied under and

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48 Stevenson n.d., 31.

49 Stevenson n.d., 40.

50 Bischof 2015, 208–15. See also Myers 1983, 76–77.

51 Cruickshank 1970, 28–29.

52 Cruickshank 1970, 40–41.

assisted supervising teachers in their classrooms. Some were then awarded scholarships to attend teachers' colleges to extend their general education and their knowledge of teaching. There was an increasing emphasis on recruiting pupil teachers directly from the new elementary schools from the age of thirteen, under five-year apprenticeships.

This new system emerged just as the 'great disruption' of 1843 split the Presbyterian Church. A large section of the Church, led by Thomas Chalmers, professor of theology at the University of Edinburgh, objected to the power exercised by local gentry in lay patronage of the 'presentation' of ministers. About 470 ministers and one-third of the laity left the Presbyterian Church to found a new Free Church. Part of this new church's mission was to build churches, schools and colleges. The disruption helped to double the number of teacher training colleges. Moray House in Edinburgh, a Free Church college closely associated with the University of Edinburgh, was founded in 1848.<sup>53</sup>

The new system of apprenticeships followed by training at teachers' colleges raised issues about professional standing and status. In 1848, the Educational Institute of Scotland was formed in Edinburgh, representing the professional interests of burgh and parish school teachers. The institute's aims were to defend the traditional system of Scottish education based on parish dominies and to advance teaching as a profession.<sup>54</sup> Among the institute's supporters was Simon Laurie, then secretary of the Church of Scotland Education Committee. He proposed that prospective teachers should first attend secondary burgh schools, rather than 'normal schools' (which soon became teachers' training colleges). "Why," he asked, "set down Normal Schools in low localities and assemble together an innumerable number of ill-trained unmannerly children and educate our future teachers on the same forms as these children?" It was far better, he suggested, for prospective teachers to mix with the middle class in secondary schools, where they would acquire 'the manners and habits of gentlemen'.<sup>55</sup>

An administrator and author, in the mid- to late nineteenth century Laurie was Scotland's best known 'educationalist'; he was recognised throughout Britain and the Empire, and even in America. Born in Edinburgh in 1829, Laurie was the son of the chaplain to the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and the grandson (on his mother's side) of a Presbyterian minister. He attended Edinburgh High School and then Edinburgh University, graduating in 1849. After five years as a private tutor, he became the secretary to the Education Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, a post he held for half a century. From this position of authority he helped to shape educational activities in Scotland.

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53 Cruickshank 1970, 51–53.

54 Myers 1983, 83–85.

55 Cruickshank 1970, 65.

Laurie reported to the Argyll Commission on schools in the 1860s and was then an adviser to the Merchant Company, advocating the reorganisation of the hospital schools, including Daniel Stewart's. He also became an examiner and visitor for the substantial Dick Bequest, set up to supplement the salaries of teachers in North-East Scotland and help them to attend university.<sup>56</sup>

With his background at Edinburgh High School and the University of Edinburgh, Laurie was committed to ensuring future teachers continued to be exposed to a liberal education that included philosophy and the humanities. In 1868, he applied unsuccessfully for the chair of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>57</sup> In 1876 (the year of Alexander Mackie's birth), he was appointed Bell professor of education at Edinburgh. A similar appointment was also made at St Andrews, making Scottish universities the first in the British Isles to found chairs of education. Formally, Laurie's chair was established in the conjoint fields of the theory, history and art of education. In his inaugural professorial address, Laurie sought to define the place of education in the university. He paid particular attention to the success of training colleges over the previous thirty years, but went on to describe universities as the sites for education; 'a specialist Training College does not answer the same purposes as a University. The broader culture, the freer air, the higher aims of the latter give to it an educational influence which specialist colleges can never exercise.'<sup>58</sup>

Laurie saw two overlapping scenarios for the future of teacher education. First, he proposed that universities should become the 'trainers of all aspirants to the teaching profession who are fitted by their previous education to enter on a University curriculum', holding out the possibility of a Faculty of Education similar to departments devoted to professions such as engineering.<sup>59</sup> Second, he suggested that education should be accepted as a subject discipline within universities – a step that had been partially achieved by the establishment of the chair he held. However, he still faced claims that teacher education was too focused on practice rather than theory.<sup>60</sup> These twin scenarios would remain influential in future programs of teacher education, not only in Scotland but throughout Britain and the Empire. And they would have a specific impact on Alexander Mackie's professional education.

Laurie's attempts to find a place for the study of education in universities faced a number of difficulties. Although St Andrews appointed a Bell professor of education in 1876 – John Meiklejohn – the university did little to support this

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56 Templeton 2010. See also Knox 1962.

57 Knox 1962, 139.

58 Laurie 1913 [1882], 10–11.

59 Laurie 1913 [1882], 11–17.

60 Laurie 1913 [1882], 20–33.



chair. The Universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow did not make any such appointments until the early twentieth century. At the University of Edinburgh, Laurie found little support for any program of educational studies until 1880, when the university introduced a ‘Literate of Arts’ that included education as an optional course. In 1886, Laurie persuaded the University of Edinburgh to establish a post-graduate diploma, the ‘Schoolmaster’s Diploma’, taken at a general level by those with a pass degree or as a diploma by honours graduates seeking careers in secondary school teaching.<sup>61</sup>

The introduction of education into the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Edinburgh was part of an ongoing review of Scottish universities in the nineteenth century, focusing on the arts curriculum and the tradition of a general degree with philosophy at its core. A series of royal commissions were established in 1826, 1858 and 1876. Some saw these commissions as an effort to ‘Anglicise’ Scottish education by introducing more specialist studies in areas such as classics to replace the general university curriculum. There were also fears that Scotland’s democratic tradition in education would be undermined by proposals to raise university entry standards and thereby exclude poor boys from parish schools. At the same time, there were limited moves to introduce ‘honours’ schools for further specialisation – these schools challenged the general curriculum, which focused on philosophy.<sup>62</sup>

Recent research suggests that this was not so much a process of Anglicising Scottish universities as part of a transformation of universities and higher education that spread throughout the British Empire during the nineteenth century. While the specialties of classics and mathematics maintained their status at Oxford and Cambridge, elsewhere middle-class meritocracy, professionalisation and local community interests helped to shape the university curricula. Scottish universities, which were increasingly grounded in principles of merit and professional training, influenced the curriculum of the University of London and many of the civic universities in England, as well as many of the degree-granting institutions established in the Empire from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Thus, Scottish examples as much as English influences helped to shape universities in metropolitan centres throughout the Empire. This was the beginning of a form of transnationalism that would soon influence the development of education as an academic discipline.

The increasingly professional orientation and purpose of Scotland’s universities aided the introduction of education as a foundational discipline for the teaching profession. In the Act of 1889, the new Universities Commission in-

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61 Bell 1983, 158.

62 Davie 1964; Walker 1994, 58–71.

63 Anderson and Wallace 2015, 265–85; Sherington and Horne 2010, 36–51. See also Walker 1994, 72–84.

cluded education as a full qualifying subject for the Master of Arts (MA) degree at all four Scottish universities. This paved the way for professorial and lecturer appointments. It now seemed that Scotland's universities would play a prominent role in training teachers.

Scotland's university system provided an example for universities elsewhere in Britain. In teacher training, Scotland was moving away from the pupil teacher system introduced from England to embrace a model based on college and university education. Most teacher training in England was still based on the pupil teacher system, in association with training colleges, which were usually residential institutions controlled by the churches. From 1890, state grants were provided for the education and training of teachers in day training colleges, which would soon be absorbed into universities as Departments of Education. But it was not until the eve of World War One that the academic discipline of education became a significant part of universities in England and Wales.<sup>64</sup>

Laurie retired from his chair in 1903. He had not achieved everything he had expected when he was appointed professor almost thirty years before. But through his work for the government and the Church, and then in the university, he had become one of the most influential educators in Britain. His participation in government enquiries was matched by an extensive list of publications, principally on the history of education, although he also wrote about the philosophy of education. Laurie's most important book was his 1881 study of the Renaissance scholar Comenius, which bolstered his reputation across the Atlantic, including at the teachers' college attached to Columbia University in New York.<sup>65</sup> Laurie laid the basis for the academic study of education leading to publication (even if not based on research), providing an example for future academics focusing on education as a discipline involving theory and practice.

Simon Laurie was Alexander Mackie's first significant mentor and supervisor at the University of Edinburgh. Later, Laurie was a referee for Mackie's applications for academic positions, including the role of principal of Sydney Teachers' College. When Mackie was appointed to the principalship in Sydney, he remained in contact with Laurie.<sup>66</sup> A follower of the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume, Laurie believed in 'common sense' based on reason and the need to dispute all matters. This was Mackie's first encounter with academic philosophy.

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64 Turner 1990, 19–38.

65 Knox 1962, 141–44.

66 USA: A. Mackie P169/3 Letters received by Alexander Mackie 1892–1955; S.T. Laurie to Alexander Mackie, 26 June and 29 July 1910.

## BECOMING A TEACHER

Alexander Mackie was part of the changing world of teacher education in late nineteenth-century Scotland. Once a predominantly male profession, teaching in Scotland became more feminised in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Males comprised sixty-five per cent of Scottish teachers in 1851 but only thirty per cent in 1911.<sup>67</sup> Much of this shift was due to the 1873 Act that created state funded schools under school boards. The demand for teachers in urban elementary schools brought forth a teaching force with varied backgrounds and qualifications. The male dominie of the rural parish was increasingly supplanted by the mainly female urban elementary school teacher. The increasing demand for teachers was met through a complex system of certification that led to low pay for women. Many males now sought opportunities in commerce or the civil service. But there were still inducements for young men who entered teaching, such as scholarships and remuneration during training and the prospect of a career in teaching, particularly in secondary schools.<sup>68</sup>

The changing hierarchy in teacher education opened up new opportunities for middle-class males such as Alexander Mackie. Alexander entered the world of teaching at a significant moment in the history of Scottish education. His training began with a role as a pupil teacher. In 1893, his father signed an agreement with the Edinburgh School Board allowing Alexander to become a pupil teacher for three years. Alexander received a payment of £17.10s.00d for his first year and up to five hours instruction each week to prepare to qualify to enter a training college. He was allotted to a teacher at the elementary school in the village of Canonmills, which lay in a low hollow north of Edinburgh's New Town, near the Mackie family residence.<sup>69</sup> As Alexander told his daughter years later, as a sixteen-year-old pupil teacher in a gallery classroom of ninety students, he doubted that the children learned much. The experience led him to oppose both gallery classrooms and pupil teaching.<sup>70</sup>

After Canonmills, Alexander went on to Moray House teachers' college, where the rector praised his teaching; not only did Alexander have a command of the theory of education, he received the mark of 'excellent' for his 'practical work' – the 'highest in our power to give'.<sup>71</sup> Alexander soon became part of a

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67 Corr 1983, 137.

68 Corr 1983, 138–50.

69 USA: A. Mackie P169/5; Agreement between Edinburgh School Board and William Mackie, January 1893.

70 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie.

71 USA: A. Mackie P169/12 Applications by Alexander Mackie for positions; Applications and testimonials, Maurice Paterson, Rector, United Free Church Training College, Moray House, 9 March 1906.

new bursary scheme instituted in 1895, known as ‘Queen’s Studentships’, which allowed candidates to receive professional training and undertake academic studies at university (similar to scholarships already existing in England). These new studentships were intended principally for secondary school teachers and were particularly attractive to males, many of whom were undertaking concurrent studies at Moray House and the University of Edinburgh.<sup>72</sup>

Prospective teachers now occupied a prominent place in the university, as did women, who had been allowed to undertake degrees since 1892. In contrast to the 1860s, when students as young as fourteen could come to university, students were now required to complete a university entrance exam, which was normally undertaken after a prolonged period at secondary school. And there were opportunities for honours degrees in fields of specialisation.<sup>73</sup>

Late nineteenth-century reforms to teacher training had created the prospect of a more diverse teaching force that built upon but went beyond the old ideal of the dominie in the rural parish school. Some still had the background of a ‘lad o’ pairs’ who had been given an opportunity to become a teacher. Among those who qualified as teachers around the same time as Alexander Mackie was William Campbell. Born in 1867, Campbell was a poor boy from the Highlands who had succeeded, through his own merits and determination, in becoming a pupil teacher, before attending Moray House on a scholarship. A teacher by 1893, Campbell later married and became committed to family, school and local community.<sup>74</sup> Support for the democratic intellect among students from rural parishes was thus retained – although they had to conform to new regulations and examinations in preparing to teach.

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72 Cruickshank 1970, 119–21.

73 Anderson 1983, 252–93.

74 Bischof 2015, 208.



*Alexander Mackie as pupil teacher in the 1890s. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/23.*

In the four years between 1896 and 1900, Alexander Mackie completed a series of qualifications and studies. While still a pupil teacher, he undertook certificates in drawing and electricity. He continued to study fields of science under the British Department of Science and Art between 1898 and 1899, while undertaking courses at Moray House. Alexander commenced his studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1896, when he passed the preliminary exam for graduation in arts and science, completing courses in Greek, Latin, mathematics and English. He began the ordinary degree for the MA in 1897, but soon transferred to honours. From 1898 to 1900, he undertook honours courses, studying the history of education with Laurie and working with general philosophers.<sup>75</sup>

## THE ACADEMIC WORLD

In Britain, by the end of the nineteenth century, there was an emerging view of academics not just as teachers but as ‘intellectuals’ focused on ideas for social and political change.<sup>76</sup> At Oxford and Cambridge, the transformation of college tutors from clergymen in holy orders to secular ‘dons’ was associated with a

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<sup>75</sup> USA: A. Mackie P169/5.

<sup>76</sup> Collini 2006, 15–64.

new world of academic enquiry, critical scholarship and publication based on research. As one of the leading proponents of change, the Oxford scholar Mark Pattinson saw the ‘academic vocation’ as a ‘calling to the lifelong task of mental cultivation for its own sake’.<sup>77</sup> Harold Perkin has suggested that this was not so much a new vocation as the emergence of academics as the key profession preparing and educating students for entry into other professions. Increasingly, education and training for the various professions became integrated into universities, which imparted both skills and values. More generally, there were new values in university life; teaching and research held promises of services to the community and hopes of action for social change.<sup>78</sup>

Much of this reconceptualisation of academia was due to Scottish examples. In Scotland, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment helped to foster a new view of academics as creators of novel disciplines, particularly in the social sciences. For instance, economics was pioneered by Adam Smith and his colleagues. Academics and graduates from Edinburgh helped to found University College London, with professors appointed in medicine, law, political economy, logic, philosophy, modern languages, science and engineering. Edinburgh’s medical school was emulated throughout Britain and the Empire – an indication that academic study was a prelude to professional practice.<sup>79</sup>

Transnational models of reform also emerged. Visions of the modern university often focused on German examples. What became known as the ‘Humboldtian model’ of reform was part of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment in Germany and took clearer shape in the wake of Napoleon’s defeat of Prussia in 1807. The aristocrat Wilhelm von Humboldt played a decisive role in the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810. Humboldt and the philosopher Fichte saw university reform as a way of rousing the German nation. They looked to a new spirit of neo-humanism and character formation – *bildung* – to ‘inoculat[e] the Germans with the Greek spirit’. According to R.D. Anderson, Humboldt suggested a new image of universities that promoted ‘the unity of teaching and research’. Teachers had to be researchers; the search for truth and understanding, rather than professional training, was the primary purpose of universities. In the area of philosophy, ‘the university teacher is no longer a teacher, the student no longer a learner, but the latter carries out research himself, and the professor directs and supports his researches’.<sup>80</sup> Following the unification of Germany under Prussia in 1870, research was more clearly defined as state-supported science, encompassing both the investigation of phenomena and the application of results.

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77 Jones 2007, 9.

78 Perkin 1969a.

79 Perkin 1973, 74–75.

80 Anderson 2004, 55–56.

The physical and social sciences were embraced.

For most of the nineteenth century, German thinking and values held sway in the field of philosophy throughout much of Europe. The four Scottish universities had long histories of association with European philosophy. The Scottish Enlightenment had encouraged toleration and ‘liberty’ in philosophical debate and discussion in universities and in the Presbyterian Church. Scottish universities developed longstanding relationships with Germany through the discipline of philosophy and the work of moral philosophers such as Kant, Fichte and Hegel. This association with German thought was first seen in traditional disciplines, but also had a major effect on the emerging discipline of education.<sup>81</sup>

The German Enlightenment placed emphasis on education as a form of self-realisation. Born in 1776, the German philosopher Johann Friedrich Herbart published his *Science of education* in 1806. Herbart proclaimed that ‘the one and whole work’ of education was ‘Morality’, which was found in individual ‘will’ generated from desires.<sup>82</sup> Desires were regarded as conditions of ideas. This view had implications for teaching. The teacher was required to stimulate and incite interest so that pupils were open to new ideas. To do this, Herbart proposed five stages for developing a lesson in a class: preparation, presentation, association, generalisation and application.<sup>83</sup> The Herbartian method was regarded as one of the major contributions of German philosophy and applied science to the understanding of teaching methods.

Many students and scholars travelled to the University of Jena, which became known as the German centre for educational research. Founded in the sixteenth century, Jena was closely associated with the major figures of the German Enlightenment, including Goethe, who had taken a strong interest in the university, Schiller, who was given a chair in history, and Fichte and Hegel, who had taught there. By the late nineteenth century, it was a globally acclaimed centre for applied scientific research in the field of education, attracting scholars and postgraduate students from America, Britain and Europe.<sup>84</sup>

Some British students came to Germany to extend their knowledge and develop a foundation for careers in the Empire. Born in Scotland, John Smyth had begun his teaching career in Londonderry, Ireland, before migrating to New Zealand in 1881 to take up a teaching position in Invercargill. By 1891, he held a Bachelor of Arts (BA) from the University of Otago; he graduated with an MA the following year. In 1895, he left New Zealand to study at the University of Heidelberg. Upon returning to New Zealand, he became a lecturer in mental sci-

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81 Allan 2015, 97–113.

82 Selleck 1968, 227–32.

83 Selleck 1968, 235–36.

84 Anderson 2004, 155–56.

ence at Otago University. In 1898, he travelled to Edinburgh to complete a PhD in philosophy and formal studies in education and economics. From 1899 to 1900, he studied at Jena and Leipzig. He then returned to New Zealand to become inspector of schools at Wanganui. During a visit to Melbourne, Smyth impressed Frank Tate, the future director of education in Victoria, with his views on technical education. In 1902, Smyth was offered the position of principal of Melbourne Teachers' College and a lectureship at the University of Melbourne.<sup>85</sup>

The emerging discipline of education was also shaped by wider intellectual developments. Influenced by German philosophy, the intellectual movement known as philosophic idealism became prominent in British universities from the 1850s. Particularly significant in this movement were the Oxford don T.H. Green and other young, Oxford-educated liberals of moral conscience.<sup>86</sup> These idealists sought an 'organic whole', where communities of like-minded moral individuals came together for collective action. Such idealism went beyond individualism to embrace the view of the ethical state as central to restoring the sense of belonging to a community.<sup>87</sup> Philosophic idealism was not only shaped by transnational influences; it was an international movement giving a moral purpose to academic life.

Support for the role of the state in the provision of education was central to moral and political action among idealists. They aimed to extend opportunities and positive freedoms to all citizens. Before his early death in 1882, T.H. Green worked to develop elementary and secondary education to help create a national school system.<sup>88</sup> As in other areas of social life, Green preferred the voluntary principle in organising schools. But he accepted that only state action in education could lead to equality and justice and support principles of citizenship. Almost emulating the old Scottish ideal of democratic intellect, Green advocated a state system of education that would provide a 'ladder of learning' that students from humble homes could climb to attend university.<sup>89</sup>

A decade after Green's death, Oxford philosophers attempted to develop a theory of education that applied to the state by studying the classical scholar Plato. In 1897, the Oxford scholar R.L. Nettleship published *The theory of education in the Republic of Plato*, which provided an accessible account of Plato, stimulating further research and publications. Commitment to Platonic ideals became more common, though this did not so much advance the idea of education and democracy as strengthen Plato's assertion that government must focus on

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85 Flesch 2017, 14–16. See also Spaul and Mandelson 1983, 81–117.

86 Gordon and White 1979, 10–12; Richter 1964.

87 Gordon and White 1979, 13–47.

88 Gordon and White 1979, 67–88.

89 Richter 1964, 354–55.



training elite ‘guardians’ to protect society and its aristocratic and intellectual values.<sup>90</sup>

Philosophic idealism spread from Oxford. By the late nineteenth century, idealism was becoming pre-eminent in Scottish academic circles. One of T.H. Green’s close associates was Scots-born Edward Caird, a Christian idealist who became professor of philosophy at the University of Glasgow in 1866, before returning to Oxford as master of Balliol College in 1893.<sup>91</sup> In 1879, a number of Caird’s students formed The Witenagemote, a discussion group similar to The Old Morality of the 1850s, of which Green and Caird were members at Oxford. Within the next few decades, at least twelve members of The Witenagemote were appointed to chairs in Britain and the Empire. Among the group’s members were Mungo MacCallum and Francis Anderson, both at the University of Sydney, and Andrew Pringle-Pattison, who became the main supervisor of Mackie’s studies in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh.<sup>92</sup>

Andrew Pringle-Pattison (who changed his family name from Seth) and his brother James Seth were important figures in Scottish idealism from the 1870s. Sons of a bank clerk, they had excelled at school – Andrew at Edinburgh High School and James at George Watson’s. They both went on to study philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. Andrew then studied in Germany, co-operating on academic studies with the future Scottish liberal idealist politician R.B. Haldane. After positions at St Andrews and Cardiff, he returned to Edinburgh as professor of logic and metaphysics in 1891. In his early years, he was a Hegelian. But he came to reject the absolute idealism of Hegel, returning to Kant’s views, which located self-consciousness in the individual. By the 1890s, he was one of the best known Scottish philosophers in Britain and the United States, presenting a case for ‘rational theism’ and proposing ‘personal idealism’ founded on Christianity. Recent scholarship suggests that he was one of the most significant idealists in Scotland in the late nineteenth century.<sup>93</sup>

After early studies in philosophy, James Seth undertook a divinity degree and also spent a period in Germany. In 1886, he went to Dalhousie College in Nova Scotia, Canada, to teach ethics. He moved to Brown University in 1892 and then to Cornell in 1896. In 1898, he returned to Edinburgh to take up the chair of moral philosophy.<sup>94</sup> Andrew Pringle-Pattison’s and James Seth’s careers demonstrate the transnational and transatlantic movements of Scottish academics in the late nineteenth century. The fact that both Pringle-Pattison and Seth returned to

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90 Gordon and White 1979, 177–78.

91 Gordon and White 1979, 12, 59.

92 Jones and Muirhead 1921, 90–91.

93 Addison and Poon n.d.; Boucher 2015.

94 Graham n.d.

Edinburgh reinforces the university's international standing in the field of philosophy.

## STUDYING AT EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY

After studying the theory of education with Professor Simon Laurie, Alexander Mackie spent the latter part of his undergraduate degree under the supervision of Pringle-Pattison and Seth. The brothers encouraged him to pursue further studies in philosophy; Pringle-Pattison even suggested that Alexander consider studying in Germany. He also recommended books to Alexander, including *Essentials of logic*, which the prominent British neo-idealist Bernard Bosanquet had published in 1895.<sup>95</sup> Pringle-Pattison engaged Alexander as a tutor in his class on logic and metaphysics, and advised Alexander on his prospects of gaining a university fellowship or scholarship.<sup>96</sup>

Alexander's own views were revealed in an honours essay on Plato – who was regarded as the father of idealism in the ancient world. Significantly, Alexander took a different position from Oxford scholars such as R.L. Nettleship. Alexander made no reference to 'guardians' protecting moral and social values. Instead, he argued that there was unity between the individual and the state in ancient Greece. In modern society, he believed Christianity emphasised the 'supreme value of the individual' – a view that was consistent with the Christian idealism of Green, Caird and Pringle-Pattison. What was needed, Alexander proposed, was a new approach that would emphasise balance and harmony, in the spirit of Plato's philosophy; this would be realised by improving the classroom environment and including school concerts and opportunities for appreciating art, while remembering that the social environment was just as important as the physical. Above all, Alexander argued in his essay, it was essential to remember that education was not the ability to pass 'codes' of attainment. Rather, its aim was 'the formation of a national type of mind' – 'it is a mind not subjects that has to be taught'.<sup>97</sup> Alexander's interpretation of Plato accepted Pringle-Pattison's views, while displaying a commitment to Laurie's emphasis on liberalism and the individual student.

In a related essay, Alexander argued that 'education is more spiritual than manual'. This shows notions of self-realisation through idealism. He contended

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95 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; A.S. Pringle-Pattison to Alexander Mackie, 28 July 1899. See also Collini 1976.

96 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; A.S. Pringle-Pattison to Alexander Mackie, 29 March, 30 November and 10 December 1901.

97 USA: A. Mackie P169/7 University essays and notebooks of Alexander Mackie; 'Plato's theory of education and its relation to modern educational practice'.

that ‘we have to train a mind in a body’ and so the ‘definite formulation of an ideal of education is more important than the formulation of teaching’; unless the teacher is ‘striving after an ideal, his ideal for the children will be ineffective’. While the ancient Athenian ideal focused on gymnastics and music and the harmony of the soul, the Roman ideal was ‘practical’ and the Renaissance ideal was ‘cultural’, the modern ‘true ideal’ had to be ‘ethical’. Alexander believed that man’s true end is his realisation of a certain type of self: the ideal of ‘formation of high moral character’, with education of the intellect and the body producing a ‘self-governing being’ able to stand against the world.<sup>98</sup>

As a student of both philosophy and education, Alexander was deeply embedded in an individualised form of idealism during his years at the University of Edinburgh. His views on philosophic idealism were being shaped at a time when there was emerging interest in teaching methodologies. Much of this interest was focused on efforts to compare the intellectual discipline of education to the methodology of science. In 1878, Alexander Bain, professor of logic at the University of Aberdeen, published *Education as a science* – an ambitious effort involving the study of physiology, psychology, moral education, values and the methodologies of teaching different subjects.<sup>99</sup>

Alexander took the advice of his university supervisors and undertook basic studies in psychology, concentrating on the importance of attention in children. He wrote a paper for his supervisors on ‘The science method’ with reference to the psychology of attention. In this paper, he suggested that the study of psychology assisted teachers in a number of ways. First, it provided ‘rational insight’ into the rules of method. Second, it enabled judgement of traditional or empirical rules to accept or reject as they conformed to the ‘great generalisations of the science of mind’. Third, it gave the power to judge new methods. Overall, the teacher had to know the child’s mind and child psychology. The mind was a ‘self-developing activity’ and training the habit of attention was one of the most valuable effects of attention. The training of attention was also ‘a moral training’. For the teacher, this meant graduating lessons so that slightly greater effort was required in each lesson. The teacher should strive to arouse ‘expectant attention’. In keeping with

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98 USA: A. Mackie P169/7; ‘Plato’s theory of education’.

Mr Mackie had a distinguished record as a student of Philosophy in this University. He attended the advanced classes in the subject during Session 1899–1900, and gained the Bruce of Grangehill and Falkland Prize, the highest honour to undergraduates. In April, 1900, he graduated with First Class Honours, his papers being both full and accurate, and altogether of a high standard. For two sessions he acted as one of my class-tutors, and in that capacity had to read and report upon a section of the class essays. He performed this work with ability and judgement.<sup>101</sup>

101 USA: A. Mackie P169/12; Applications and testimonials, A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 8 March 1906.

Herbart's ideas, Alexander emphasised that teachers must ensure a close connection between gaining students' 'attention' and their 'interest' in a subject. Such interest is used by students to please their parents and teachers.<sup>100</sup>

Seven years after he began as a pupil teacher, Alexander graduated with an MA from the University of Edinburgh in 1900. As his chief supervisor during his final years at the university, Professor Pringle-Pattison later provided an assessment of Alexander's attainments and standing in the field of philosophy:

Mr Mackie had a distinguished record as a student of Philosophy in this University. He attended the advanced classes in the subject during Session 1899–1900, and gained the Bruce of Grangehill and Falkland Prize, the highest honour to undergraduates. In April, 1900, he graduated with First Class Honours, his papers being both full and accurate, and altogether of a high standard. For two sessions he acted as one of my class-tutors, and in that capacity had to read and report upon a section of the class essays. He performed this work with ability and judgement.<sup>101</sup>

Aside from the honours Pringle-Pattison outlined, in his studies at Moray House and the University of Edinburgh Alexander gained a first class certificate in education, first class honours and the medal in both metaphysics and moral philosophy, and the medal and the Merchant Company Prize in political economy.<sup>102</sup>

Alexander maintained his interest in philosophy while gaining teaching experience. After graduating, he taught in schools for two years while continuing to work at the University of Edinburgh as a tutor for Pringle-Pattison. He spent a brief period at Berwick High School, where he was mainly involved in instructing students in English and mathematics in preparation for the Leaving Certificate examination. The Edinburgh School Board then appointed him to Broughton Public School in July 1900.<sup>103</sup> Within a few years, his contacts and academic networks opened up the prospect of an academic career.

## BECOMING AN ACADEMIC

The slow expansion of Britain's university system created opportunities in acad-

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100 USA: A. Mackie P169/7; 'The science method in relation to educational method'.

101 USA: A. Mackie P169/12; Applications and testimonials, A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 8 March 1906.

102 USA: A. Mackie P169/12; Alexander Mackie to agent-general for New South Wales, 9 March 1906.

103 Baillie 1968, 85.

emia. Throughout the nineteenth century, a market had emerged for academics with the knowledge and skills to educate teachers. From the mid-nineteenth century, English ‘civic universities’, such as Manchester, Nottingham and Leeds, and the University of Wales had provided evening classes for teachers, accessing a new base for enrolments. By the 1890s, Oxford and Cambridge were providing forms of teacher training for male and female undergraduates who wanted to teach in secondary schools.<sup>104</sup> Day training colleges also emerged. Attached to universities, they offered courses based on notions of liberal academic training. By 1900, day training colleges were providing almost one-quarter of the places available for the education and training of teachers. Day training colleges soon became akin to university departments, offering academic courses in education. The discipline of education was principally founded on the philosophy and history of education, but it increasingly embraced psychology as the basis for ‘scientific’ pedagogy.<sup>105</sup>

These developments integrated Scottish initiatives into the wider world of education studies and established a sub-profession for education academics. This created opportunities for a new generation of scholars in the emerging discipline of education, although traditional disciplines such as philosophy provided the foundation for new professorial appointments in day training departments.<sup>106</sup> Many of the professors in education came from Oxford and Cambridge, which continued to dominate the staffing of the civic universities until well into the twentieth century.<sup>107</sup> However, unlike many Oxbridge graduates, Edinburgh graduates in education, such as Alexander, had the advantage of experience in schools and training and studies at college and university.

By 1900, the number of academics in Britain remained small – less than 2,000, nearly half of whom were at Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>108</sup> Progress in the academic world depended not only on ‘merit’ but on networks of influence within and across university systems. Established academics supported their postgraduate students as a way of extending their own influence.

In 1903, Alexander was appointed assistant lecturer in education at the University of Wales Bangor. He succeeded another Edinburgh graduate, Alexander Darroch, who had been appointed to the Bell chair of education at Edinburgh following Simon Laurie’s retirement. A former pupil teacher, Darroch was a decade older than Alexander Mackie but had followed a similar trajectory at the University of Edinburgh, completing an MA with honours in philosophy. Darroch was

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104 For Cambridge, see Hirsch and McBeth 2004.

105 Turner 1990, 19. See also Furlong 2013, 16–17.

106 Ogren 1953, 67.

107 Lowe 1989, 163–80.

108 Perkin 1973, 77.

part of a new generation of Scottish scholars who moved away from the influences of German philosophy to embrace education as a discipline that provided an understanding of the social role of schools, much in the way of the American John Dewey. Alexander soon developed a close friendship with Darroch, who became one of his referees as well as an intellectual influence.<sup>109</sup>

His supervisors at Edinburgh, Pringle-Pattison and Seth, congratulated Alexander on being appointed to the position at Bangor over men from Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>110</sup> Bangor was a college of the University of Wales, which had been founded by royal charter in 1893 as a federal university (similar to the University of London), where colleges were responsible for teaching while the central university was in charge of examinations. A chair of education had been established at Bangor in 1894, a year before England's first education chair was created at Newcastle. The education of teachers in Wales was hindered by disputes between the established Church of England and the Welsh population due to the predominance of religious nonconformity. But there was increasing attachment to the colleges in Wales; these institutions sought to provide a foundation for emerging Welsh nationalism and support the aspirations of the Welsh people. Sir Henry Lewis, a Welsh businessman and a sponsor of the Bangor college, saw the advantages of a 'normal' college where future teachers would have the 'inspiring influence of a University College before them every day'.<sup>111</sup>

His new appointment created opportunities for Alexander. He gave lectures on the theory and practice of education, conducted criticism lessons and supervised school practice. J.A. Green was the head of the education department and professor of education at Bangor from 1900 to 1906. After he was appointed professor of education at Sheffield in 1906, Green became the first editor of the *Journal of Experimental Pedagogy*.<sup>112</sup> At Bangor, Green came to rely on Alexander, even appointing Alexander mentor of the male students while he was in Germany. Alexander's status as a philosopher was reinforced following his election to the Hamilton Fellowship in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1903. He then became an assistant to James Gibson, professor of logic and philosophy at Bangor. Overall, Alexander's years at Bangor provided him with new academic supporters in his work as a teacher of method and in the field of philosophy.<sup>113</sup>

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109 See Darroch 1914; Darroch 1907.

110 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; A.S. Pringle-Pattison to Alexander Mackie, 21 December 1902; USA: A. Mackie P169/3; J. Seth to Alexander Mackie, 21 December 1902.

111 Thomas 1990, 9.

112 Gordon 1990, 165, 170.

113 See comments of Mackie, Green and Gibson in USA: A. Mackie P169/12; Applications and testimonials.



*Alexander Mackie on rock in Carnarvonshire, Wales. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/70.*

On the basis of his experience at Bangor, in early 1905 Alexander applied for the position of master of method in the day training college at the University of Bristol. He used eleven referees from his time at Edinburgh and Bangor. All gave him strong support. H.R. Reichel, principal at Bangor and fellow of All Souls at Oxford, commented:

Mr Mackie came to us three years ago with a brilliant reputation, and his work ever since has more than justified his appointment. He is an excellent teacher, a firm disciplinarian, with considerable organizing capacity and plenty of tact and good sense. Personally he is a cultivated gentleman of high principles and broad sympathies and most pleasant in all personal intercourse.<sup>114</sup>

This reference was written on 26 January 1905, the day that later became ‘Australia Day’ – perhaps a portent of where Alexander’s academic future lay. He did not get the position at Bristol.

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114 USA: A. Mackie P169/12; Applications and testimonials, H.R. Reichel, principal of University College of North Wales, 26 January 1905.

## NETWORKS OF EMPIRE

Middle-class Scots were major settlers across the Empire, in India, Canada, South Africa and Australasia. This was partly due to the general diaspora of Scottish university graduates. Graduates from Scottish universities in the late nineteenth century have been described as more cosmopolitan than their predecessors. Catriona Macdonald has suggested that, in the wake of curriculum reforms following the enactment of the 1889 Act, graduates ‘considered themselves part of a world-wide community of scholars and more apt to take action in pursuit of international understanding’.<sup>115</sup> Scots had long sought opportunities abroad, serving in the army and civil administration, and the expansion of the Scottish universities in the nineteenth century saw many graduates heading overseas. In 1933, an analysis of 19,501 graduates from the University of Edinburgh found that more than half were living in Scotland, more than one-quarter in the rest of Britain and over one-sixth overseas, mainly in the Empire.<sup>116</sup>

In her seminal study, *Empire of scholars*, Tamson Pietsch has outlined the personal contacts and networks that shaped the ‘British academic world’ from the mid-nineteenth century. From the 1880s, universities in Britain and the dominions of settlement were linked through scholarships, exchanges and appointments. A culture of research in the humanities and sciences and an emerging culture of professionalism based on universities spread throughout the Empire.<sup>117</sup> The careers of Scottish academics in the Empire show that developments in the sciences and humanities often ran parallel to efforts to advance professional education. The most prominent example of professional education founded on scientific research was in the discipline of medicine. Edinburgh’s medical school was closely associated with a number of universities and schools in the Empire. One of the most significant was the medical school at the University of Sydney. The University of Sydney, founded in 1850, originally centred on studies in classics, mathematics and science. But by the 1880s, it had a medical faculty, overwhelmingly staffed by graduates from Edinburgh.

Education as a discipline and teaching as a profession developed via many networks. But none were more influential than the neo-idealists, particularly the students of Edward Caird. Francis Anderson was an assistant to Caird at Glasgow in the 1880s. A former pupil teacher, Anderson was determined to improve the status and standing of teachers. But he was also attracted to theology. At the age of twenty-eight, Anderson migrated to Australia to become an assistant to Charles Strong, who had broken away from the Presbyterian Church to found the Aus-

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115 Macdonald 2015, 293.

116 Anderson and Wallace 2015, 281.

117 Pietsch 2013.



tralian Church. Strong emphasised the ‘social gospel’ of Christianity, promoting a social liberalism that embraced humanity. He became very influential in Melbourne; the future prime minister Alfred Deakin saw Strong’s views as a way to unite spiritualism with social action.<sup>118</sup> Anderson also imbibed such views. In 1888, he left Melbourne to become a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Sydney. In 1890, he was appointed to the new Challis chair of philosophy. Essentially, Anderson was a Christian ‘idealist’ – as were most philosophers educated in Scotland in the late nineteenth century. He constructed a wide ranging curriculum that embraced ancient and modern philosophy, and psychology and sociology, with attention to education, economics and even science.<sup>119</sup>

John Adams was an undergraduate companion of Anderson’s at Glasgow University. Born in Glasgow in 1857, the son of a master blacksmith, Adams began his career as a pupil teacher before attending training college and becoming a school teacher. He then studied at the University of Glasgow, commencing an appointment at the Aberdeen Training College while completing his degree. He continued to move between university, college and schools, gaining experience and knowledge of the theory and practice of pedagogy.<sup>120</sup> Adams drew upon this background in a seminal publication on ‘Herbartianism’ that illuminated the educational implications of Herbart’s philosophy. In 1898, the now Professor John Adams of Glasgow University published *The Herbartian psychology applied to education*. According to one authority, ‘the work burst like a new star into the educational firmament, and everything thereafter was different. Educational science, instead of being a dead language, became a modern living tongue’.<sup>121</sup> The new book was more Adams than Herbart. In particular, Adams interpreted the Herbartian idea of interest as a way to motivate students: ‘the theory of interest does not propose to banish drudgery, but only to make drudgery tolerable by giving it meaning; so far from enervating the pupil, the principle of interest braces him up to endure all manner of drudgery and hard work.’<sup>122</sup>

In 1902, Adams was appointed professor of education and principal of the London Training College, which was attached to the University of London. This soon became the premier institution in the Empire for the study and development of the discipline of education.<sup>123</sup> For two decades, from 1902, Adams extended his influence through American tours, while various educators came to London. Adams and his protégé, Percy Nunn, virtually founded the field of educational

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118 Brett 2017, 208–10.

119 O’Neil 1979.

120 Rusk 1961, 49–50.

121 Rusk 1961, 54.

122 Rusk 1961.

123 Aldrich 2002, 1–40.

psychology in Britain. Initially, they turned to psychology to improve the understanding and practice of teachers. Others went further, embracing a new ‘science’ of education and child development based on testing and measurement. The main disciple of this approach was Cyril Burt, who was created the official psychologist of the London County Council in 1911. Burt’s focus on ‘intelligence’ in children helped to provide a new way of classifying students.<sup>124</sup> Adams’ influence in the Empire and the United States would have a significant impact on Alexander Mackie’s career.

On 9 March 1906, Alexander Mackie submitted an application for the position of principal of the ‘Government Training College for Teachers, Sydney New South Wales’. He had excellent references from his teachers and colleagues at Edinburgh, including Professors Simon Laurie, Andrew Pringle-Pattison, James Seth and Andrew Darroch, all in education, and Professor Joseph Shield Nicholson in political economy. He also had references from Maurice Paterson, rector of Moray House, and H.R. Reichel, then vice-chancellor at Bristol.<sup>125</sup> On this occasion, Alexander’s networks of support resonated with the selection committee, most of whom would have known his referees personally. The chair of the committee was Professor John Adams, and other members included John Struthers, head of the Scottish Department of Education, and Graham Wallas, a Fabian socialist, founder of the London School of Economics and chair of the London County Council Sub-Committee on the Training of Teachers.<sup>126</sup> The selection committee was thus principally Scottish in origin and committed to modern and professional methods of education and teaching.

According to the *Australian Journal of Education*, the field for the position was restricted by the relatively low salary of £750 per annum.<sup>127</sup> There were thirty-one applicants for the position, including many schoolmasters, at least two with academic experience in education: Charles Chapple, who was the principal of a training college in Argentina, and Frank Fletcher, who was professor of education at Hartley College at the University of Southampton.<sup>128</sup> A Sydney press report in August 1906 suggested that there were no applicants from the United States and only six from Australia. The report of the selection committee stated: ‘We are of the opinion that Mr Mackie is the best all round man ... who, we think, ought to be selected.’ The New South Wales government accepted this view.<sup>129</sup>

Alexander left for Australia on 12 October 1906. In the days before his de-

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124 Woolridge 1994, 11–12, 62–64.

125 USA: A. Mackie P169/12; Applications and testimonials.

126 For Wallas, see Aldrich and Gordon 1989, 252–53.

127 Boardman et al. 1995, 24.

128 Boardman et al. 1995.

129 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 August 1906.

parture, he wrote to his father on a number of occasions. While in London, he visited Professor John Adams and John Struthers, and saw the agent-general for New South Wales.<sup>130</sup> On his day of departure, he noted: ‘A beautiful morning. My train goes at 11.30 to Tilbury.’<sup>131</sup> Mackie embarked aboard the *Moldavia*, a 9,500-ton passenger steam ship built in Glasgow in 1903 for the Peninsular and Orient line to travel between England and Australia via the Suez Canal. He was facing a voyage of 12,000 miles, but he had no concern for the reptiles that his aunt believed he would encounter in the Antipodes.<sup>132</sup>



*Deveron Bridge, Huntly – the site of fishing for young Alexander Mackie. USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023.*

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130 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 10 and 11 October 1906.

131 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 12 October 1906.

132 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie.



*Alexander Mackie in 1894. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/18.*



*Alexander Mackie as pupil teacher in the 1890s. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/23.*



*Alexander Mackie on rock in Carnarvonshire, Wales. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/70.*

PART TWO  
Principal and professor



*Alexander Mackie at his desk in 1910. USA: G3/224/2255.*





*Alexander Mackie at his desk in 1923. USA: G3/224/2307.*

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Empire was brought closer together not only through formal conferences and meetings but also by the continued improvement of sea travel. The *Moldavia* reached Sydney Heads on Thursday 22 November 1906, after a six-week voyage. While at sea, Alexander had written sixteen letters to his father, William. After arriving, he composed a long correspondence to William detailing his favourable first impressions of his new home.

I think that Australia will prove a pleasant place to live and Sydney in particular. The harbour scenery reminded me of the West Coast of Scotland. The Shore rises steeply, and is fringed with rocky cliffs. The main channel of the harbour runs off into a great number of creeks and the various suburbs of Sydney stand on the tongues between the creeks. I am afraid it is impossible to describe the town as it is so scattered and irregular but I am sending you a large plan which will help you to fix the places I mention.<sup>133</sup>

Over the next decade, Alexander sent letters to his father on almost a weekly basis. His correspondence to William in Edinburgh sought not only to provide details of his new environment but also to give insights into his prospects and career in Australia.

New South Wales had many connections to Scotland, beginning in the early years of colonial settlement. Scottish migration – mainly of free settlers – to the colony had begun by the 1820s. In the 1830s, the Presbyterian minister John Dunmore Lang founded the Australian College, which was designed for all Protestants, not just Presbyterians. Its curriculum was ‘broad and liberal’, following the Scottish tradition drawn from the Reformation. Among the ‘professors’ Lang brought from Scotland was Dr Henry Carmichael, who soon left the Australian College to found a normal school in the Hunter Valley to provide non-sectarian teacher training.<sup>134</sup>

By the early twentieth century, Scottish influences were represented in the New South Wales education system in a number of ways. Some Presbyterian secondary schools had emerged; however, the English public school tradition’s focus on sport and the formation of character had come to prevail over Scottish ideas of intellect and merit in many of these schools. The best example of this trend was The Scots College in Sydney. Founded in 1893, the college adhered to principles that owed less to the ideal of the ‘democratic intellect’ and more to Thomas Arnold’s moral and intellectual principles – now interpreted as a form of ‘muscular Christianity’ – which celebrated sport.<sup>135</sup>

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133 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 25 November 1906.

134 Prentis 1983, 174–75.

Scottish influences were more clearly seen at the University of Sydney. There was a significant Scottish presence at the university from its foundation in 1850. Scotland was the birthplace of more than one-fifth of the small number of academics at the university between 1850 and 1890. Many of these academics had been educated at the University of Edinburgh – almost as many had degrees from Edinburgh as from Oxford.<sup>136</sup> In the next half-century, Scots continued to constitute at least one-fifth of the academics at Sydney, and degrees from Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Aberdeen were prominent.

The role of Scots in the public school system that emerged in the late nineteenth century was equally significant. From the 1860s, the Presbyterian community in New South Wales abandoned its own government supported elementary schools to patronise state public schools. Increasing numbers of school teachers and inspectors of public schools were Scots by birth or origin. These Scots promoted ideals of opportunity and merit based on academic achievement.<sup>137</sup> This was what Mackie found when he arrived to take up his new post: a climate similar to the educational environment he had emerged from.

Peter Board, the son of a Scottish migrant and director of education in New South Wales, and another Scot, Mackardy, the acting principal of the new Sydney Teachers' College, met Mackie at the wharf. Mackie soon dismissed Mackardy, describing him as 'a little elderly man of about 50 with a fierce moustache like a sea lion's'.<sup>138</sup> Board was another matter. In his departmental report for 1906, Board had already endorsed Mackie's appointment, stating that Mackie 'brings with him a very extensive knowledge of educational methods and of systems of training, as well as a varied experience of teaching in both primary and secondary schools. There is a good reason to believe that under his management the Training College will take a high place among institutions of that character.'<sup>139</sup> The relationship between Board and Mackie blossomed once they met.

Peter Board's career provides a clear example of the influence of the Scottish diaspora in New South Wales. His family and professional background made his appointment as director of education particularly significant for Mackie. Board's father had migrated from Scotland in 1842 to farm. He became a teacher after the birth of his son Peter in 1858. Peter's mother's brother, the Reverend Archibald Cameron, was a Scots graduate appointed to the Manning River parish and a follower of John Dunmore Lang. Educated at his father's schools, Peter Board was serious and studious. He had an early association with the University of Sydney;

135 Sherington and Prentis 1993.

136 Based on the author's analysis of entries of academics in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

137 Prentis 1983, 178–80.

138 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 25 November 1906.

139 Boardman et al. 1995, 25.

he attended the Fort Street ‘model school’ and completed the university’s junior exam. In 1873, at age fifteen, he became a pupil teacher. Twelve years later, as a trained and experienced teacher, he became one of the first of a small group of evening students to enrol at the University of Sydney. Board graduated with a BA in 1889 and an MA in 1891, gaining second class honours in mathematics. As part of a fragment of Scottish culture in the Antipodes, he became an example of the modern ‘dominie’ transposed to New South Wales.

After twenty years as an inspector of schools in rural and metropolitan areas, in January 1905 the new state government under Premier Joseph Carruthers appointed Board to the position of under-secretary of the Department of Public Instruction and to the newly created post of director of education. Most see Board as a harbinger of reform in New South Wales, albeit with predilections towards academic curricula for elite students and more vocational subjects for the majority of pupils.<sup>140</sup> Overall, he became a major agent of change in public education in New South Wales.

After his luggage was taken to the Hotel Australia in Pitt Street, Mackie spent the afternoon with Board at the director’s offices. In a letter to his father, Mackie described Board as ‘a very nice fellow, somewhere over forty and I think that we shall pull very well together’. Mackie also met various others and concluded that, while he could not remember names, ‘they were all very cordial and in fact there is much less reserve among people here than at home’.<sup>141</sup>

## CONTEXTS FOR CHANGE

Mackie had arrived in Australia at a moment of heightened hopes in education. The federation of the Australian colonies in 1901 had created paths for educational reform, not so much through the new Commonwealth government as through the states. Under the Commonwealth Constitution, the states held residual powers in important areas such as education, which encompassed public schools and universities. Following the 1890s depression, there was a new emphasis on students, rather than the formal curriculum, in education politics, accompanied by active policy making. A form of educational renaissance emerged, accepting parts of the ‘New Education’, which was already having an impact in Britain, Europe and North America.

In the early twentieth century, foundations were laid for a public education system, which would remain the focus of government action for at least the next half-century. There was more emphasis on the practical aspects of what became

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140 Wyndham 1979. See also Crane and Walker 1957; Lynch 2002.

141 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 25 November 1906.

known as ‘primary schools’, and various types of secondary schools emerged, including academic high schools for the elite and vocational and continuing education institutions for the rest of the pupils. There were also efforts to include universities in this public education system. Among the Australian states, New South Wales became the leader in new forms of nation building, extending its school system and increasing opportunities. Developments were often based on the principles of merit and academic credentials that had shaped education in Edinburgh in the late nineteenth century. Building the nation through education was conceived as part of Australia’s contribution to the Empire.<sup>142</sup>

These changes had major implications for the education and professional training of teachers. From the early nineteenth century, the Australian colonies had mirrored the trajectory of teacher education in England and Scotland. This led to the adoption of a number of experiments in New South Wales, including a brief trial of the monitorial system. By the 1850s, the English-based pupil teacher system had been introduced in the Antipodes, just as a similar system was emerging in Scotland. For half a century, males and females, often aged only twelve, were recruited from within public schools, learning to teach through four-year apprenticeships. Some were awarded scholarships to attend the model school at Fort Street for a few months.<sup>143</sup> In contrast to the approach in Britain from the 1840s, there were no efforts in Australia to develop teachers’ colleges associated with the churches. Rather, the colonies regulated and provided trained teachers for their own schools.

The growth of the public school system led to a search for new methods of teacher training. In New South Wales, English-born William Wilkins, who trained as a pupil teacher under James Kay-Shuttleworth (the United Kingdom administrator of schools from 1839), became the head of the Fort Street model school and then the chief administrator of public schools. In the 1870s, Wilkins travelled overseas to study teachers’ colleges. The Parkes government of the 1880s was strongly committed to public schools. With the enactment of the 1880 Act – and its principles of ‘compulsory, free and secular’ – the government accepted the need to extend training for men at Fort Street and to establish a residential training college for women at Hurlstone Park.<sup>144</sup>

For much of the nineteenth century, Australia’s universities played little role in the formal training of teachers. The public examinations of the University of Sydney and University of Melbourne, introduced in the 1860s, were open to both school students and teachers, allowing them to undertake further studies in the humanities and sciences. The University of Sydney thereby encouraged an acad-

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142 Campbell and Sherington 2006; Sherington 2014; Sherington and Horne 2010.

143 Boardman et al. 1995, 4–10.

144 Boardman et al. 1995, 10–17.

emic meritocracy through matriculation. It also influenced the curricula of boys' and girls' secondary schools in New South Wales, including some public schools, such as Fort Street, which produced not only future teachers but also many of the colony's academic elite.<sup>145</sup> However, the public school system and the provision of teacher training had no direct relationship to the university. In part, this was because the colonial public schools were for the 'people', while the university was designed for the academic elite.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Australia's universities had begun to assume a more prominent role in the professionalisation of teaching. In 1876, the newly established University of Adelaide allowed students to attend classes without matriculating. Many of these early students were female teachers seeking to upgrade their qualifications. Thus Adelaide became the first Australian university to admit women and initiated a new relationship between Australian universities and school teachers.<sup>146</sup>

The admission of women to the University of Sydney from 1881 was indirectly associated with curriculum reforms, including the introduction of new academic disciplines and the creation of a Faculty of Science. By the late 1880s, there were also moves to include the university in the education and professional training of teachers. The University of Sydney entered into negotiations with the colonial government over a proposal – initiated within the professoriate – to allow some students from the teachers' training colleges to undertake studies at the university.<sup>147</sup> The initial negotiations broke down. But in the 1890s, Joseph Carruthers, then minister for public instruction and a graduate of the University of Sydney, proposed that not only should training college students be allowed to attend the university, steps should also be taken to locate a teachers' training college within the university grounds.<sup>148</sup>

The growing recognition of teachers and education within Australian universities was related to both local needs and new perceptions of the Empire.<sup>149</sup> Australia's attachment to the Empire in the late nineteenth century was associated with the colonies' culture and identity as well as matters of defence and trade.<sup>150</sup> Education in the dominions of settlement, and in domains of conquest such as India, had long been part of the mission of the Empire.<sup>151</sup> Throughout the Empire, common patterns of education had emerged with the creation of state school sys-

145 Horan 1989.

146 Sherington and Horne 2010, 40–42.

147 Boardman et al. 1995, 20–22.

148 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 286–87.

149 Sherington and Horne 2012.

150 Schreuder and Ward 2008.

151 Allender 2016; Mangan 1988; Sherington and Horne 2010.

tems and the foundation of state-sponsored universities. By the early twentieth century, the sharing of knowledge among the universities of the Empire was accomplished through networks of research and teaching. Relationships with other academics in the Empire were cultivated through correspondence, direct contact and more formal conferences.<sup>152</sup> This network of research and sharing of knowledge paralleled general international movements, such as the New Education in Europe and America, which focused on child-centred curricula. But ideas of and connections to the Empire remained preeminent in Australian teacher education until well into the twentieth century.<sup>153</sup>

Ideas formed in Scotland were part of the New Education movement. The most significant Scots-born academic at the University of Sydney in the area of education was Professor Francis Anderson, who was a prominent supporter of Alexander Mackie. When Mackie arrived in Sydney, Anderson's influence within the university and in the general community was at its height. He had become an icon of educational change, attracting attention through his ideas, style and general approach.<sup>154</sup> One of Anderson's students recalled:

He was old-fashioned in dress and manner, combining a straw (boater) hat with a huge open, starched collar. He walked up and down as he lectured, in a very long gown, and frequently drew his curious, triangular head down into that vast collar, so that, as he paced his philosophy platform, he looked like a tortoise training for a race with the hare. ... "Andy" had a rather sepulchral voice, which became shrill and electric when he raised it to stress a point or make a humorous sally. He was one of the few university teachers who knew students by their name and talked to them in the tram.<sup>155</sup>

Anderson sought to engage with both students and the wider community. With his background in philosophic idealism, he sponsored the foundation of new academic disciplines in the social sciences at the University of Sydney – including anthropology and education – all of which were located in the expanded Faculty of Arts.<sup>156</sup> By the eve of World War One, he was influencing a generation of undergraduates, including the young Herbert Evatt, who became a High Court judge and then the leader of the federal Australian Labor Party.<sup>157</sup> Knighted after

152 Pietsch 2013.

153 Goodman 2014.

154 For Anderson's general career, see O'Neil 1979.

155 Chisholm 1958, 41–42.

156 Elkin 1952, 27–41.

157 Murphy 2016, 46–47.

his retirement, Anderson's achievements were later engraved in stone; a commemorative fountain was constructed at the University of Sydney, opposite the Anderson Stuart building.

From the late nineteenth century, Anderson was involved in a number of educational organisations and causes. Through the Kindergarten Union, he met Maybanke Susannah Selfe, whose father had been involved in technical education. They married and formed a partnership for educational reform.<sup>158</sup> Following Federation, Francis Anderson extended his influence into the politics of public school reform. He began a major campaign for change, including overhauling teacher training.

On 26 June 1901, at the annual conference of public school teachers, Anderson delivered a clarion call to the community and government. He criticised the whole system of public education; his critique of its leadership, the pupil teacher system and the training colleges was particularly severe. His student (later Professor) Elkin wrote: 'Those of us who attended his incisive tones cleaving the air in the manner of the prophet Amos.'<sup>159</sup> The press indicated that the effect of Anderson in full flight had been electric: 'Women were standing on chairs waving their handkerchiefs and parasols, men were stamping and shouting and shaking hands with perfect strangers.'<sup>160</sup> Anderson published his speech in full – with certain additions – in a pamphlet entitled *The public school system of New South Wales*. In the pamphlet, he drew attention to the failings of the pupil teacher system and the associated training colleges – 'the greatest defect in our system, the blackest spot upon our "glorious luminary", the fault which most urgently stands in need of correction'.<sup>161</sup>

Anderson continued his campaign for reform from within the University of Sydney, playing an important role in engaging the university in contemplation of the nature of the public school system. For the first time, a University of Sydney professor had begun a major debate over the future of public schools. Anderson published articles in the university magazine, *Hermes*, on the role of universities in national education. He pointed out that teachers in public schools had 'for many years been practically excluded from any direct participation in university instruction', and noted that the study of education in the university 'remains without its professor' and that no place had been found in the university for the 'professional training of teachers'.<sup>162</sup> There seems no doubt that these views drew

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158 O'Neil 1979.

159 Elkin 1952, 28.

160 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 1901.

161 Anderson 1901, 22.

162 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 397.



upon Anderson's understanding of the emerging role of universities in teacher education and training in Scotland.

In November 1901, Joseph Carruthers, then leader of the opposition, called a meeting at the Sydney Town Hall. His aim was to pressure the premier to establish a royal commission or a committee of experts to enquire into the state of the public school system. While Anderson was the chief speaker, Carruthers took the opportunity to push for a deputation to meet with Premier John See and John Perry, the minister for public instruction.<sup>163</sup> In early December, See and Perry conferred with a deputation including Carruthers and Anderson. Once again, Anderson argued that the need for proper teacher training was a critical issue. Another member of the deputation was the chief statistician for New South Wales, G.H. Knibbs, who handed the premier a document outlining arguments in favour of a royal commission. Knibbs was a statistician and surveyor, an author of numerous publications, and a lecturer in geodesy, astronomy and hydraulics at the University of Sydney from 1890 – a further indication that school reform was being taken up at the university.<sup>164</sup> By January 1902, Perry had informed a meeting of Department of Public Instruction officials that he would appoint two officers to 'inquire into education abroad' to see whether the system in New South Wales was meeting the needs of the times.<sup>165</sup>

In early 1902, the New South Wales government appointed two commissioners to undertake surveys and enquiries in Britain, Europe and North America. The first was Knibbs; the second was John Turner, a former pupil teacher who became a headmaster and was then promoted to the Fort Street model school. These appointments struck a balance between a declared educational reformer and someone within the leadership ranks of the public school system. Over the next five years, the commissioners drew upon international examples to guide reform in New South Wales. Among their early recommendations were proposals to improve teacher training and appoint a director of education.<sup>166</sup>

Even before becoming director, Peter Board had been caught up in the education reform movement in New South Wales. In 1903, he went abroad on leave, taking the opportunity to compile a report on primary education, which soon became even more influential than Knibbs and Turner's more voluminous report.<sup>167</sup> By 1904, Board was playing a major role in a conference convened by the minister for public instruction, which included the commissioners and representatives of the University of Sydney and of the community. The conference carried reso-

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163 Shanahan 1973, 18–21.

164 Shanahan 1973, 17–21.

165 Shanahan 1973, 23–24.

166 Shanahan 1973, 23–24.

167 Shanahan 1973, 23–24.

lutions that called for the abolition of the pupil teacher system, the establishment of a chair of pedagogy in connection with the university and the provision of a normal school with a practice school attached.<sup>168</sup>

The debate over the future of teacher training went well beyond what Wilkins had sought when he went abroad just two decades earlier and what some university professors had urged in the 1880s. Once appointed director of education, Board placed emphasis on reforming teacher training with the aims of phasing out the pupil teacher system and providing full-time pre-service preparation. In 1905, steps were taken to replace the pupil teacher system with a new form of ‘previous training’ of teachers. Board announced the establishment of a college within the grounds of the University of Sydney, offering a two-year course of training with provision for students of ‘special ability’ to graduate from the university after a third year of study. In the meantime, the school buildings at Blackfriars, near the university, would become a ‘temporary training college’. By March 1905, the training of male students had been transferred from Fort Street to Blackfriars; they were joined later in the year by female students from Hurlstone.<sup>169</sup>

There is little doubt that both Anderson and Board had significant connections with the selection committee that recommended appointing Mackie. The use of a selection committee in the United Kingdom was based upon the longstanding practice for professorial appointments at the University of Sydney. Following this practice to select the principal of the teachers’ college implied that candidates would need to have an academic standing equivalent to a professorial appointee. Francis Anderson probably played a significant role in advising the government – and Board in particular – on the composition of the committee. Anderson and Professor John Adams, the chair of the selection committee, were old friends from their days at university in Glasgow. It is likely that Anderson also suggested John Struthers, the head of the Scottish Department of Education, as a member of the selection panel. Finally, Anderson may have advised Adams to convey to Mackie the possibility that a chair in education might accompany the position of principal of Sydney Teachers’ College.<sup>170</sup>

The *Australian Journal of Education* reflected on the significance of Mackie’s appointment: ‘That gentleman comes to us with the centuries of practical interest in and knowledge of education which Scotch parentage implied, and with several years of experience in Wales, one of the most lively quarters in matters educational to be found in the British Empire.’<sup>171</sup> It was beginning to seem that new opportunities – and not the Antipodean reptiles of his aunt’s imagination

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168 Boardman et al. 1995, 22.

169 Boardman et al. 1995, 23.

170 Elkin 1952, 29.

171 Elkin 1952, 29.

– were awaiting Mackie in the Empire.

## INTRODUCING THE NEW COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

Before Mackie's arrival, Anderson and Board had been the main proponents of changes in teacher education. The new principal soon became the subject of major attention from the press and teachers. In the days and weeks after his arrival, Mackie's introduction to schools, teachers and pupils in New South Wales proceeded apace. In the few weeks before Christmas 1906, Mackie established personal contacts and addressed public meetings. Much can be gleaned from the almost daily letters he sent to his father in Edinburgh.

The day after his arrival, Mackie visited the training college at Blackfriars, where 200 students were enrolled. He returned to the city to lunch with Broughton Barnabas O'Connor, the recently appointed minister for public instruction. A graduate of the University of Sydney, O'Connor was the youngest member in the New South Wales government, aged thirty-six.<sup>172</sup> Mackie also met representatives of the Public Service Board, which oversaw the civil service. In the evening, he visited Peter Board's home to meet members of the Presbyterian community.<sup>173</sup>

The weekend after Mackie arrived, he and Board travelled by train to Windsor, on the rural fringes of Sydney. A nature study exhibition was being held there, involving thirty to forty schools, with both children and parents examining the work sent in from participating schools. Mackie agreed to give a talk, writing to his father 'So my first public appearance was made at Windsor'.<sup>174</sup>

Having arrived at the end of the school year, with Christmas approaching, Mackie had to face a number of audiences – particularly from the teaching profession – who were eager to hear his views. The Public School Teachers' Association invited him to speak at a dinner held in Pitt Street, Sydney, on 27 November. A little overwhelmed and unused to the fuss, Mackie wrote to his father before the event that he was not looking forward to his 'execution'. He expected it to be the biggest audience he had ever addressed, with over 200 men and women present.<sup>175</sup> He had various supporters in the audience, including Peter Board and Professor Anderson. Also present was another Scot, Horatio Scott

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172 Sherington 1988. O'Connor, the son of an Irish Anglican clergyman, presided over much of the post Knibbs–Turner reform, including the introduction of free education in primary schools. He resigned his portfolio in May 1907 and went to the Legislative Council.

173 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 25 November 1906.

174 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 27 November 1906.

175 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 27 November 1906.

Carslaw, professor of mathematics at the University of Sydney since 1903. Born in Scotland and educated at the University of Glasgow and University of Cambridge, Carslaw was committed to research and to improving the standards of mathematics in schools. He would play a major part in the debate over reforms to secondary education that Board would implement in the following years.<sup>176</sup>

The local *Evening News* provided an extensive report of the dinner under the headline ‘A teacher of teachers’. According to the report, the host of the dinner, P.J. Nelligan, the head of the Public School Teachers’ Association, welcomed Mackie, suggesting that the ‘desire for improvement and reform’ came from the ‘ranks’ of teachers in New South Wales. As director of education, Board proposed a toast to the new principal, stating that Mackie had come to Sydney after an ‘education revolution’ had taken place in New South Wales. There was a ‘certain irony’, Board said, in the fact that Mackie had begun his career as a pupil teacher, a system that was coming to an end in the state. The *Evening News* report mentioned that Mackie had ‘come from that University which had produced some of the finest scholars in the old land – Edinburgh’. Board stated that ‘the position [Mackie] had come to Sydney to fill was just as important’ as his academic posts in Edinburgh and Wales, ‘for no training college in England, Scotland or Wales would have a greater number of teachers than the splendid college that within eighteen months would be ready for Professor Mackie’. Board’s reference to a future professorial title for Mackie was almost confirmed when Professor Anderson, who was also on the stage at the meeting, stated that while the Department of Public Instruction and the University of Sydney were once on ‘different sides of the fence’, that fence had been pulled down and the ‘two sources of learning were now commingled’.<sup>177</sup>

The press report of this meeting indicated that the college principal was proposing a new era in teacher education in Australia. In his address, Mackie reflected first on the honour he was being accorded. He also discussed his own education and learning and gave indications of possible future directions for teacher education under his supervision as principal. ‘Though he could never forget the 30 years he had spent in Scotland’, Mackie ‘hoped soon to be able to look upon Australia as his second homeland’. According to the *Evening News*, Mackie described the present as a time of ‘upheaval’, the like of which had not been seen since ‘Socrates pointed out the fallacies of the Sophists’. Mackie believed that there was hope for ‘educational progress’, provided that the educational administration worked with the ‘social and economic structure of the State’. He argued that the pupil teacher system had ‘outlived its usefulness’, not only in the ‘older countries of the world’ but also in Australia. The press report noted that Mackie

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176 Jaeger 1979.

177 *Evening News*, 28 November 1906.

presented ‘two main points in the training of the teacher’: ‘first, he should receive a thorough general culture in academics and in the techniques of his art’ and ‘secondly, that he should carry the academic training so far as to obtain a degree in arts or sciences’. There should be no differences between primary and secondary teachers, Mackie suggested, and ‘no obstacle placed in the way of obtaining a University education for young teachers’. As such, he held out the prospect of a teaching profession founded on university credentials, rather than the traditional model involving different qualifications for primary and secondary teachers.<sup>178</sup>

In the three weeks before his first Christmas in Australia, Mackie spent time with Board and at the Blackfriars college, while continuing to extend his professional and social contacts. In particular, he came to know more of the university and its colleges, telling his father that of the three male colleges ‘as you might expect the Presbyterian (St Andrews) is more vigorous and flourishing than either the RC (St John’s) or Episcopalian (St. Paul’s)’.<sup>179</sup> Mackie soon developed a rapport with Harper, the principal of St Andrews, and Prescott, the longstanding head of the Methodist Newington College. He also met Professor Wilson in anatomy, a friend of James Seth.<sup>180</sup>

Just before Christmas, Mackie addressed two important groups. First, he spoke to the Kindergarten Union, with Anderson present. He suggested that kindergartens had helped to free state elementary schools in Britain from ‘the mechanical precision, deadly monotony and rigidity which had so long characterised them’ – words very similar to the criticisms Anderson had directed against New South Wales public schools in his famous speech in 1901. According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mackie claimed ‘kindergarten was not a separate form of instruction, but an attitude of the mind towards infant teaching determined by certain well-defined principles of education’.<sup>181</sup> As Mackie told

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178 *Evening News*, 28 November 1906. Mackie would have probably taken exception to the press suggestion that he had said teachers would need a degree ‘since students of the future would be without the knack acquired during the four years formerly spent in apprenticeship as pupil teachers’. Mackie told his father that the press interpretation of his speech was a poor report of what he had said (USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 27 November 1906).

My address at the Teachers’ Conference came off this morning. At the last moment I decided to talk and not to read the address I had prepared. The strains and exertions were greater but I think it was more successful. People listened very carefully and I think that I improved the occasion and rubbed in some truths I was anxious to impose at the beginning of my work here. The important people were satisfied and I was on the whole fairly well pleased with myself.<sup>183</sup>

183 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 18 December 1906.

180 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 1 December 1906.

181 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 December 1906.

his father, over 500 people were present, 'mostly women of course'; 'I was rather glad to get it over,' he added, 'for this was an appearance before a body outside the sphere of the education department's influence and it may be useful to keep in touch with them'.<sup>182</sup>

A few days later, Mackie spoke to the annual public teachers' conference. He wrote to his father:

My address at the Teachers' Conference came off this morning. At the last moment I decided to talk and not to read the address I had prepared. The strains and exertions were greater but I think it was more successful. People listened very carefully and I think that I improved the occasion and rubbed in some truths I was anxious to impose at the beginning of my work here. The important people were satisfied and I was on the whole fairly well pleased with myself.<sup>183</sup>

A typed copy of the address Mackie had prepared survives in the University of Sydney Archives. It was entitled 'The training of the teacher'. The substance of this prepared address is given here. It indicated the range of Mackie's proposals for change. He drew upon his recent experience at Bangor, where he had trained kindergarten, primary and secondary teachers. Emphasising the importance of a 'professionally trained body of teachers' for a functioning education system, he outlined what he saw as the 'leading principles' for the future operation of Sydney Teachers' College. The foundation of teacher training would involve 'more ample professional training', with more students undertaking university degrees. He expected that the increasing number of matriculants from state secondary schools would mean that more teacher trainees would be qualified to undertake university degrees. This would mean that, in the case of the university students in particular, it would be necessary to make such arrangements as would secure the right balance between university and the practical work of the college.<sup>184</sup>

In his written address, Mackie also argued that the course of study for teacher education should be 'wide and liberal, cultural rather than journalistic'. He suggested that many of those entering the college would be more qualified in the humanities and in elementary science, and that undertaking courses in these subjects at the college would be 'more profitable than language drill or much mathematics'. In specific courses, including history, Mackie proposed incorporating lectures and 'laboratory work' so that students could learn 'the new methods of teaching the school subjects'. In elementary science and nature study,

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182 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 16 December 1906.

183 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 18 December 1906.

184 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, 'The training of the teacher', paper read at the annual conference of public school teachers, 1906.

he advocated ‘direct experience and experimental work’.<sup>185</sup>

In the final part of his prepared address, Mackie noted the need for theoretical and practical work in the study of education. He suggested that theoretical work should include study of ‘the meaning and aims of education as a factor in social welfare’ – this contention reflected the influence of his colleague Darroch at Edinburgh. Mackie believed theories of education should involve ethics, psychology and logic, as well as the new field of child study, which would be developed by observing children in schools. He added that ‘some knowledge of the history of educational progress and of the great theorists is most valuable in order to secure breadth of view and permit a due understanding of many current tendencies in educational doctrine and practice’.<sup>186</sup>

Mackie ended his address to the public teachers’ conference by emphasising the need for teaching students to discuss the practical problems of pedagogy. He stated that the proposed training he outlined would not produce ‘the experienced teacher’, but rather ‘some facility in class management’. It would furnish a teaching student with the required tools and ‘open his mind to the possibilities of his profession’. In the written version of his address, Mackie concluded:

The science of education is slowly assuming definite outlines but cannot be assured unless there is a body of opinion capable of exercising intelligent judgment upon educational writings. If that were the case, the general level of educational discussion and writing would be much higher than it is at present. Improved theory would inevitably react upon practice, making it better and more intelligent ... This truth is apt to be overlooked by the teacher engaged in the details of school work.<sup>187</sup>

The continuing use of the male pronoun in Mackie’s address was a reflection of his own education. Otherwise, this address illuminated many of his ideas in the emerging world of the New Education. His vision of a teaching profession with close associations to both training colleges and universities was clearly related to the situation in Scotland in the mid- to late nineteenth century. It also reflected developments in Europe and America, including at institutions such as the Teachers’ College, Columbia. Mackie’s references to new methods of preparing teachers that ensured they became child-centred took up some of the ideas of ‘progressives’ such as Darroch and Dewey. Overall, his address concentrated on the significance of such ideas for New South Wales.

Mackie managed to find time in his busy schedule to discover the natural en-

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185 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, ‘The training of the teacher’.

186 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, ‘The training of the teacher’.

187 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, ‘The training of the teacher’.

vironment of Sydney and its surrounding bushland and beaches. On a Sunday in early December, he visited the Andersons at their ‘country house at Pittwater’, crossing the harbour by ferry to Manly and then travelling for an hour and a half to reach the Anderson residence, which he described to his father as ‘beautifully situated on high ground at the head of a sea loch, an arm of the Hawkesbury’. Continuing to use parallels to well-known sites around Glasgow and Edinburgh, he told his father ‘if you think of the view from the head of the Loch Katrine [near Glasgow] you will know the sort of place’. The memories of his homeland were reinforced by ‘Scotland Island’ in Pittwater and ‘Glasgow Park’ on the shoreline.<sup>188</sup>

When he and Anderson went for a walk in the bushland in the afternoon, Mackie thought he could have been wandering around ‘Corstorphine Hill’ in Edinburgh, except for the ‘unfamiliar appearance of the trees’. Mackie wrote to his father that when they reached the top of a ridge with a view of the coastline and the ‘coastal belt of the flat wooden land’, Francis Anderson even suggested that the view was ‘very similar to the French Riviera and one promontory might very well have been taken for Monte Carlo’. Their comments provide an interesting reflection of two Scots-born academics seeking not just memories of their homeland but also the prospect of a more cosmopolitan Australia.<sup>189</sup>

Mackie continued to visit the Anderson house over the following years, apparently feeling at home in the villa ‘at the head of the finest west highland loch you know’. There was even a ‘housekeeper from Aberdeen’, who he described to his father as ‘kind but with a manner like Aberdeen granite and a marked Aberdeen accent’.<sup>190</sup>

## INSTALLING THE COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

In February 1907, the minister for public instruction, B.B. O’Conor, opened the new year at Sydney Teachers’ College. He spoke of a new vision for the college, suggesting that the ‘mingling of the teachers with the men and women of the university should have a great influence in the public life of the State’. He recognised the ‘manifest interest’ the university had shown in the teaching profession; ‘he felt more and more every day that the University was coming right down into the lives of the people’, a *Sydney Morning Herald* report stated. O’Conor noted that the college was available to primary and secondary teachers as well as students from all schools.<sup>191</sup>

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188 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 10 December 1906.

189 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, c. 1908.

190 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, c. 1908.



Already the new college principal was being recognised as an effective, if quiet, leader. Though he was small in stature, Mackie's voice had what A.R. Chisholm described as 'a compelling quality that sufficed to solve all problems of discipline'. He did not raise it much; as a rule, Mackie spoke and moved softly, attracting attention in verse and song:

And the girls all call him Mackie, Mackie;

He treads as soft as a lackey.<sup>192</sup>

A crucial test for Mackie was ending the pupil teacher system. Throughout Australia, the nineteenth-century system of pupil teachers was being replaced by college-based professional training associated with the universities. In 1900, the Victorian government had reopened Melbourne Teachers' Training College, which had been closed during the 1890s depression. In 1902, John Smyth, who Mackie knew from Edinburgh, had been appointed principal. In 1907, Smyth and a group of students visited Sydney to establish a sporting carnival that would bring the two colleges together. Over the following years, this led to intercollegiate competitions with interstate visits and fostered forms of college and student identity.<sup>193</sup> Both Mackie and Smyth remained committed to their respective colleges and students, with the aim of creating a corporate life.

Mackie and Smyth were equally determined to establish new practices in teacher training. Given their experiences at Edinburgh, both had a strong attachment to the study of education and professional practice within a college and university partnership. But their strategies and opportunities led to different outcomes. At Melbourne, a university-based Diploma of Education was well established by 1905 and Smyth devoted much attention to teaching students in this program. But he gained little support from within the university. Significantly, because of government policy, Smyth was unable to create a college-based profession. Victoria maintained a system of single-teacher rural schools; this led to the continuation of the pupil teacher system, which the creation of the Melbourne Teachers' Training College had been intended to end.<sup>194</sup>

In contrast to Smyth's experience, Mackie received strong support from those in government administration and in parts of the university for at least the first decade and a half of his time in Sydney. Under Board's oversight as director of education, Mackie's appointment as principal of the college provided the opportunity to enact a program ending the pupil teacher system and introducing college training as the future of teacher education.

This reform proceeded in stages. Following a competitive examination, for-

191 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 1907.

192 Chisholm 1958, 44.

193 Boardman et al. 1995, 40.

194 Spaul and Mandelson 1983, 87–97.

mer pupil teachers could undertake a one-year course at Sydney Teachers' College. Until 1910, these ex-pupil teachers, most of whom already held teaching positions in schools, formed the great majority of the college's intake. Scholarships were introduced to assist those who were forgoing salary to upgrade their qualifications. There was also financial assistance available for some students who were not already in the public school system to enter the college, as it sought to meet the demands of the expanding student populations in public and other schools. As a further recruitment strategy, a probationary student scheme was introduced in 1906, offering allowances for students as young as fifteen who stayed in school with the intention of entering the college. This scheme remained in place for almost a decade, until the introduction of the new Intermediate Certificate in 1911 and the Leaving Certificate in 1916 consolidated formal secondary school credentials as the foundation for teaching careers.<sup>195</sup>

Sydney Teachers' College was founded with the aim of producing teachers for primary schools – these schools were a compulsory component of universal education. Initially, the college offered one-year and two-year courses, providing different certification. Both courses included theoretical studies and practical experience in classrooms in local demonstration schools, including Blackfriars. Given his academic attainments in Edinburgh, Mackie was initially disappointed in the general education of entrants to the college. He believed the limitations of their prior education imposed a double burden on college students as they sought to improve their academic work while undertaking classroom practice. It was not until the introduction of the state-created Intermediate and Leaving Certificates in secondary schools that the standard of the college's recruits began to improve.<sup>196</sup>

There were early advancements in staffing at Sydney Teachers' College. By 1911, some of the staff had qualifications equivalent to academics within the university. One of the early appointments was L.H. Allen, a classical scholar who had attained his doctorate in Germany. A poet and a student of Virgil, he taught at the University of Sydney and the college until 1918, when he became professor of classics at the Royal Military College at Duntroon. In 1909, Percival Richard Cole arrived at the college. Cole had completed a doctorate at Columbia University in New York and would teach educational psychology and the history of education. He co-authored a number of books on teaching with Mackie. Henry Tasman Lovell lectured at the college in the theory of education and in German and French.<sup>197</sup> He held a doctorate and soon became professor of psychology at the University of Tasmania.

The college also provided opportunities for young scholars and teachers.

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195 Boardman et al. 1995, 33–34.

196 Boardman et al. 1995, 34–35.

197 USA: A. Mackie P169/13 Miscellaneous MSS of Alexander Mackie; Departmental Board, Teachers' Training College.

James Fawthrop Bruce was a former pupil teacher who had spent eight years teaching before undertaking four years of study at the college. He graduated from the University of Sydney with first class honours in English, philosophy and history. Beginning as an assistant lecturer in education, he became a lecturer in history at the university and an assistant to Professor George Arnold Wood. In 1928, he became a professor of history in Punjab.<sup>198</sup>

There were few women on staff at the college. Mackie sought to assist the career of Martha Margaret Simpson, who was the mistress of infants at Blackfriars. She was appointed to the college staff in 1910, after she had developed kindergarten teaching methods in about twenty schools in Sydney. She had difficulty getting recognition and pay for her duties as a lecturer as distinct from her role as infants mistress. As in other cases, such as the role of warden of students, the few women lecturers at the college found that they were discriminated against by the rules and regulations enforced by the bureaucracy.<sup>199</sup>



*Alexander Mackie unveiling a portrait of Percy Cole at Sydney Teachers' College. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/22.*

Through such early appointments, Mackie attempted to assert that the col-

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198 USA: A. Mackie P169/13; Departmental Board, Teachers' Training College.

199 USA: A. Mackie P169/13; Departmental Board, Teachers' Training College.

lege was an essential part of the university. As early as 1908, Mackie told a departmental enquiry into salaries at the college that ‘the only comparison is with the University. The Training College is, in spirit, if not in fact, a Department of the University’.<sup>200</sup> In later years, Mackie pointed out that Peter Board, as director of education, had encouraged this development, providing for the best possible appointments but leaving staff alone.<sup>201</sup> This was a reflection of what had occurred in Scotland and England, resulting in the creation of departments of education within many universities. Both Board and Mackie hoped to emulate those trends.

## AUSTRALIA’S FIRST PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

Almost a decade after Federation, governments in the individual Australian states were taking an increasing interest in shaping the modern public university. The Labor government founded the University of Queensland in 1909 as part of a program of state-sponsored economic development. By 1913, the University of Western Australia had become a ‘university for the people’, supported by private philanthropy and state grants.<sup>202</sup> Around Australia, there were moves towards establishing chairs in fields related to professional occupations.

The reformation of teacher training and qualifications was part of a wider agenda encouraging professional education in universities. In New South Wales, the Liberal governments under Joseph Carruthers (1904–07) and Charles Wade (1908–10) negotiated with the University of Sydney over proposals for rural developments and over the issue of teacher education. These governments took up ideas from the 1880s, when Carruthers had been minister for public instruction. In 1889, William Wallace, professor of agriculture at the University of Edinburgh, had visited Sydney and urged the university to introduce agricultural education based on scientific principles and to create a chair in this area, mirroring the chair that had been established at Edinburgh a century earlier. Taking up this idea, Carruthers had recommended in 1889 that the university implement a comprehensive plan for agricultural education, building upon the proposed introduction of such studies in schools. This plan involved the creation of a chair of agriculture.<sup>203</sup> Despite a favourable reception at the university, the 1890s depression put paid to the proposal. By 1907–08, these ideas had been revived in the university and the government, with an associated proposal to introduce courses and a chair in vet-

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200 Boardman et al. 1995, 43.

201 USA: A. Mackie P169/10; Mackie’s address to staff, c. 1951.

202 Sherington and Horne 2010, 48–50.

203 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 363–64.

erinary science. The university negotiated with the government for funding. By 1909, Robert Watt, a graduate of the University of Glasgow who had worked in South Africa, was appointed as the foundation professor of agriculture and James Stewart, who had studied at the Royal Veterinary College in Edinburgh and had experience as chief inspector of stock in New South Wales, was appointed professor of veterinary science.<sup>204</sup> Once again, this strengthened the influence of Scottish ideas and practices within the University of Sydney.

This pattern of negotiations between the government and the university was repeated in the area of education. The government introduced proposals that, in part, dated back to Carruthers' tenure as minister for public instruction in the 1880s. In March 1907, Peter Board approached the University of Sydney Senate with a request that the university provide a site on its grounds for a non-residential training college for 400 students. Board and Mackie then met with the chancellor and vice-chancellor, and Professors Anderson and T.W. Edgeworth David, both of whom were known supporters of Mackie. At this conference, Board indicated that his department intended for the majority of college students to be matriculants to the University of Sydney; he believed that those who did not matriculate would profit from attending at least two university courses. Within several years, he expected that 'practically all the students would be of University rank, the larger number of them being matriculants'.<sup>205</sup> The Senate agreed to grant a site of about three and a half acres between the Women's College and University Oval, on two conditions: that the proposal was endorsed by legislation in the New South Wales parliament and that within five years all college students would be required to attend at least two courses of lectures during each year of their training. Plans for the college building had to be submitted to the university Senate for approval.<sup>206</sup> Almost all of the proposals for the college were conceived in terms of the partnership between university and teachers' college that Mackie had known at Edinburgh. However, the actual location of the college within the university remained uncertain for another half-decade.

Related to this agreement between the university and Board's department were the issues of a proposed chair in education and of the teaching of education as a subject within the university curriculum. In October 1908, the minister for public instruction asked the university to recognise a college course on the theory of education, which Mackie suggested could count towards a BA at the university. The Professorial Board advised against this on the grounds that the course was only offered to college students; no provision was made to teach the course within the university so that it could be listed as a degree course; and the course

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204 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 358–62, 373–80.

205 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 401.

206 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 401.

would be given by a lecturer whose appointment was not controlled by the university Senate. But, on a positive note, the board proposed a solution: the subject of education could be taught by the university as part of the BA degree and offered to both arts and college students.<sup>207</sup>

Over the next eighteen months, Mackie was gradually integrated into the university. In the wake of the Professorial Board's report, Peter Board proposed that a chair of education be established by promoting Mackie to professor and assigning him to teach university courses in education. But matters of academic autonomy intervened. At a university Senate meeting, Professor Mungo MacCallum argued that the university should not give the title of professor to someone over whom it could not exercise full control. Instead, he argued that Mackie should become a lecturer at the university – a proposal Board accepted. The Senate also agreed on the grounds that a chair appointment would have to await the allocation of government funds. In 1910, Mackie was appointed as a lecturer in education. But, in effect, his friend Professor Francis Anderson had bypassed this decision by seeking leave during 1909 and having Mackie appointed acting professor of philosophy, with responsibility for teaching courses in the field of education.<sup>208</sup>

In March 1910, Peter Board again recommended to the university Senate that Mackie be made a professor. The Public Service Board had proposed that Mackie's position as principal should be made permanent, with a salary of £800. Board suggested that the University of Sydney contribute an additional £100 and make provision for a pension that accorded with those granted to other professors. The Senate concurred and agreed to make the appointment, dating from 1 March 1910.<sup>209</sup>

Mackie had already written to his father in anticipation of this decision. Describing the financial terms of the appointment, he pointed out that the university's contributions would provide a pension of £400 per year, so that 'After 20 years I can retire and claim the pension if I wish; at 60 years of age the University can if it desires retire me without any reason being given'.<sup>210</sup> It was a prophecy that would come back to haunt him.

Mackie's appointment as a professor at the University of Sydney was a major step for him personally and for the recognition of education as an academic discipline. He was the first to hold the title of professor of education in an Australian university. In April 1910, when his appointment to the chair was confirmed, Mackie wrote to his father about the progress he had achieved in his career, but

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207 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 402.

208 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 402.

209 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 404.

210 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 11 February 1910.

also about his uncertain future and growing disillusionment with the central state system of education in New South Wales:

You will agree I am sure that it has been a long climb – 18 years I think counting from May 1896 when I first went to Canonmills as a pupil teacher. Whether or not it was worth the climb is perhaps a more difficult question to answer. I don't know if the climbing is finished or not, or if I like the lowlands, I have got to pull up the ladder and begin afresh. For it is somewhat uncertain where I want to climb now. Certainly I do not want to be Undersecretary or Director for he is much more hampered by politicians than I. I can say what I think about the state educational system from the chair but he can't speak out his mind. Perhaps I might set about writing a book but that you would say would give my enemies a chance they are better without.<sup>211</sup>

Mackie's appointment as professor of education allowed him to manage a close affiliation between the university and the teachers' college. Three developments between 1910 and 1912 helped to clarify this relationship: the creation of a Diploma of Education for university graduates; the proposed construction of the college within university grounds; and the provision for college students who had matriculated to undertake a degree at the university without paying fees. These developments were closely related.

The Diploma of Education was instituted in 1911 as a one-year postgraduate qualification that was open to graduates in arts and science. Its curriculum emphasised principles in the theory and practice of education, including the history of education, class management and school practice. The diploma was a formal credential; it was taught by Mackie and the senior academics at Sydney Teachers' College.<sup>212</sup>

In July 1910, Board and Mackie met with the chancellor, Sir Henry Normand MacLaurin, to again take up the question of the actual site for the proposed college. Born in Scotland, a graduate in medicine from Edinburgh University and the son of a schoolmaster, MacLaurin was also a member of the Legislative Council, CSR (the Colonial Sugar Refining company) and Sydney Grammar. Mackie told his father that with these contacts the chancellor had been able to persuade the state government to provide funds to complete the Fisher Library (which now stood on the eastern side of the University of Sydney Quadrangle). To Mackie, 'the best plan' was to build the college within the university grounds; but he wrote to William that 'Board had always been suspicious of it as he thinks it will

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211 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 2 April 1910.

212 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 404.

mean loss of control by the Department'. After 'animated discussion' between Board and the chancellor, the meeting failed to resolve the issue.<sup>213</sup>

By May 1911, the university Senate was discussing a bill for the construction of the college and for the attendance of college students at university lectures without fees – both matriculated students and those whose attendance at lectures was approved by the minister for public instruction.<sup>214</sup> The confirmed site for the college was not in the Quadrangle, as the vice-chancellor had proposed and Mackie had preferred, but near University Oval, as envisaged in the original discussions between the university and Peter Board in 1908. The building and land was vested in the minister for public instruction, indicating that Sydney Teachers' College was a government college, rather than a college of the university. Construction began in 1914. The building was completed by 1920 but not officially opened until 1925.<sup>215</sup>

The teachers' college building was part of a new relationship between the government and the university. With the passage of the *University (Amendment) Act 1912* (NSW), the location of the college was confirmed in the context of reforms that embraced the University of Sydney as part of the New South Wales public education system. Students at the teachers' college were a major part of this process. The 1912 Act confirmed the University of Sydney as the public university it had been since 1850 and made it the pinnacle of a public education system involving schools and students. This legislation was introduced by the Labor government that had been elected in 1910, but it arose principally from ideas and proposals that Peter Board brought back from his trip to America in 1909. The Act provided more public endowment to the university and established the state-devised Leaving Certificate examination as the primary basis for matriculation to university. Furthermore, the reforms included 100 free places, known as 'exhibitions', to be offered to new university students each year, increasing to 200 by 1915.<sup>216</sup>

Of specific significance for the future of teacher training, students at Sydney Teachers' College were offered free tuition if they matriculated to the university. The proposal had its origins in Carruthers' 1889 scheme. It had been revived in 1902, following the end of the 1890s depression, but its effect was limited to a few students who qualified. Free university tuition for all matriculating college students was then confirmed as part of the arrangements for the construction of Sydney Teachers' College. Free university education was also included in the state scholarship scheme for intending teachers. When the college opened

213 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 16 July 1910.

214 USA: Senate minutes G1/1; 7 May 1911.

215 Turney, Bygott and Chippendale 1991, 410.

216 Sherington and Horne 2012, 69–70.



in 1906, state scholarships had only provided fee relief and a small stipend. By 1912, the scholarship scheme was consolidated into a form of bonded service. Student teachers now had the prospect of a university degree, professional training at the college and a career in school teaching.<sup>217</sup> With most students at the teachers' college completing secondary school and matriculating to university, the way was open for a much closer relationship between the university and the college, as Anderson and Mackie had long intended.



*Opening of Sydney Teachers' College building stage 1 (n.d.) – Anderson, Mackie and Board. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/33.*

This relationship became much clearer after 1912, with the expansion of secondary schools in New South Wales. By 1917, at least one-third of all entrants to the college had attained the Leaving Certificate and half of the students in the college's two-year ordinary course had matriculated to the university. Mackie now claimed that within the college 'the change from a mainly academic course to a mainly professional course is complete'.<sup>218</sup> The university provided a foundation in academic subjects, while the college moulded students as professionals, instructing them in methods of teaching as well as the psychology, philosophy and history of education.

Region and gender became significant issues in the composition of the

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217 Sherington and Horne 2012, 74–75. See also Boardman et al. 1995, 32.

218 Boardman et al. 1995, 52.

emerging teaching profession. Country high schools, in particular, became a source of future teachers, while female trainees made up more than half of the entrants to the college. Such trends had been apparent almost from the opening of the college, but they became more pronounced during World War One, beginning in 1914.<sup>219</sup> The establishment of Teachers' College Scholarships opened up new professional opportunities for women. In the two decades after 1920, approximately two-thirds of college entrants were female. Most entrants came from the metropolitan and country high schools that Peter Board had created, but about twelve per cent were from Catholic schools.<sup>220</sup>

Academic teaching subjects were effectively transplanted into the university, where teacher trainees who had matriculated could pursue a degree. In 1917, 146 females and fifty-five males from the college were studying at the University of Sydney. Of these, forty-four women and twenty-eight men were on the 'honours list', having gained a credit, distinction or honours in a specific subject. The number of college students within the university had grown so great that regulations had been prescribed. College students who had matriculated could pursue a degree in arts, science, economics or agriculture. Those who passed their first year with credit or distinction could continue their course at the university. Others would be required to discontinue their university studies and devote a year to professional work at the college – these pupils were soon known as 'returned university' students. A similar provision applied at the end of the second year, allowing students who achieved distinction to continue at university and requiring others to return to college. Those who completed a third year at the university would be required to undertake professional training for the Diploma of Education.

These regulations formalised the relationship between professional studies at the college and academic studies at the university. The provisions for continuing a university degree helped to create a future academic elite within the teaching profession. This was not so different from the approach that governed teacher training when Mackie was in Edinburgh; ideas of merit and an honours program prevailed. But the relationship between the university and the college was far from settled, as would become clear in future years.

## A SHINING LIGHT IN THE EMPIRE

The creation of Sydney Teachers' College elicited interest well beyond New South Wales. When Alexander Mackie visited Britain during extended study

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219 Boardman et al. 1995, 52–56.

220 Boardman et al. 1995, 93–98.

leave in 1921, he delivered a paper on ‘The universities and the training of school teachers’. His focus was on the University of Sydney, but he also referred to Australian universities in general. Pointing out that public education was the responsibility of each Australian state, he noted in this paper that ‘Professional training for teaching in primary and in secondary schools is provided by the Universities and by the Education departments’, which control ‘Colleges for Teachers’. The universities exercised no ‘direct control’ over the colleges. However, in every state except Western Australia the teachers’ college was on or adjacent to university grounds; staff in the colleges often held positions in the universities.<sup>221</sup>

By the 1920s, Sydney Teachers’ College was by far the most significant teacher training institution in Australia. The college had over 1,200 students – more than were enrolled in the rest of the colleges in Australia combined. Melbourne Teachers’ College had less than 400 students.<sup>222</sup> According to Mackie, particular circumstances had shaped teacher training in Sydney, providing a new engagement between the university and the college. Mackie was professor of education and head of the college; the college’s vice-principal was a lecturer in education at the university. Lecturers from the college were in charge of the university’s evening course in education and its postgraduate course in experimental education. Like other Australian universities, Sydney offered courses in the theory and history of education and a university diploma for graduates, which the Department of Education recognised as a qualification for public school teachers. Mackie believed that control of Sydney Teachers’ College should be transferred to the university Senate; in ‘The universities and the training of school teachers’, he noted ‘I am of opinion that the change would be beneficial to the University, to the College, and to the teaching profession in general’.<sup>223</sup> In 1920, 389 of the students preparing to teach in New South Wales were undertaking university courses. So ‘the University exercise[d] a strong influence in forming the character of the abler among the future teachers’.<sup>224</sup>

The benefits of its close association with the university were reflected in the staffing of Sydney Teachers’ College. A number of lecturers appointed during the 1920s had graduated with honours from the University of Sydney. Of particular note were students of George Arnold Wood, the professor of history, including H.L. Harris, who later became director of youth welfare in New South Wales,

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221 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, ‘The universities and the training of school teachers’, 7 July ?1921.

222 Browne 1927, 455–58.

223 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, ‘The universities and the training of school teachers’, 2.

224 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie, ‘The universities and the training of school teachers’, 3.

and Harold Wyndham, the future director-general of education. Wyndham taught education at the college between 1925 and 1927, while researching his Master's thesis on the Italian Renaissance. He left to undertake doctoral studies at Stanford. As Brian Fletcher has argued, in many ways, in the interwar years Sydney Teachers' College had more active research scholars than most departments in the university's Faculty of Arts.<sup>225</sup>

W.F. Connell has suggested that four main fields of education research emerged in Australia before World War One: child study, history of education, school achievement and mental testing. Dewey and Darroch were international supporters of child study. In New South Wales, the Department of Public Instruction had a strong interest in studying children, particularly in terms of physical development. In 1913, Thomas T. Roberts, a lecturer at Sydney Teachers' College, initiated surveys and questionnaires to examine children's development. The college's vice-principal, Percy Cole, was an international scholar on the ancient and contemporary history of education. By the early 1920s, a number of scholars from the college, including Cameron, Phillips and Roberts, had initiated studies of school and pupil achievement. But the most significant developments arose in the field of mental testing, adapting the work of Binet in France. Research in this field at Sydney Teachers' College began with Cameron in 1908; Sydney researchers followed examples from Melbourne Teachers' College to carry out testing in the field and the laboratory.<sup>226</sup>

Formal praise for Mackie's achievements at Sydney Teachers' College was a little late in coming. In December 1926, a commissioned portrait of Mackie by the well-known wartime artist George Lambert was unveiled at a formal ceremony. A number of public figures associated with the development of the college were in attendance, including W.A. Holman, the former premier (1912–15) whose government agreed to move the college onto the university grounds, Mungo MacCallum, the vice-chancellor, and Peter Board, who had retired as director of education. Percy Cole pointed out Mackie's achievements, including the college's art collection, the 'country camp' for students and the advancement of the 'cause of experimental education' and the Montessori method in pre-schools. Holman said that teaching in New South Wales had been transformed from a 'trade' into a 'profession'. MacCallum and Board spoke of how Mackie had framed the 'characters' of student teachers.<sup>227</sup> In reply, Mackie reflected on how he had come to Australia, thanking Sir John Adams and Sir John Struthers for the 'opportunity' they had given him and recognising Francis Anderson's and Peter Board's support. He concluded:

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225 Boardman et al. 1995, 71.

226 Connell 1980, 24–35.

227 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1926.

He had often wished the college could become an organic part of the University. If such a dream could come true students would continue their studies to a stage more advanced than that reached by them at present. Nothing could do more to improve the status of the teaching profession than the presence in its ranks of a body of men and women of distinguished scholarship.<sup>228</sup>

## KEEPING THE COLLEGE ALIVE AND ACTIVE

Despite Mackie's hopes for the future of teacher education, economic and political priorities soon turned in other directions in the postwar world. Australia was still tied to the Empire, but through the mantra of 'men, money and markets' rather than the ideas and idealism of the prewar period, when educational change had seemed achievable. The Commonwealth and state governments saw the settlement of Australian ex-soldiers and British migrants on the land as providing a basis for economic productivity, borrowing from Britain to fund settlement schemes.<sup>229</sup> Expenditure on social services grew, but much of this went to income support measures, such as widows' pensions and child endowments, that were introduced in New South Wales by the Lang Labor government in the 1920s. State funding for education mainly concentrated on supporting the expanding school population, rather than the university and the teachers' college.<sup>230</sup> Allowing college students to proceed to a four-year degree, rather than qualifying with just two years of training, was increasingly seen as a costly luxury that was delaying the entry of new teachers into the profession.

In this climate of 'economic restraint', the University of Sydney and Sydney Teachers' College were not drawn closer together. If anything, they drew further apart, in spite of Mackie's efforts. By 1922, Mackie had lost his supporters Francis Anderson and Peter Board, who had both formally retired. Mackie failed to find many academics at the University of Sydney who would support him the way Francis Anderson had. Scots-born John Anderson, who succeeded Francis Anderson as Challis professor of philosophy, became Mackie's friend. But as a Marxist-influenced materialist, he was opposed to the growth of pragmatism and the emergence of the 'Deweyites' in the discipline of education in Scotland.<sup>231</sup> As one example of the continuing distance between the university and the college, the Professorial Board refused to recognise college courses in education, while

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228 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 1926.

229 Roe 1995.

230 Sherington and Hughes 2015, 126.

231 Davie 1986, 94–133.

accepting that Mackie and other college staff taught university courses at undergraduate level and as part of the Diploma of Education. This situation was not unique to Sydney. Overall, the distance between Australia's universities and the newly established teachers' colleges increased during the interwar years. Financial pressures and a decline in state grants hindered new developments.<sup>232</sup>

Peter Board's retirement was particularly significant for Mackie. The new director of education, S.H. Smith, was a former pupil teacher who did not share Board's support for university graduates in the teaching profession. Smith insisted on the need for more teachers, rather than graduate teachers, and so refused to support the practice of teacher trainees attending the university. In 1924, he even changed arrangements for teaching students studying at the university. Only those undertaking an honours degree could proceed to graduate; others were required to 'return' to the college to qualify with a certificate. Smith also sought to exercise control over Sydney Teachers' College as part of the New South Wales public education system. Smith and Mackie clashed on issues of authority and independence. As principal, Mackie sought to both protect and promote his staff, who were often frustrated by the rulings of the Public Service Board – their employing agency. In the 1920s, and even into the 1930s, Mackie constantly proposed that the only answer to these dilemmas was for the college to become more independent of the government, perhaps as a college of the university. It was an argument that he was unable to win.<sup>233</sup>

The growing influence of the bureaucracy and the increasing distance between colleges and universities was not exclusive to Australia. It was occurring in Scotland and throughout Britain. In 1905–06, Alexander Darroch, Mackie's friend at Edinburgh, responded favourably to the idea that the four universities should associate with training colleges in 'provincial' schemes, leading to the possible integration of colleges into the universities, which were expected to play a leading role in teacher education. But the head of the Scottish Department of Education, Struthers – who had been on Mackie's selection committee – made it clear that the bureaucracy must retain control over the training of elementary teachers, leaving the universities in a subsidiary role. The Scottish universities turned to promoting research, leaving undergraduate pre-service training to the colleges.<sup>234</sup> At the Second Congress of the Empire in 1921, there was an emerging view that the university sector in Britain and the Empire could not absorb large numbers of trainee teachers who might prefer a life in a teachers' college over being on the margins of a university. In 1925, a departmental report of the Board of Education for England and Wales reinforced the view that training col-

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232 Hyams 1979, 79–101.

233 Boardman et al. 1995, 63–69.

234 Bell 1990, 97.

leges and university departments of education should operate in separate spheres, with limited scope for co-operation.<sup>235</sup>

At Sydney, Mackie continued to straddle the roles of college principal and university professor, even while he suffered financially. Under the terms of his appointment as professor of education, Mackie received an annual salary of £800 from the Department of Education, entitling him to state superannuation benefits. The university initially ‘topped up’ his salary with contributions towards a future pension. In early 1927, someone – no doubt S.H. Smith – informed the State Superannuation Board that, as a part ‘employee’ of the university, Mackie was not entitled to state superannuation benefits, and he was removed from the scheme. Legal opinion later indicated that Mackie had been denied justice in this matter, but by then he had accepted the decision. In November 1927, the director of education added further spite by suspending Mackie from his position as principal for a week. Smith informed Sir Mungo MacCallum, the vice-chancellor of the university, that Mackie had been appointed as both principal and professor, and the appointment required the concurrence of the university Senate and the Department of Public Instruction.<sup>236</sup> The result was that the department and the university would continue to pay Mackie’s salary, but he would receive no state superannuation in the future – only pension payments from the university. And as principal, Mackie was expected to give due respect to the authority of the director of education. It was another strange twist in Mackie’s academic life.

Despite this financial setback, Mackie continued to impress upon the Department of Education and the Public Service Board that the college was a tertiary institution responsible for the professional training of teachers, comparable to the professional schools of medicine, law, engineering, dentistry and pharmacy at the university. In a series of memoranda written between the late 1920s and mid-1930s, Mackie argued that staff at the college required special qualifications and working conditions. Underlining the views he expressed when he arrived in 1906, he stressed that college staff should be of high standing both scholastically and professionally. He sought to employ ‘the ablest and best qualified’ of the younger teachers. The college had been modelled on the teachers’ colleges developed from the late nineteenth century in England, Scotland and America, all of which had connections with universities. College staff therefore required qualifications beyond those necessary to teach in schools. Mackie argued that college lecturers should be given permanent positions on staff and should be considered for future appointments as inspectors of schools.<sup>237</sup>

A critical issue was the opportunity for leave – an integral part of academic

235 Patrick 1986, 247–50.

236 USA: Personnel file G3/187; Alexander Mackie.

237 Cohen 1956, 93–97.

life. Throughout the Empire, study leave had become crucial for university academics to undertake research and develop networks in their discipline. From 1895, the University of Sydney formalised leave arrangements, allowing professors ‘periodic leave’ for the two terms preceding or succeeding the long summer vacation.<sup>238</sup> Terms of employment for teachers in public schools and lecturers at the college were increasingly regulated by the Public Service Board, which oversaw the ‘humble and obedient servants’ of the state.<sup>239</sup> Mackie argued that academic staff in the college should have access to leave on full salary. There was continuing disagreement between Mackie and the Department of Public Instruction over this issue once Smith became director of education. By the 1920s, staff were no longer permitted to take study leave, despite the fact that it had been partially funded by a reduction in the salaries of those on leave.<sup>240</sup>

Mackie took up the cause again in 1936, arguing that it was vital for staff to take leave so they could become acquainted with developments overseas, particularly because the college was ‘so isolated by distance’. This call for travel was associated with Mackie’s insistence on ‘personal freedom’ for college staff in terms of their movements. In particular, Mackie objected to the Public Service Board’s requirement that staff sign an attendance book. He had never insisted on the number of hours staff spent at the college, especially in view of the fact that there were no individual staff rooms. Overall, of their thirty hours of official duties each week, no more than one-third was to be devoted to class teaching; the remainder was dedicated to preparation for teaching, individual tutorials and supervision in schools. As Cohen has suggested, ‘The business of a College lecturer is to guide the studies and the practice of young people preparing to teach’. Significantly, Mackie always encouraged college lecturers ‘to make contributions to the study of their subject ... the stimulus to original thought is most valuable and greatly increases the lecturer’s efficiency as a stimulating teacher’.<sup>241</sup>

While supporting his staff, Mackie became increasingly concerned about the erosion of the professional standards of students at the college. With the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the numbers of college students who were able to attend university declined as a result of financial cuts imposed by the Department of Education. In his address to students leaving the college in 1934, Mackie strongly criticised this policy. He pointed out that the college had been placed within university grounds so that college students could enjoy the life of undergraduates, but in 1934 only two students were enrolled in the Faculty of Arts. Such a policy, he claimed, was ‘bad for students, for the Education Service, and

238 Pietsch 2013, 44–46.

239 Tyler 2006.

240 Boardman et al. 1995, 77.

241 Cohen 1956, 97–103.



for the State'. It was also detrimental to teaching as a profession.<sup>242</sup>

In this address, Mackie reflected on attributes that he saw as essential to all professions and professionals. First, according to Cohen, Mackie noted that professional practice meant acquiring a technique through 'specialised intellectual training, of a period of systematic or scientific study'. Second, Mackie suggested that members of a profession developed a 'sense of responsibility for their technique which finds expression in a concern for the competence and honour of the whole body of practitioners'. Third, he contended that professionals needed to develop 'a sense of responsibility' to those receiving professional services. This responsibility was especially important in teaching, where Mackie argued that it was possible to 'waste so much time for so little result, to impair and damage the minds of pupils without being found out'. Mackie believed that those in charge of the administration of education should encourage this sense of responsibility.<sup>243</sup> His vision for the professionalisation of teaching was firmly grounded in the principle of freedom for individual teachers working with students. He concluded his 1934 address with the contention that freedom was the basis of responsibility:

And nothing, I am convinced, encourages and develops its growth as the granting to the teacher of a due measure of freedom. A mechanical efficiency may be secured by a form of control which impairs the vitality of the profession. And in the practice of teaching the welfare of the pupil demands vitality far more than mechanical efficiency.<sup>244</sup>

Mackie had established the college as an institution focused on academic life, rather than the training needs of the state bureaucracy. In spite of the views of Smith and his staff, and of personal and other difficulties in the interwar years, Mackie continued on this path. However, the focus in teacher education shifted from the Empire to North America. Sydney Teachers' College had emerged out of Scottish ideas on the preparation and training of teachers, and the specific educational context of post-Federation New South Wales. As such, its origins were partly transnational, set within the networks of Empire. But increasingly, attention in the new world of education research was oriented towards the United States. By the 1920s, the most significant model for teacher education was the research-based Teachers' College, Columbia in New York.

## TOWARDS PROGRESSIVISM IN TEACHER

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242 Cohen 1956, 116–17.

243 Cohen 1956, 116–17.

244 Cohen 1956, 117.

## EDUCATION

Trained as a philosopher, Mackie had emerged from his studies in Scotland committed to philosophic idealism. Before World War One, he had even contemplated a new university in New South Wales, funded through annual state grants – an outcome that was achieved, in part, by the 1912 legislative reforms.<sup>245</sup> The war undermined the neo-idealism that was once prominent in British universities. Forms of neo-Hegelian thought were tainted by their association with the authoritarian ‘Junker’ German state so dramatically portrayed in the British press during the war.<sup>246</sup>

In other ways, German influences in the field of education had begun to fade by the 1920s. Despite prewar recognition of ‘scientific investigation’ in Germany, ‘professional instruction’ was a major weakness of German higher education. While German philosophy and associated models of social science remained influential until World War One, translating these ideas into a professional form to educate teachers was problematic. German universities had developed a reputation for educational research, but there was little commitment to becoming directly associated with educating and training professionals. To enter university, German students had to complete a classical education in a ‘gymnasium’. The universities refused to provide training for engineers and kept scientific and technical study confined to separate institutes. In the 1880s, there was discussion concerning training for secondary teachers. The reformer Friedrich Paulsen delivered lectures on pedagogy at the University of Berlin. But there was still division between those who wanted teacher training confined to small seminars attached to gymnasiums and others, such as Wilhelm Rein of the University of Jena, who wanted professional training integrated with trainee teachers’ scholarly pursuits at university.<sup>247</sup> Even this pragmatic model of teacher training soon gave way to more integrated models of teacher education that began to emerge, particularly in North America.

For much of the nineteenth century, teacher training in North America occurred mainly through normal schools, which provided basic instruction on how to teach. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, American universities became more focused on the middle-class culture of professionalism, with its ideals of autonomy and authority in specialist fields or occupations, underpinned by higher education, usually in graduate schools. Professional programs in graduate schools promoted pupils of talent and merit. University graduate school programs expanded to include areas such as theology, law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy

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245 USA: A. Mackie P169/8 Notes made by Alexander Mackie for lectures on education; New university.

246 Collini 1976.

247 Albisetti 1983, 130–31.

and veterinary studies.<sup>248</sup>

By the 1890s, academics in the United States were beginning to embrace teacher training as part of higher education. Colleges began replacing the normal schools, many of which had low statuses and reputations. Here, as in other areas of higher education, many Americans initially looked to Germany but sought even better ways to prepare teachers and advance educational research. Significantly, an opportunity arose in New York, not through state action but through the support of American philanthropy. Grace Dodge, the daughter of a wealthy New York merchant, was interested in educating the poor in household management. This movement broadened, leading to the foundation of the Industrial Education Association, which promoted all forms of industrial education. A small college emerged with a focus on educating teachers; by 1898, it had become the Teachers' College, Columbia, formally affiliated with the University of Columbia, which became the centre for higher education in New York.<sup>249</sup>

James Earl Russell became the dean of this university-affiliated college, transforming it into a world-leading seat of learning and research. Russell had worked with the Herbartian Wilhelm Rein at Jena before completing a PhD at Leipzig. The college provided new programs for the teaching profession, going well beyond the form of teacher education offered in the North American normal schools. As dean of the college, Russell defined four qualities required of qualified teachers: general knowledge, professional knowledge, special knowledge and technical skills.<sup>250</sup> The teachers' college drew upon the strengths of Columbia, which soon became the largest graduate university in the United States concentrating on the professions. With support from Rockefeller philanthropy, the teachers' college expanded to occupy an entire city block. By 1912, its enrolment was the fourth highest of any graduate school in America. It provided a clear example of the transformation of teaching into a profession linked to the academic life of a college and a university.<sup>251</sup>

The establishment of the Teachers' College, Columbia marked the beginnings of a progressive education movement that focused on studies of the child and the appropriate curriculum for schools. This movement's methodology was distinct from philosophic idealism, couched in a view of education as an experimental science, rather than in philosophic ideals. Edward Thorndike – who was almost the same age as Mackie – joined the faculty at Columbia in the 1890s. According to Geraldine Clifford, Thorndike saw himself as a 'scientist' and believed 'science' was the only 'sure foundation for social progress'. He soon

248 Bledstein 1976.

249 Cremin 1969, 168–71.

250 Clifford 1984, 175–76.

251 Clifford 1984, 190.

supplemented experiments with tests; his national reputation grew when he designed intelligence tests that were administered to army recruits during World War One.<sup>252</sup>

In 1904, Columbia secured the services of John Dewey. Dewey became professor of philosophy at the University of Columbia and taught the philosophy of education at the teachers' college. Born in Vermont in 1859, Dewey reacted against his early education, which was founded on the traditional Scottish 'common sense' philosophy and did not provide any unified understanding. After training as a school teacher, Dewey studied at university to become a teacher of philosophy. Like many late nineteenth-century Scottish philosophers, Dewey was attracted to neo-idealism under the influence of Hegel. But he soon moved beyond those views and helped to develop education as a discipline founded on experiment and experience. Arthur Wirth has suggested that the 'demand for a unifying philosophy' led Dewey to Hegel 'and then gradually to the elaboration of experimentalism', including establishing a laboratory school designed to examine the dynamics between teachers, students and subject content.<sup>253</sup>

By the early twentieth century, many of Mackie's colleagues in Scotland were being attracted to the new ideas and ventures in America. Alexander Darroch at Edinburgh and William Boyd at Glasgow had already developed transatlantic contacts and networks.<sup>254</sup> In contrast to the philanthropic impulse that catalysed the foundation of the Teachers' College, Columbia, 'progressivism' in Scotland often developed in response to the perceived needs of the state education administration, becoming focused not so much on democratic ends as on issues of control and efficiency.<sup>255</sup> On the eve of World War One, Darroch published *Education and the new utilitarianism*, promoting a perception of knowledge as socially useful. Opposing the idea of an 'unchangeable and eternal reality', Darroch presented the view that the 'universe is dynamic and progressive' and so 'evolution may be creative'.<sup>256</sup> Knowledge was sought not for its own end but to promote social action. Schools were designed to advance the welfare of society – not only 'to secure the social efficiency of the individual' in carrying out some particular duty or service but also 'to educate him so that he aid[s] in the advancement of society'.<sup>257</sup>

Some elements of prewar thought endured. Faith in the science of education remained prominent, particularly in the views of Thorndike and others in Amer-

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252 Clifford 1984, 190.

253 Wirth 1966, 8, 35–101.

254 Bell 1983, 161.

255 Finn 1983, 175–96.

256 Darroch 1914, 6.

257 Darroch 1914, 9.

ica who promoted tests and testing as a means of classifying students.<sup>258</sup> But the progressive education movement that emerged after the war also emphasised the freedom of teachers to guide change. Percy Nunn, who succeeded Sir John Adams as principal of the Institute of Education in London, abandoned the pre-war attachment to idealism grounded in state action, instead asserting the primacy of the individual and individualism. Nunn's colleague Cyril Burt promoted views of individual differences based on intelligence. In America, John Dewey had moved beyond idealism to emphasise individual growth achieved within democratic communities. His *Democracy and education*, published in 1916, became a statement for many seeking social change through education.<sup>259</sup> By 1919, a Progressive Education Association had formed in the United States, stimulated, in part, by Dewey's ideas.

Increasingly, the progressive education movement focused on the need for a child-centred curriculum. Progressive reforms came to involve the introduction of new subjects into the curricula of the comprehensive secondary schools that were emerging across America. Grounded in the meritocratic values of late nineteenth-century Scottish education, Mackie never accepted the idea of secondary schools succumbing to a curriculum that might displace academic subjects. His support for the role of the university in the preparation of teachers was obviously intended to promote academic studies as part of a liberal education of the kind he had known at Edinburgh. But he was also aware of how progressive education could contribute to teacher training.

During the interwar period, the intellectual status of education changed markedly. There was a new international emphasis on research, pointing the way forward for education as an independent, enquiry-based academic discipline, rather than an offshoot of philosophy, psychology, sociology and history. Initially, much of this shift in emphasis was transatlantic, involving America and Britain – particularly Scotland. Before the war, Darroch had proposed a new model for schools in Scotland based on German and American examples of 'laboratories' for experiments in education.<sup>260</sup> Following Darroch's early death, William Boyd at the University of Glasgow proposed the establishment of an educational institute that would strengthen teaching as a graduate profession and promote the development of educational expertise through research training and enquiry. Over the next three decades, Scotland became a leader in areas such as educational psychology and testing.<sup>261</sup>

Progressively, the focus in fields such as educational psychology and the

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258 Clifford 1984, 383–409.

259 Gordon and White 1979, 200–19.

260 Cremin 1969, 330.

261 Lawn and Deary 2015.

measurement of the intelligence quotient moved to America. By the 1920s, the Teachers' College, Columbia had a number of prominent academics who had achieved public recognition and international standing. The most significant and influential was Edward Thorndike. Thorndike focused on the field of applied psychology, which was first developed in Scotland in the nineteenth century. In this field, educational theory was believed to provide an understanding of the best methods for social selection and training. Thorndike taught generations of teachers and superintendents at Columbia.<sup>262</sup>

## THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

Mackie and Australia were on the edge of this new world of education research. As principal of Sydney Teachers' College, Mackie appealed to a local rather than international audience. In 1920, he contributed to the book *Australia: economic and political studies*, edited by Meredith Atkinson, formerly at the University of Sydney, then a tutor in adult education in Melbourne. Atkinson claimed that this book was the 'first comprehensive and authoritative work on the sociological economic conditions of Australia yet to be published'.<sup>263</sup> Against the background of World War One, Atkinson and most other contributors argued for Australia's 'independence', opposing the 'imperial loyalists' who still supported the union of the Empire and even an imperial parliament based in Britain.<sup>264</sup>

Mackie's chapter was his first attempt to publish an outline of his views on 'Education in Australia'. He was highly critical of the role of government in education in all the Australian states. Like American visitors in the 1930s and beyond, Mackie decried the persistent uniformity in state administration and the lack of financial support for non-state schools, noting that 'The marked similarity in administrative structure is certainly very striking, especially since it departs so widely from that in existence in Great Britain, with its combination of local and central control and support'.<sup>265</sup> Mackie also drew comparisons with America, where expenditure per pupil was twice that in New South Wales. While there had been advances in teacher training in Australia over the previous decade, he argued that support for rural teachers was insufficient. There was increasing attention to child welfare, but school buildings and equipment were inadequate. Australia's new high schools were an advancement, but they could only be compared to American junior high schools, or higher grade or elementary schools in

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262 Clifford 1984.

263 Atkinson 1920, preface.

264 Atkinson 1920, 380–414.

265 Atkinson 1920, 234.

England and Scotland. At that time, they only offered four years of high school education; Mackie wished to see this increased to six years. There was little benefaction for higher education in New South Wales, which meant that the ‘highest institution in the State for teaching and research’ was ‘increasingly dependent on State support for continued development’.<sup>266</sup> Equally disturbing was the ‘distinct loss in public interest’ in these educational concerns. Mackie argued that this was a result of communities being ‘given no share in local administration’. Overall, Mackie suggested that ‘public opinion’ in Australia was ‘neither energetic nor well informed’, while in England during the war there was strong support for change.<sup>267</sup>

Mackie was committed to the view that writers on education should be critics of policy. In 1929, he wrote a foreword to R.W. Gordon Mackay’s *Some aspects of primary and secondary education*.<sup>268</sup> Mackay was a solicitor and a lecturer in the tutorial department at the University of Sydney; he had been a lecturer in philosophy at St. Paul’s College at the university. Calling for reform of New South Wales schools, Mackay argued that the system of education in the state was ‘atrociously bad’, the curriculum ‘terribly antiquated’ and teaching methods ‘almost useless’.<sup>269</sup> In his foreword, Mackie praised Mackay, describing him as an outsider to the education system who was able to ‘make an independent examination of the evidence and express their opinions freely’. Only with an ‘enlightened body of opinion’ could there be an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school system.<sup>270</sup>

Mackie’s experience with the bureaucracy influenced his views on the state’s role in education after World War One. Increasingly, he saw teachers, rather than the state, as agents of change. Mackie’s shift away from centralised state-based reform towards the possibility of teacher initiatives at the local level was seen in a number of ways. Before the war, he had proposed a more flexible curriculum at Sydney Grammar School and encouraged the principal of Grenfell High School to experiment. After the war, students from Sydney Teachers’ College used Glenbrook School, on the outskirts of Sydney, for their practice sessions. But, as in other areas, state bureaucracy frustrated these experiments.<sup>271</sup>

By the 1920s, state-controlled and government-financed school systems were coming under scrutiny from the new world of education found in teachers’ colleges and associated universities in Britain, America and Australia. There was

266 Atkinson 1920, 250.

267 Atkinson 1920, 256.

268 Mackay 1929.

269 Mackay 1929, 9.

270 Mackay 1929, 11.

271 Baillie 1968, 121–26, 171–74.

also a shift in Mackie's perspective. Rather than concentrating on institutional change alone, he focused more on ideas, comparing the Australian system to the emerging world of education elsewhere. As an academic, principal and professor, Mackie was becoming a critical intellectual, keen to raise issues in the public domain beyond the university and the college.

Stefan Collini has argued that the idea of the 'intellectual' emerged in the late nineteenth century. It was sometimes fused with the concept of the academic. But while the function of the academic was still tied to higher education institutions, the intellectual was defined by wider public roles. According to Collini, 'a public role is a constitutive part of the meaning of the term "intellectual" in the cultural sense; being politically active is one form which that public role may frequently, but not necessarily, take'.<sup>272</sup>

In interwar Australia, a number of intellectuals began to publicise their views on 'progressive' ways forward. Like Mackie, they were part of the prewar generation that drew ideas from the contexts of the Empire and Europe. They promoted science, including genetics, and rational social and economic planning. Often coming from backgrounds of influence and privilege, they saw themselves as leaders.<sup>273</sup> Mackie did not necessarily fit this profile, but he sympathised with such views. He had thought, when he was appointed as principal and professor, that he would be a leader in education and in the teaching profession. With Peter Board as director of education, Mackie had become an agent of change. After Board, he seemed to be a public servant subject to the bureaucracy.

Mackie's 'public' initially comprised the college students and staff, but extended to include teachers and the wider Australian community. His domains for public dissemination included publications, associations and public enquiries. Mackie's ideas were not always original; they drew on international debates in education. His intention was to demonstrate the need for change in Australian schools and colleges by highlighting developments elsewhere, particularly in Britain and America.

In 1917, he founded the journal *Schooling*. Published by Teachers' College Press, Sydney (establishing a parallel with Teachers' College Press, Columbia), the journal accepted subscriptions from the general community. Edited by Mackie and the college's vice-principal, Percy Cole, the new publication had an associated committee made up of the principals of the other Australian teachers' colleges – John Smyth from Melbourne, A.J. Schulz from Adelaide and Rooney from Perth. The first editorial set the tone:

Not only the science and art of but the practice of school education are

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272 Collini 2006, 50.

273 Roe 1984.



changing rapidly at the present time. There is unrest and dissatisfaction with things as they have been, and teachers and others are seeking for a new theory and a new practice of schooling suited to the changed conditions of the modern democratic community, of modern industry, and the social organization to which it has given rise. A new philosophy of education and a new theory of teaching procedure are rapidly coming into being, reflecting on the one hand the changed theory of social welfare and on the other the changed practice of the present day school room.<sup>274</sup>

The new publication was designed to encourage ‘free discussion’ to avoid stagnation. Initially, the journal’s developers proposed to release five issues per year, but publication became less frequent. They hoped to have contributions from teachers and other writers from all Australian states and to include developments in ‘schools not under State departments’, for the ‘experience of schools working under freer conditions is of particular value in Australia where the schools are so very centralised’.<sup>275</sup> But over the next fifteen years, until *Schooling* ceased publication in 1931, most of the contributions came from staff at Sydney Teachers’ College, who provided examples of their own work or outlined new developments occurring in Britain and North America.

The articles in the journal formed the basis for more extensive books written or edited by Mackie and Percy Cole. The first of these was *The groundwork of teaching*, published in 1919. A second edition of this work was released in 1924. Edited by Mackie, the book contained contributions from leading staff at the college and past college staff who had moved elsewhere, including chapters by Percy Cole on the ‘school system’ and the ‘conduct of the lesson’; T.T. Roberts on the ‘nature of the lesson’ and ‘teaching procedure’; H.J. Meldrum on mathematics; R.G. Cameron (soon to become principal of Claremont Teachers’ College in Western Australia) on testing and the idea of the ‘school community; and L.H. Allen (then at the Royal Military College at Duntroon) on the ‘vocation of the teacher’.<sup>276</sup>

Mackie wrote the opening chapter of *The groundwork of teaching*, entitled ‘The aims of schooling’. At the outset, he made it clear that his perception of the purpose of schooling was founded on democratic and social principles: ‘It is here proposed to examine those fundamental purposes which appear to control the work of public education in democratic communities’.<sup>277</sup> He rejected the idea being propounded by some educational ‘progressives’ that it was harmful to at-

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274 ‘Editorial’ 1917, 1.

275 ‘Editorial’ 1917, 2.

276 Mackie 1924.

277 Mackie 1924, 1.

tempt to shape the character and views of the young. Instead, he ‘proposed to keep to the more common view that schooling should exercise a positive influence upon the pupils, moulding them in mind and body’.<sup>278</sup> Mackie argued that schooling should meet the aims of parents and communities and seek ‘to promote the welfare and happiness of the children’. This required attention to both individual ends and social purposes.

In this chapter, Mackie noted that schooling supplements home life, social life and other training. He suggested that schools should both prepare children for adult life and provide a form of social life that is satisfying in itself.<sup>279</sup> He also discussed the interests of the state in finding ways to form good citizens, a goal that was achieved by providing and maintaining schools of various kinds.<sup>280</sup> Each school must consider the roles their pupils will play in the democratic community, taking governance, civic duties and social manners and responsibilities into account. The school curriculum must therefore include subjects such as physical education. With growing leisure, schools should also cater to tastes such as art, religion, hobbies and sport. Mackie saw schools as a form of social life. The ‘occupations’ of a school were to form the physical, mental and moral character of the young, to fit them for living as useful members of the community and, in so doing, to promote their happiness and welfare.<sup>281</sup>

In another chapter in *The groundwork of teaching*, Mackie reflected on ‘The general nature of teaching’, emphasising that the purpose of teaching was to encourage learning, which was the foundation of experience. He drew upon a number of recent thinkers, including the Italian Maria Montessori, who used toys in her kindergartens to help children learn by experience. This gave new meaning to the role of the teacher – teachers should not so much ask questions of the child as answer questions the child posed from their experiences. Mackie also touched upon what would soon become a major issue: how to group students into classes while also recognising individual differences.<sup>282</sup>

Mackie’s views on schools and teaching reflected his academic journey. Seeming to abandon his earlier support for the notion of a Platonic idealised state, he moved towards ideals of democratic communities, which had obvious Scottish associations but also reflected the progressivism of Dewey and others. However, Mackie had not abandoned the view that schools formed citizens. He had little sympathy with some of the more radical educational views of the interwar years, which often led to education outside the public sector preaching the ‘freedoms’

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278 Mackie 1924, 2.

279 Mackie 1924, 3–5.

280 Mackie 1924, 9–11.

281 Mackie 1924, 15.

282 Mackie 1924, 64–78.

of pupils and warning of the dangers of too much teacher intervention.<sup>283</sup> Mackie was too committed to teaching as a profession to accept that there could be too much teacher intervention.

What then was Mackie's relationship to the transnational progressive education movement and to the view that schools should be child-centred, rather than subject-oriented? One historian has argued that progressivism in American schools and teachers' colleges failed in the interwar years because of conservatism in curriculum planning.<sup>284</sup> But Mackie's views on teaching show a commitment to student-centred learning; his emphasis on classification and individual differences reveals a dedication to experimentation and a general acceptance of intelligence testing.

By the mid-1920s, Mackie was increasingly supportive of the new field of educational psychology. The growth of this field in the interwar years led to the measurement of student abilities and new forms of classification based on an intelligence quotient. Aware of the pioneering work of Cyril Burt in London, at the end of the war Mackie recruited Gilbert Phillips, a graduate from Melbourne who had worked at the University of London under Professor Spearman – the inventor of the idea of 'general intelligence' as a marker of difference between students. Phillips had graduated from London with a doctorate of science. With encouragement from Mackie, he developed a course on educational and psychological testing at Sydney Teachers' College. In 1928, Phillips became principal of the Glenfield School for Special Education, which soon became a site for understanding of children deemed to be of low intelligence.<sup>285</sup> In this way, the college helped to spread the intelligence testing movement, which was already prominent in Britain, influenced by Burt and supported by the battery of tests developed at Moray House in Edinburgh. Psychology had come to prominence as the foundational discipline for education, promising a new view of merit grounded in intelligence testing.<sup>286</sup>

When *The groundwork of teaching* was republished in 1924, Mackie wrote a new chapter on 'The study of education', where he proposed that education was becoming a science based on experimentation. Like many others in this period, he believed that testing students' mental abilities was the way of the future. Testing identified innate abilities and provided statistical distributions that divided the school population into the most and least able. In this way, merit was identified through intelligence tests, rather than just through 'scholastic' exams, as in Mackie's own schooling. The significance for teaching was that most class

283 For some examples, see Selleck 1972.

284 Zilversmit 1976, 252–61.

285 Boardman et al. 1995, 118.

286 Wooldridge 1994.

groups would be heterogeneous. Successful teaching, Mackie suggested, required teachers to know more about their class in terms of the ‘psychological nature of scholastic abilities’.<sup>287</sup>

Mackie and his deputy, Percy Cole, were joint authors of two further publications that examined many of the issues first taken up in *The groundwork of teaching*. In *Studies in contemporary education*, Mackie discussed the elements of physical and other forms of welfare for students. He emphasised the significance of education for work and leisure and provided a study of psychoanalysis in education. But most of his attention was focused on ‘Studies in experimental education’, giving specific consideration to pathways towards intelligence testing and the implications for the organisation of schools.<sup>288</sup>

In *Studies in the theory of education*, published in 1925, Mackie commented on ‘The school system and the formation of class groups’, while Cole attempted to synthesise the theories of the nineteenth-century German philosophers Herbart and Froebel.<sup>289</sup> Teachers’ College Press, Sydney published both of these books in association with commercial publisher Angus & Robertson, which was based in Sydney – an indication that they were intended for a public that extended beyond the college.

Other education academics followed in Mackie’s wake, establishing themselves as public intellectuals. Before becoming the third professor of education at the University of Melbourne in 1934, G.S. Browne had edited the major publication *Education in Australia*, which surveyed developments in all the Australian states and was published in London by Macmillan.<sup>290</sup> From the 1930s, he used radio and other media to inform the public about new ideas in education and teaching. Like Mackie, Browne did not hesitate to criticise the government’s approach to education when he saw it as necessary to do so.<sup>291</sup>

## AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION AND AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

By the late 1920s, Mackie’s role within and outside Sydney Teachers’ College was developing a transnational focus. Although his ideas had arisen from Scottish influences and the needs of the Empire, Mackie and other Australian academics began to turn to America for inspiration and support. Even before World War

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287 Mackie 1924, 205–24.

288 Mackie and Cole 1924.

289 Mackie and Cole 1925.

290 Browne 1927.

291 Flesch 2017, 50–51.

One, some Australian scholars had been attracted to North America. Sydney-born Percy Cole had gone to the Teachers' College, Columbia in 1905 to complete a doctorate in the history of education (graduating with a PhD in 1907) before returning to Sydney Teachers' College in 1910.<sup>292</sup> In 1925, K.S. Cunningham departed Melbourne for Columbia to undertake a PhD in educational measurement.<sup>293</sup> Others would travel to different research centres in the United States, including Mackie's best student, Harold Wyndham, who went to Stanford.

In the 1920s, American philanthropy began to discover Australian higher education institutions. The Rockefeller Foundation in New York supported medical research and anthropology at the University of Sydney, establishing a professorial chair and an academic department in anthropology. In this way, American philanthropy funded research in an Australian university in ways not even attempted by Australian governments.<sup>294</sup>

The Carnegie Corporation had been established in 1911 to promote the advancement of knowledge and understanding within the United States. In 1917, funds were set aside for similar purposes in 'Canada or the British Colonies'.<sup>295</sup> A decade later, James Russell, recently retired as head of the Teachers' College, Columbia, visited Australia on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation. Stopping in Sydney, he met with Mackie and H.T. Lovell, professor of psychology at the university and formerly on the staff of the teachers' college. Russell then travelled to Melbourne for a meeting with Frank Tate, the director of education in Victoria. Russell wanted to stimulate the creation of a body concerned with educational research, which would be staffed and controlled by Australians. He was sceptical of what had been achieved at Sydney Teachers' College but suggested that in the context of New South Wales' conservative system of education the college 'must be kept alive and alert'.<sup>296</sup> Within a week of Russell's departure from Sydney, a National Institute of Education had been formed, with Mackie as president and Cole as secretary.<sup>297</sup>

After further discussions with Russell, Frank Tate took the initiative and sought support for a national body for educational research. In December 1928, an executive group, including Tate as president, Lovell as vice-president and Mackie as secretary, was established for what would become the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER). Cunningham later became the executive officer. This quartet decided much of the direction of the new council, which

292 Connell 1980, 8.

293 Connell 1980, 40–41.

294 Sherington and Horne 2012.

295 Connell 1980, 20–21.

296 Connell 1980, 2–8, 103–16, 122–29, 314.

297 Connell 1980, 8.

was composed of delegates from research institutes in the Australian states. Over the next decade, the ACER provided numerous scholarships for Australians to study in the United States. In 1932, Harold Wyndham, who had worked with Mackie for over a decade, was granted a doctoral scholarship to research the abilities of gifted and talented students.<sup>298</sup>

The establishment of the ACER had major consequences for the future of education research in Australia. It gave a clear indication that research was an important part of the endeavours of teachers' colleges as well as universities. Most of all, the ACER provided an agency for the publication of research. As executive officer, Cunningham was responsible for organising much of the dissemination of research. He became the author of a number of publications and offered grants to encourage established and younger scholars to publish their work. In 1930, the council began producing its Educational Research Series. By 1940, the series included sixty publications, mainly book length; their main focus was on Australia, but often set against developments overseas.<sup>299</sup> Within a decade, and based on research output, education had become the main social science in Australia.

The establishment of the ACER provided an opportunity for Australian education to show itself to the world. The New Education Fellowship (NEF), a principally European organisation, had been formed in 1921 to press for progressive education. During the 1920s, the NEF held a number of conferences in European cities. In 1934, a conference was held in South Africa. Cunningham attended this event and lobbied for the NEF to come to Australia. The ACER executive backed the proposal, gaining support from Australia's universities and vice-chancellors, and eventually the Commonwealth and state governments. The Carnegie Corporation provided a grant and encouraged the Australian conference, which brought twenty-one overseas speakers to deliver over 300 papers. Most of these overseas visitors were established figures in universities or education administration, and many were well-known proponents of the progressive education movement. The NEF conference was held on the campuses of Australian universities in August and September 1937. The total audience at seven sessions was 87,718.<sup>300</sup>

Many of the papers presented at the Australian conference were published in 1938, in a collection entitled *Education for complete living*, which provided a catalogue of worldwide developments in education and suggestions for change. Many of the overseas visitors, particularly the well-known scholar Isaac Kandel from the Teachers' College, Columbia, were critical of the heavy reliance on centralisation in Australian education and the accompanying rules and regula-

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298 Hughes 2002, 22–28.

299 Connell 1980, 352–55.

300 Connell 1980, 103–07.

tions, which hindered the development of teachers, students and schools.<sup>301</sup> They echoed and provided further justification for many of the views that Mackie had expressed for over two decades. The conference, and the publication of the papers, was also a way of stimulating a movement for education reform that continued into World War Two and beyond.<sup>302</sup>

When Tate died in 1939, Lovell succeeded him as ACER president and Mackie briefly became vice-president. In 1964, the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science bestowed the Mackie Medal on the ACER, recognising the council's 'notable contribution to education in Australia'.<sup>303</sup>

## TOWARDS THE END

For most of the interwar years, Mackie was locked out of government decision making in New South Wales because of the antipathy of S.H. Smith. In 1930, Mackie welcomed the appointment of G. Ross Thomas as the new director of education in New South Wales. Thomas came from much the same mould as Smith, but he was less abrasive. He was a former pupil teacher and his entire career had been spent in the New South Wales teaching service. Unlike Smith, Thomas had experience in secondary schools. He became the head of Bathurst High School and, after graduating in arts from the University of Sydney, was promoted to the inspectorate.<sup>304</sup> Mackie wrote to Thomas with the hope that 'The attitude of the past five years would be replaced by one of co-operation with the Principal of the College instead of a constant thwarting of his efforts to secure the best possible preparation for teachers of New South Wales'.<sup>305</sup>

Relations between Mackie and the department remained tense, in part because of deteriorating economic conditions. The Great Depression in the 1930s had a major effect on Sydney Teachers' College. With state finances in decline, there were significant cuts to public expenditure on education. The association between the university and the college was eroded further when enrolments in the Diploma of Education declined from 383 in 1921 to 189 in 1927 and only ninety-three in 1931, when the course was abandoned. The diploma was briefly restored in 1936 to address an anticipated teacher shortage, only to disappear again by 1938. For much of the 1930s, the college concentrated on primary education, providing a reduced two-year course.<sup>306</sup>

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301 Cunningham and Radford 1938.

302 Connell 1980, 90–162; Spaul 1982, 162–211.

303 Connell 1980, 6.

304 Boardman et al. 1995, 67.

305 Boardman et al. 1995, 67.

Mackie continued to criticise the Department of Education on grounds that went beyond the teachers' college. In August 1932, he reviewed education in New South Wales, arguing that public policy was marked by 'narrowness and insulation', lack of experience among teachers and lack of public interest in education, which remained in the 'hands of a hierarchy of officials'.<sup>307</sup> Despite this critique, or perhaps because of it, Thomas and David Drummond, the new minister for education, seemed willing to listen to Mackie's views on matters such as the secondary school curriculum and proposed examination reform.

Mackie had a longstanding interest in the secondary school curriculum. He was a member of the Board of Examiners, which was set up in 1912 to administer the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations that Peter Board had established as part of the prewar secondary school system. He was also associated with W.J. Elliott, who was appointed by Board as chief inspector of secondary schools, but who, like Mackie, had been frustrated by inertia and opposition to reform from S.H. Smith and others brought up in the pupil teacher tradition. Elliott and others at the University of Sydney, including Professor Carslaw in mathematics, were highly critical of the secondary school system, particularly the academic standards set by the Intermediate Certificate, which examined candidates after three years of schooling.<sup>308</sup>

In 1933, David Drummond established a Committee of Inquiry into Post Primary Education under Sir Robert Wallace, the vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney. Thirty-two committee members were appointed, including Mackie – an indication of the range of interests involved. Throughout the proceedings, Mackie kept in touch with Carslaw and Elliott, who was now retired from his role as chief inspector. According to Mark Askew, the main historian of the Wallace Committee, the minutes showed that Mackie led a 'reformist group' that included Carslaw and L.C. Robson, the head of Sydney Church of England Grammar School and a former student of Carslaw. Opposition to major change came from Thomas, the director of education, and McKenzie, the assistant undersecretary of education. Mackie chaired one of three sub-committees: the sub-committee appointed to investigate and report upon general problems in secondary education. Askew's research revealed that the records of their meetings contained many suggestions for reform.

Mackie was convinced that final decisions about the courses students would take should not be made until the end of their first year. In that first year, he believed, children should be exposed to a wide variety of subjects, and their aptitudes in these subjects should be considered when determining their placement

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306 Boardman et al. 1995, 80–81.

307 *Daily Advertiser* (Wagga Wagga), 27 August 1932.

308 Askew 1997.



in each stream. Mackie advocated the abandonment of the external Intermediate Certificate examination. He suggested an internal examination would be more economical and more effective because school principals would be in a position to consider other work completed by each child before deciding whether or not to award a certificate. Mackie also proposed the introduction of a Lower School Certificate examination, which would be completed at the end of the four-year secondary course, and a Higher School Certificate examination, which would be taken after a further two years of more specialised study. This suggestion was included in the sub-committee's final report; however, the two-year period of specialised study was reduced to one year.<sup>309</sup>

In the short term, the formal recommendations of the Wallace Committee achieved little. The minister for education established an Advisory Council on Education, but this council only met twice. He also agreed to disestablish the Board of Examiners in mid-1936, replacing it with the Board of Secondary School Studies, which had an expanded membership extending beyond just delegates from the department and the university. Mackie was the longest serving member of the Board of Examiners, having been appointed on its establishment, when Peter Board was director of education. His formal association with the government agency that supervised exams was now ended, although some of his ideas for change would be revived when his former student Harold Wyndham became director-general of education.

Many of the Wallace Committee's proposals formed the basis for postwar reform of secondary education. In particular, Mackie's suggestions, supported by others on the Wallace Committee, laid the foundations for the committee that Wyndham chaired in the 1950s. The Wyndham Committee's report provided the basis for New South Wales' comprehensive secondary school system.<sup>310</sup>

In July 1939, Mackie requested long service leave so that he and his wife, Annie, could visit their children, Margaret and John, who were studying in Oxford. After Oxford, they visited the Midlands. In Leicester, Mackie came down to breakfast with paralysis in one side of his face and distorted speech. A doctor in Cambridge diagnosed him with Bell's palsy, but it was soon clear that he had suffered a stroke. He and his wife returned to Sydney Teachers' College in late 1939, just after the outbreak of World War Two. When he was greeted by his long-time friend and colleague Miss Skillen, Mackie replied, 'It's not Professor Mackie. It's only a shell'.<sup>311</sup>

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309 Askew 1997, 356–57.

310 Hughes 2002.

311 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie.



*Annie and Alexander Mackie aboard the SS Jervis Bay in 1939. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/82.*

Mackie's stroke had neurological and emotional effects. In February 1940, he resigned his chair at the University of Sydney. His wife told Selle, the university registrar, that her husband was 'still unfit for the strain of work and I feel his depression is very much accentuated by anxiety (undue I think) about his financial problems'.<sup>312</sup> Mackie's financial concerns were related to his university pension, which had become his main source of retirement income since he had been denied a state superannuation pension following the government's decision in 1929. In 1935, he had again contested that decision. When he reached the age of sixty, Mackie had also become entitled to the interest from an annuity policy that the university had taken out.<sup>313</sup> In April 1940, the university indicated that Mackie would receive a pension of £400 per annum, plus a lump sum from his own contributions.<sup>314</sup> The sum of £400 per year was equivalent to a professorial salary in the 1930s. While this was a reasonable amount, there was no allowance

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313 USA: G3/187; Alexander Mackie; Vice-chancellor to director of education, 1 August 1935.

314 USA: G3/187; Alexander Mackie; Registrar University of Sydney to Professor A. Mackie, 5 April 1940.

for changes in the cost of living. Financial concerns continued to plague Mackie in his retirement, particularly due to inflation during World War Two and in the postwar years. In 1952, the university Senate agree to raise the professors' pension to £600 per year.<sup>315</sup>

## BEYOND THE MACKIE ERA

When Alexander Mackie died in October 1955, he left a legacy that was celebrated in words and memorials. In April 1956, the University of Sydney Senate named the Alexander Mackie building – a home for education tutorials – in his honour. That month, a special conference was held at Sydney Teachers' College – an appreciation of Mackie's life, reviewing his ideas and influence and outlining his contributions to teacher training. It was announced that the college library would become the Mackie Library.<sup>316</sup> Ivan Turner, then principal of Sydney Teachers' College, told the conference:

So we pay tribute to the man to whom we owe so much of what is good in our professional life – freedoms that we enjoy which were hardly known when he came to us, a fuller understanding of the importance of principles, a keener realization of our profession, and above all an awareness of the need for a broad liberal interpretation for that teaching profession which he loved and to which he made one of the most notable contributions in the history of Australian education.<sup>317</sup>

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315 USA: G3/187; Alexander Mackie; Registrar to Professor A. Mackie, 8 February 1952.

316 *The Forum of Education* 14(3), April 1956.

317 Turner 1956, 11.



*Alexander Mackie at Sydney Teachers' College, 1952. USA: G3/224/2280.*

Almost all the speakers at the conference acknowledged that Mackie had two main aims: to develop teaching as a profession and to establish education as an academic discipline informed by liberal studies and research. Central to these aims was a close relationship between the college and the university. When Mackie retired as principal and professor of education, this goal became even more difficult to achieve. In Britain, the 1944 McNair Report signalled an end to

autonomous teachers' colleges and a move towards 'a coherent teaching service', leading to the creation of Area Training Organisations involving colleges and universities.<sup>318</sup> In New South Wales, the Department of Education established new colleges to meet the demand for teachers. Some colleges in rural areas were residential. By the mid-1960s, there were eight teachers' colleges in the state, all under the department's control and most without any association with a university.<sup>319</sup>

At Sydney, relations between the college and the university grew more distant and competition developed. The New South Wales government determined that Mackie's successor would be a public servant under the control of the Public Service Board. Chris McCrae was appointed at age forty. The son of a future director of education in Victoria, he was a graduate in Latin and French from the University of Melbourne and had a Diploma of Education and an MA. He had completed a PhD at the University of London before returning to lecture at Melbourne Teachers' College and then joining Sydney Teachers' College in 1928. McCrae had published a number of books on psychology, and his age, qualifications and experience virtually guaranteed his selection. He was given the title of professor by the University of Sydney upon his appointment as college principal in 1940. Remaining at the college until 1947, McCrae participated in government plans for educational reconstruction after World War Two, becoming superintendent of teachers' colleges. In 1947, he accepted a full-time appointment as professor of education at the University of Sydney, resigning his post as principal of the college. The move initiated the development of a separate Department of Education within the university, but also ended the idea of the college principal being a professor at the university.<sup>320</sup>

From the late 1940s until the mid-1970s, the college and the university continued to co-operate in teaching the Diploma of Education that had been established in 1911. But their partnership was under strain. Dr Ivan Turner, the principal of the college for much of this period, remained a strong supporter of the involvement of universities in teacher education and was even prepared to see the university take over teacher training on the understanding that the college would retain a role. In this way, Turner followed Mackie's long-held views; he had studied under Mackie and had become a staff member at the college during Mackie's principalship. Turner had started as a science student at the University of Sydney in 1920. After graduating with honours, he had completed a Diploma of Education and a Master of Science. He then won a graduate scholarship to Cambridge, where he completed a BA in mathematics – graduating with honours

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318 Crook 1995.

319 Boardman et al. 1995, 117.

320 Boardman et al. 1995, 85–92.

– and an MA. In 1927–28, he was appointed to lectureships in mathematics at the University of Sydney and Sydney Teachers' College. By the 1930s, he had completed a PhD at Columbia and won Carnegie Travelling Scholarships that took him to London and across the world. He was exactly the type of academic scholar Mackie wanted at the college.<sup>321</sup>

Turner may have provided a way forward in the new era, but he was constrained in two ways: first, by the state Department of Education's attempts to extend teachers' colleges under its supervision, and second, by the emergence of the academic Department of Education at the University of Sydney. In 1955, Professor W.F. Connell was appointed to the chair of education at the university. With degrees in history and education from the University of Melbourne and a PhD in the history of education from the University of London, Connell had strong international qualifications, links to Britain and Europe and connections to the University of Illinois. He was interested in the ways that education could contribute to the study of social change. He wanted to create a university department of high academic standing that would not be seen as simply serving the interests of the state government.<sup>322</sup>

By the mid-1970s, Sydney Teachers' College was pursuing independence from the state government. It elected to become a College of Advanced Education, accepting funding from the Commonwealth as part of the 'binary system' of higher education that had emerged from the 1960s, creating separate roles for colleges and universities.<sup>323</sup> In 1981, the college merged with the Teachers' Guild – which provided non-government teacher education – and became part of the multi-function Sydney College of Advanced Education. By the end of the 1980s, the federal government was replacing the binary system with a unified national system of higher education, encouraging mergers between universities and colleges. The University of Sydney saw an opportunity to 'take over' the buildings, assets and staff of the former Sydney Teachers' College. The former college was amalgamated with the university's Faculty of Education, which had been established in 1986.<sup>324</sup>

More than three-quarters of a century after Alexander Mackie arrived in Sydney to take up his appointment as the inaugural principal of Sydney Teachers' College, the college was absorbed into the University of Sydney, where he had been the foundation professor of education. It was not quite as he might have expected; but given all his efforts to establish teaching as a university-based profession, it was – in part, at least – what Mackie had sought when he arrived in

321 Boardman et al. 1995, 123.

322 Chown 2010.

323 Connell et al. 1995, 434–40.

324 Horne and Garton 2017.

Australia in 1906.

PART THREE  
An academic family





*Annie and John Mackie, 1917. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/49.*

At Sydney Teachers' College and the University of Sydney, and through his publications and related work, Alexander Mackie developed his public persona as an academic. His private persona – particularly within his family – also reflected his academic values. The idea of a family of academics had its origins in the eighteenth century, when secular teachers began to replace religious orders in universities. Some sons even expected to occupy university posts held by their fathers.<sup>325</sup> From the nineteenth century, merit and academic values prevailed over privileges of birth in academic careers. Such was the case with the Mackie family – the Mackies' academic accomplishments were based not on primogeniture but on a search for knowledge and on merit gained through achievement.

## A BACHELOR'S LIFE

Having left his immediate family behind in Edinburgh, Alexander spent his early years in Australia principally in the company of men. Elizabeth Skillen, who had been appointed just before Alexander arrived, became one of his closest colleagues at Sydney Teachers' College. Admired as a lecturer in English, she soon acquired the nickname 'Good Queen Bess'. She later became an intimate friend of the Mackie family.<sup>326</sup> But she was an exception. The staff at the teachers' college and the University of Sydney were almost all male.

Alexander's new circle of friends and associates comprised not only academics but also other male professionals. The foundations of his early associations in Australia included not just the college and the university but also Sydney's gentlemen's clubs. By December 1906, Francis Anderson had arranged accommodation and temporary membership for Alexander at the Australian Club. The oldest gentlemen's club in Sydney, the Australian Club had been associated with the University of Sydney since the university's foundation in the 1850s. A number of chancellors of the university had been members, and the club's roster included members of the judiciary and other university-based professions, such as medicine. When the Australian Club decided to move to Macquarie Street in the 1890s, the university financed the construction of a new clubhouse from the bequest of the philanthropist Henry Challis, who had been a member of the club.<sup>327</sup> As Alexander told his father, the Australian Club was 'well situated' in Macquarie Street, overlooking the Botanic Gardens, the governor's residence and other public buildings; 'Macquarie is the most attractive quarter of the city and one end of it is given almost entirely to medical men.'<sup>328</sup> In some ways,

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325 Klinge 2004, 131–32.

326 Boardman et al. 1995, 41.

327 Angel 1988, 81–82.

Macquarie Street in Sydney was a reminder of the residences of the medical professionals in Edinburgh.

Sydney's gentlemen's clubs sought to mirror other clubs in the Empire, particularly those in London. Academics often formed an important part of club culture. Over two-thirds of the professors who came to Australia from the mid- to late nineteenth century were drawn from the urban middle class.<sup>329</sup> With his social and educational background, Alexander had reason to feel at home in the professional, middle-class world of Sydney. Clubs provided good dining, allowing him to meet with many university figures over lunch or dinner, including Professor Francis Anderson, Henry Barff (the university registrar) and Professor T.W. Edgeworth David, whose wife, Cara, was on the college staff and had previously been the head of the teachers' college for women, which had just closed.<sup>330</sup>

Through Sydney's clubs, Alexander met another Scottish immigrant, Dr Gordon MacLeod, a medical graduate of Edinburgh. MacLeod became a close companion of Alexander's soon after Alexander arrived in Sydney. They later shared rooms in 'Wyoming' at 175 Macquarie Street, close to the Australian Club. The architect-designed eight-storey building, constructed of reinforced masonry concrete, opened in 1911 as a city address appealing particularly to medical doctors and other professionals. 'Wyoming' still stands – an example of the Federation Free Style in Sydney, with its extensive stonework and Art Deco details.

Mackie and MacLeod often spent Saturday or Sunday exploring the suburbs of Sydney, travelling to Rockdale and walking, or to Pennant Hills and its orchards. Alexander became familiar with Sydney's natural environment but not always with its bird life. On one occasion, he told his father that he had gone for a walk on the local golf course and 'listened to the larks singing' in 'great numbers' and 'all very vigorous'.<sup>331</sup> No doubt he meant the magpies, a branch of the Australian currawongs.

By July 1908, Alexander had confirmed his place within the university community by joining the University of Sydney Club, listing his residence as 157

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328 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 27 November and 1 December 1906.

329 Smith 1990, 7.

330 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 1 December 1906. After swimming about for a bit, keeping carefully with my depth however, I wrapped a towel around my waist, put on a straw hat, and lay down to smoke and have a sun bath. The sun was very hot wherever there was shelter from the wind, and I was reminded of similar experiences on the banks of the Bogie or Deveron. Many of the boys were baked a deep copper colour, some even black from exposure to the sun. Even the youngest of them were expert swimmers and divers and it is interesting to notice how at home the little ones are in the water.<sup>333</sup>

333 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 18 December 1906.

Macquarie Street (the address of the Council of Education until the enactment of the 1880 Act).<sup>332</sup> The University Club was formed in 1905 for staff and graduates. Its first patron was Sir Henry Normand MacLaurin, a Scottish-born medical doctor and chancellor of the university. Mackie came to know MacLaurin well during the negotiations to establish the teachers' college within the university grounds.

While his early social contacts in Sydney were academics and professionals, Alexander quickly developed an interest in the general Australian way of life. During his first Christmas holidays in Australia, he boarded a ferry to Manly. Arriving at Manly wharf, he had a 'bathe in the bay', swimming in an area that was enclosed 'to prevent sharks coming in'. In a letter to his father, Alexander wrote:

After swimming about for a bit, keeping carefully with my depth however, I wrapped a towel around my waist, put on a straw hat, and lay down to smoke and have a sun bath. The sun was very hot wherever there was shelter from the wind, and I was reminded of similar experiences on the banks of the Bogie or Deveron. Many of the boys were baked a deep copper colour, some even black from exposure to the sun. Even the youngest of them were expert swimmers and divers and it is interesting to notice how at home the little ones are in the water.<sup>333</sup>

Having experienced the sun and sea in Sydney, Alexander would soon come into contact with academics, students and teachers in another part of the Australian natural environment. Just as nineteenth-century Oxford dons favoured participation in sports to build physique and character – as well as to engage with undergraduates – climbing mountains became a way of life for many Scottish academics. These academics were attracted to the athleticism of mountaineering, influenced in part by climbers in Europe and beyond. Educated at Glasgow and Oxford, the historian and liberal politician James Bryce helped to found an informal mountaineering club in the 1860s. Bryce ventured into and over the Carpathian Mountains and later climbed Mount Ararat, encountering Christian Armenians under Turkish rule.<sup>334</sup> By the 1880s, students in Scotland were forming climbing clubs. Most of their focus was on the hard-to-access highlands in North-East Scotland, near Aberdeen. When Alexander went to Bangor in Wales, he carried with him a passion for climbing peaks, which he soon brought to Australia.

As the barrier between New South Wales and Victoria, the Snowy Mountains

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332 Derriman 2005, 19; information on Mackie's membership from Robert Whitelaw, Union University and Schools Club archivist.

333 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 18 December 1906.

334 Fisher 1927, volume 1, 119.

had often attracted interest from overseas visitors. John Lhotsky, of Czech background, travelled to the area in the 1830s, publishing *A journey from Sydney to the Australian alps*. In 1840, the Polish explorer and scientist Strzelecki named Mount Kosciuszko after the Polish patriot. The area continued to attract interest from scientists in the late nineteenth century. When Alexander arrived in Australia, there was a growing interest in the ‘ice age’ within the University of Sydney. Appointed professor of geology at the university in 1891, T.W. Edgeworth David soon extended his interest in glaciers to the Snowy River region. From 1901, he began a series of expeditions to the area to examine glacial formations.<sup>335</sup> His geological work was recognised internationally.

David’s scientific studies coincided with growing tourism in the Snowy Mountains. In January 1907, the New South Wales Tourism Department helped to organise a party of twenty-seven travellers under David’s leadership. Some members of the party had scientific expertise, such as C.A. Sussmilch, a lecturer in geology at Sydney Technical College, and E.C. Andrews, from the government geological survey. Some were David’s students at the university. David’s wife, Cara, accompanied six women on the expedition – the first time females had climbed the Snowy Mountains.

Alexander was invited to join the party as a friend of the Davids. Ernest Kilburn Scott, who lectured in engineering at the University of Sydney, kept a journal of the trip. Somewhat of a humourist, Kilburn Scott wrote that Mackie ‘rode round to Bangor’ – a clear reference to Alexander’s recent academic post in Wales. He also interviewed Alexander, describing him as ‘our new chum’, and asking him whether he was married and, if not, ‘what were his limitations’. Alexander replied, perhaps half in jest, ‘Just like a Scot of base lowland descent to ask such questions’.<sup>336</sup>

The trip began in Sydney. The group travelled by rail to Cooma and then drove by carriage to the junction of the Thredbo and Snowy Rivers at the foot of the ascent to the Kosciuszko Plateau. The party camped at the junction, where the government was erecting an accommodation house for tourists. For the first part of the ascent, the government had cleared a road. After that, it was a steep walk with the assistance of a bullock wagon. The trip extended over eight days and covered 100 miles.

In keeping with his usual practice as a correspondent, Alexander wrote regular letters to his father in Edinburgh while on this trip; in fact, he wrote to William every day of the trip.<sup>337</sup> These letters are reproduced below, with notes to illu-

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335 Branagan 2005.

336 USA: T.W.E. David personal archives P11/39/4 Geological excursions – photographs/other records; An account of the trip to Kosciuszko.

337 Original letters regarding the 1907 Kosciuszko trip are found in USA: A. Mackie P169/2.

minate Alexander's text. On several occasions, Alexander reflected that parts of the Kosciuszko area reminded him of the high country in Scotland. As usual, he began his letters to his father with 'My dear Papa' and closed with 'Yours affectionately, A. Mackie'.

Jindabyne<sup>338</sup>  
Mount Kosciuszko<sup>339</sup>  
New South Wales

17th Jan 1907

My dear Papa,

Here I am 3000 ft above the sea in a little village inn enjoying a most beautiful evening after nearly 24 hours continuous travelling. A party of thirty under the direction of Professor David left Sydney by the 8.30 train on Wednesday evening. We reached Cooma on Thursday morning at 8 a.m. After breakfast we got into coaches and had a drive of over thirty five miles to this place. At 2 p.m. we halted at Berridale to water the horses and have lunch. The country so far had been undulating – low rounded hills covered with gum trees. The flatter country cleared and covered with dry looking grass but excellent feeding for sheep. After leaving Berridale where we had been provided with a most excellent lunch for 2/- much better than a West Highland Hotel gives for double the price we got into country where the hills or mountains were higher and the ground generally rougher. The hills were bare and rocky but rounded, not jagged like the Welsh mountains. Three miles before we reached this place we began to descend to the snowy river on which Jindabyne stands. From the top of the ridge there was spread out a most magnificent panorama of the Snowy River Valley with the Kosciuszko range over on the farther side. There were several snowdrifts visible on higher slopes. During the latter part of our drive the country side was swarming with rabbits. There were few birds about mostly magpies and some smaller birds too far off to recognise. The country is very sparsely populated as it is not suited for agriculture and sheep farms require to be

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338 In 1907, Jindabyne was a small settlement on the banks of the Snowy River. Jindabyne is an Aboriginal word for 'valley'. The old settlement is now under Lake Jindabyne, created as part of the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The current Jindabyne township is near the Jindabyne Dam.

339 'Kosciuszko' is now recognised as the best spelling from the Polish, but for much of the twentieth century the 'z' was left out.

large to be profitable.

We reached here about 6 p.m. rather tired after the long day couped up in a rather small stage coach. There are only a very few houses here besides the inn and the general store. The air is delightfully fresh and invigorating and the quiet and peace after Sydney very refreshing. So far we are a very happy party about a quarter ladies in charge of Mrs David who came out from England some twenty years ago to be the Principal of the Training College for women which is now merged in the Sydney Training College. She gave up that post however after three years in order to become Mrs David.

Tomorrow we march onwards 8 miles and pitch a camp on the slopes of the mountains.

After this trip is over I am going to send you on the maps I have of the district. They have been prepared by Professor David from his own plans as there are no survey maps in existence as yet.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie

Jindabyne

Thursday Evening  
Jan 17th 1906

My dear Papa,

The first stage of our journey was completed about 5 p.m. when we arrived here after a long and somewhat fatiguing coach ride of thirty five miles. We had breakfast at Cooma and after loading up the three coaches with baggage, rugs and tents for our party of 27 we made a start at about half past ten. The road at first rose steeply up a barren rocky ridge sparsely planted with gum trees but quite bare of grass. When we reached the top of an undulating plateau stretched out as far as we could see. Most of it had been cleared and was under grass but at this time of the year the grass was dry and parched and the general appearance was that of an immense harvest field stretching for miles without hedges or fences of any kind. Even the road was not fenced off except for very short distances at long intervals. A few wooden shanties<sup>340</sup> with corrugated iron roofs were scattered about but the country was apparently uninhabited. Yet these parched looking fields provide excellent feeding for both cattle and sheep. At rare intervals one

saw an occasional patch of wheat or lucern and sometimes but not often there was a vegetable garden attached to the farm houses. The road had been levelled somewhat at places but was not metalled and when one part got too badly cut into ruts the traffic diverged onto a fresh piece of country. It was hot and the dry weather made the roads very dusty – so it was not long before we were covered with a deposit of fine Monaro<sup>341</sup> dust. About half past twelve we reached Berridale, a small cluster of shanties with an inn, general merchant shop and a wool store. Just before getting into Berridale we passed a farm with a fine but neglected hawthorn hedge and several very well grown willows. The fresh green colour was very pleasant after the dried up country we had travelled over. At Berridale we were given an excellent lunch of corned beef & vegetables, boiled rice, custard and jelly along with the inevitable cup of tea. In all this upland district the water supply is rain water collected from the roofs of the houses and stood in large circular iron tanks placed on the side of the houses.

At two o'clock we were on our way again and when within about 6 miles of Jindabyne began to rise through wooden country till we reached the top of the ridge overlooking the Valley of the Snowy River. Just as the road turned down into the valley we got a magnificent view across a wide open valley to the mountains beyond. The mountains are rounded and forest covered and so do not give the appearance of height which the Snowden<sup>342</sup> mountains do. And besides we were now over three thousand feet up. A couple of miles of very quick descent brought us to Jindabyne – a place similar to Berridale, situated just where the road crosses the Snowy river by a strong wooden bridge. The Snowy at this point is about the same size and similar as the Tweed at Pebbles.<sup>343</sup> It does not dry up in summer as many of the other Australian rivers do for it is fed by the melting snowdrifts on the mountains and up there the snow lies all the year round.

Some of us were accommodated at the Inn and some at a house on the other side of the Snowy. I stayed at the Inn along with the men of the party but had meals at the other place with Professor and Mrs David.

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340 The term 'shanty' originated in America in the nineteenth century, implying a crudely built hut or cabin. The more common term in Australia was 'shack'.

341 Monaro was a district of southern New South Wales.

342 Mackie misspells 'Snowdon' as 'Snowden'. Snowdon Mountain in north-west Wales rises to 1,085 metres and is the highest mountain in Wales. Mount Kosciuszko rises 2,228 metres.

343 The Tweed River in the Southern Uplands of Scotland flows 155 kilometres to the North Sea, at one point forming the border between Scotland and England in the county of Peeblesshire.



Three of us shared a bedroom – two in beds, one on a shakedown on the floor. I was in a bed. My two companions were Susmilch – lecturer on Geology at the Technical College, and Andrews one of the government geologists attached to the Mines Department and formerly in the Public Instruction Department. For supper we had Turkey, Rabbit Pie, Roast Lamb and Sponge Pudding, custard, stewed cherries and clotted cream. Cost of Supper, bed and breakfast was 5/6.

After nearly twenty four hours travelling we were all somewhat tired and turned in early. Tomorrow we leave civilisation behind us and go into camp for a week.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie

### Wilson's Valley Camp

Friday  
Jan 18th

My dear Papa,

We were up at six o'clock this morning but did not get off until 9. The morning was fresh and sharp like a fine September day at home, quite different from the sultry summer weather of Sydney. Before breakfast we had a bathe in the Snowy River. The heavy baggage – tents and provisions – was placed on a large and clumsy looking oxwaggon drawn by six yoke oxens under the charge of Bill the Bullocky,<sup>344</sup> an unkempt, unwashed elderly man in a tattered shirt that did not appear to have been off his back since it was bought. He was accompanied by a depressed looking wall eyed mongrel with a good deal of collie in him.

The coaches took us up to Spencers Camp almost 4 miles from Jindabyne on the banks of the Crackenback or Thredbo River. Then our walk commenced to our first camping place at Pretty Point.<sup>345</sup> The day was very

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344 The Australian term 'bullocky', meaning bullock driver, dates from the 1860s.

345 According to Professor David's later description of 'Pretty Point', 'The magnificent outlook from this huge rocky promontory was greatly admired. Its nearly level top is about 6000 ft above the sea. Some 3000 ft below, dimly seen at the foot of an almost precipitous slope, is the Thredbo River; beyond, yet seeming at the foot of the party, lay Jindabyne'.

hot and the road very dusty. The road was a second class one, that is it had been graded but was not macadamised. It wound steeply up from the river through virgin bush. Most of the trees were rather small and twisted for the snow lies here for several months in the year. About midday we reached a sawpit where we stopped for lunch. Soon the fire was made and the billy boiling and I had my first billy tea in Australia.<sup>346</sup> After a rest and a smoke we went on again. But the road had come to an end. A bridle track sometimes as steep as Church Lanes wound upwards through the bush. Big granite boulders and often tree trunks were lying in the way. When we reached Wilson's Creek four miles on it was after 4 p.m. and it was decided to camp there instead of going on to pretty point.

Wilson's camp is simply a widening in the valley up which we had been travelling. There was no one camping except ourselves. This wider part was about half a mile long by about 200 yards wide with flat grassy bottoms giving good ground for pitching a camp. It is a beautiful place for camping as it is shut in by steep wooden sides and the thick soft grass makes a soft surface for lying on, and a beautiful little stream supplied water for making tea. In the stream there were only the little native trout – the galaxia – about 2 inches long. The rainbow trout that have been put into the Snowy have not yet got up this length.<sup>347</sup>

After making preliminary arrangements for camping we had tea and waited the arrival of the waggon. But no waggon appeared. Instead about half past six the Bullocky appeared and told us his team was quite knocked up about 2 1/2 miles back and could not tackle the steep finishes – as they are called – that night. So there was nothing for it but that the men of the party should go back and bring up the tents and rugs of the party. This we did but by the time we got back to the waggon it was quite dark and the return journey – heavily laden – was somewhat long. However it came to an end and we got the tents pitched. I had one along with Andrews and Sussmilch. After the tent was pitched we spread out our waterproof sheets, then our rugs and blankets on top, got into pyjamas and I at any rate, was very soon fast asleep.

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346 The phrase 'to boil the billy' dates from early colonial Australia. Initially, it implied making tea with a billy can, as Mackie experienced here. By 1907, it still implied making tea, but not always with a billy.

347 Rainbow trout were stocked in New South Wales in 1894, from New Zealand stock that had been shipped from California. They were put into the Snowy River principally to allow fishing for sport. When at Jindabyne, the party had encountered Justice O'Connor, who had resigned as minister for public instruction just after Mackie arrived in Sydney; O'Connor was there for a trout fishing expedition.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie

P.S. I am sending you on my copy of the district map later.

Raggs' Camp Kosciusko.

Saturday Night  
19th Jan 1907

My dear Papa,

We have had another hard days march and are camped at right up on the plateau, about 6000 ft in very beautiful grove of snow gums with thick soft carpet of grass to lie on. We were up before six o'clock breakfasted at 6.30 and then went back to where the waggon was stuck. More of the baggage was taken off and carried up to camp to lighten the load and the bullocks were thus able to get the waggon up to camp. Then tents were taken down, the waggon was reloaded and we set off again.

Just as we set off the premier – Mr Carruthers – and his party which included his daughter met us. He was returning to Jindabyne after a visit to Kosciusko. The party was on horseback so did not have our difficulties to encounter. As I had called on Carruthers before I left Sydney I went over and spoke to him for a few minutes.<sup>348</sup> The students cheered him and we moved off up the valley. Soon we rose out of the valley and came out on moorland country known as Baggy Plains. This was crossed without difficulty and we halted at the foot of Pretty Point for lunch. Pretty Point is the end of a ridge from which a magnificent view of the Thredbo Valley and

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348 A graduate of the University of Sydney, Carruthers had long supported the university and been involved in teacher education; hence Mackie's interest. Carruthers' visit to Mount Kosciuszko, with formal lunch served at the summit, was a planned event reported in the press as a way to promote tourism. In 1991, Carruthers Peak, on the main range track near Mount Kosciuszko, was named in recognition of his interest in the region. Despite his promotion of tourism in the region, as a strong advocate of New South Wales' state rights, he opposed the federal parliament when it chose the village of Dalgety on the Snowy River as the proposed site for the national capital, arguing that it was too close to Victoria. Eventually, Canberra was selected as a compromise for the federal capital.

the country beyond is obtained. After lunch we tackled the sharp rise leading over the Pretty Point ridge. About half way up is a very harsh turn – like the Devil’s Elbow<sup>349</sup> and this gave us some trouble to get round. The ground was soft, and we had also to cut big stones to form a firm roadway for the waggon, and we had also to cut down several trees to allow the oxen to pull the waggon round the bend. But after three quarters of an hour’s work we were successful and amid great shouting the waggon lurched forward and got up the hill without being upset.

The next four miles were fairly easy work though we had to stand by and make the road in several places where the ground was boggy. You can imagine our party crossing the moorland.<sup>350</sup> Some in front of the waggon, some behind and the long train of oxen pulling the heavy waggon over the rough, uneven ground from which the boulders had not been removed. It was really wonderful to watch the way the waggon would climb up a big granite boulder several feet high and bump down on the other side. Over and over again I thought we should stick or that there would be a spill as we turned a sharp corner. Just before getting into camp some of the party killed a large black snake – about four feet long – and brought him into camp. I have secured the skin and am going to get it tanned and prepared as a waist belt for Maggie.<sup>351</sup> There are a great many snakes in this district and they are all venomous. Three others were killed during the day but they were all small and were left on the track. This one I have got was dispatched by the whip of the Bullocky and I am afraid that the whip mark will damage the skin.

Yesterday’s delay had made us a day late for we ought tonight to have reached our permanent camping place at Betts’ Camp.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie

Bett’s Camp Kosciusko<sup>352</sup>

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349 The Devil’s Elbow was a double hairpin bend near Glenshee in Perthshire – one of the steepest roads in Britain, with a one-in-six gradient – a journey favoured by cyclists and walkers.

350 Mackie is using the term ‘moorland’ with reference to the Scottish moors – open, uncultivated land on acid, peaty soil, covered with heather or coarse grasses. The Australian-born would probably have referred to this as ‘open grasslands’.

351 Alexander’s sister, Maggie, was in Edinburgh.

352 Established in 1905, Bett’s Camp provided limited accommodation for tourists walk-

Sunday evening  
Jan 20th 1907

My dear Papa,

We have at last reached our permanent camping place after another day's hard travelling, though the actual distance from our last camp is only about 12 miles. We made our early start after a hurried breakfast. Tents were taken down, packed or placed on the waggon. Most of the men of the party kept with the waggon in case of accidents. We got on well for about a couple of hours, then a bog had to be crossed and the waggon sank in it almost up to the axle trees. There was nothing for it but to lighten the waggon by unloading and when that was done we dug it out and got on our way again. We mounted a rise and descended into another valley. Some attempt had been made at a road but this was entirely deceptive. A thin sprinkling of granite gravel served nearly to hide the soft boggy ground. One attempt to cross was disastrous. The whole waggon sank over the axle trees and the oxen were quite powerless to get it out. It was a good hour before we were on the road again. It was now midday so we made tea and had lunch before making a start again, while one of the party was sent on to inform those in front of the cause of the delay.

After lunch we got under way again and now began a steady rise till we got over the Porcupine – a bold rocky ridge so called from the jagged appearance of the granite blocks that fringe the summit.

Early in the afternoon the track passed between two huge granite blocks forming a sort of gateway. There was barely room for the waggon to pass through and just at the critical moment the leading oxen swerved slightly and the waggon got jammed against the rock. The team had to be unhitched, taken to the rear and the waggon pulled back for another attempt. The second attempt was also a failure but the third time we got through after nearly an hour & a half delay. The remainder of the journey was slightly down hill till within a quarter of a mile of the camp which lies in a fold of the hills above the Crackenback Gorge – hundreds of feet below. There is a small wooden accommodation house here but it consists of only two rooms – a kitchen and a sleeping room to accommodate eight. So most of us had to get under canvas. I am very snug among a clump of trees with a thick carpet of grass underneath and crowds of strange creeping things paying us visits. They are all however apparently harmless. The

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ing to Mount Kosciuszko.

nights get very cold after sunset and one is glad to get under blankets as soon as possible. For the next three days we shall make this our headquarters, taking expeditions to various parts of the range. Within a stone's throw of camp is a large snow drift about half an acre in extent. It is a great source of amusement to the students, very few of whom have ever seen snow before. In spite of the fatigue of the day snowballing and tobaggoning – on plates – were in full swing as long as the light lasted.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie

Betts Camp Kosciusko

Monday Evening  
Jan 21st 1907

My dear Papa,

We have had a splendid day's tramping over the mountains in glorious weather. After breakfast we started off for the Blue Lake which lies high up among the mountains about four miles from the Camp. Soundings of the lake were to be taken as well as geological work done so we were loaded up with geological hammers, sounding line and weight tough branches for making the framework of a boat – wire netting and a sheet of American cloth as well as a couple of broad boards and a long pole to make a paddle with. A short rise took us out of the little fold where our camp lay and we got into a broad boggy valley leading into the bigger valley through which Spencer's Creek runs. Most of the water had dried off the pools and I noticed that the bottoms were riddled with holes like rat holes. These were the burrows of the fresh water crayfish or lobster which abounds here. I never saw any alive as they are deep down during the day time. But skeletons were plentiful enough, left by the foxes who catch the crayfish, it is said, by letting their tails down the holes and yanking out the animal when it grips. At the foot of the valley we turned to the left up Spencers Creek, then crossed Charlotte's pass and went down to the Snowy River which here is almost the size of Kilkenny. After crossing the Snowy we ascended to the right, crossed a snow covered ridge and got into another valley. We crossed it diagonally and climbed up among a great mound of linked boulders left by a glacier. This mound shuts in a small lake called Hedley's Tarn. On the top of the mound grew great numbers of beautiful cream coloured ever-

lasting flowers specimens of which I have sent to Maggie. Continuing the ascent we reached another mound bigger than the last and when we reached the top we looked down into the Blue Lake. This lake is also of glacial formation, shut in by the debris left by the glacier as it melted. On the other three sides it is shut in by a ring of very steep cliffs among the crevices of which were several snow drifts coming right down to the water's edge. The dark granite cliffs, white snow, blue water and bright sunshine made one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever seen. And on the top of the mound on which we stood grew a wonderful profusion of alpine flowers.<sup>353</sup>

We soon got down to the waters edge, found a sheltered place & had lunch. Unfortunately the billy can had been forgotten in the hurry of our departure. But we emptied the tins of tomatoes we had brought, cut off the lids and fastened on wire handles and were able to make a sufficient supply of tea. After lunch we discovered last year's coracle used by Professor David last January. So we were saved the trouble of putting together a new one and an hours work made the old framework fit for use again. Then Professor David embarked and took several soundings across the lake which is about a mile and a half round. The soundings were 70, 50 and 45 ft respectively. I wandered away up among the hills and thought I was at the waterfall in the Pentlands.<sup>354</sup> The return journey commenced at 4.15 p.m. and we reached camp by 7.30 just as it was getting dark.

Tomorrow to make the ascent to Kosciusko.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie

Tuesday Evening  
Jan 22nd 1907

My dear Papa,

Today we have the longest tramp in point of distance which we have so far undertaken. After the usual early breakfast we set out for the summit of Kosciusko. At first our way led over the same track as we took yesterday. We went up the valley through which Spencer Creek runs, crossed Charlotte Pass and descended to the banks of the Snowy. Then we bore away to

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353 David described the Blue Lake in the following way: 'Truly the Blue Lake is the brightest gem in the crown of Kosciusko'.

354 The Pentlands was a range of hills south-west of Edinburgh.

the left instead of to the right at first for about a mile we kept up the river, then we struck upwards towards Mount Clark. A long steep climb over slippery grass brought us to a shoulder from which we could look down into another valley remarkable for its glacial features. Then we turned left in order to make for the saddle which connects Mount Clarke and Kosciusko. When this point was reached we were able to look down into the valley where the beautiful little Lake Albina lay a thousand feet below us. It was part of the programme to examine some very fine specimens of glaciated pavements on the shores of the lake. But the ladies doubted their powers of doing the extra climb so as it was past 1 o'clock we had lunch and then sent the ladies on to the summit which most of the men descended to the lake. We very soon got down among a tumbled mass of ice carried boulders among which hundreds of little lizards were playing. The valley is very narrow – with precipitous rocks on one side and a very steep grass slope on the other two. The fourth is the outlet to the lake and here there is a very steep descent to the Gorges of the Murray. So this curious little valley is high up among the mountains. We saw the ice scratched pavements with the long parallel lines – like cart tracks scratched by the rocks embedded in the ice as it flowed down the valley. The narrow valley was as hot as a furnace. There was not a breath of air and the bright sunshine was thrown back from the rocky walls. We were all glad to get out and catch a little breeze as we made for the summit. On reaching the summit we had one of the finest views of mountain country I have ever seen. There was not a cloud in the sky and we could see far over the plains on the N.S.W. side. Over the Victorian border the ground falls away rapidly and gorges with their intervening ridges stretched as far as we could see. On this side forest fires caused a thin film of smoke – like a light mist and this softened the outlines and added to the beauty of the general effect.

Just below the summit (7200 ft) on the shady eastern side was a long snowdrift – quarter of a mile long by 100 yards broad. Just below was a spring of beautifully clear water so we were able to have tea on the summit. As it was the date of the King's accession<sup>355</sup> we sang the national anthem and gave a variety of cheers. Then the students read an address to Professor David signed by us all. Then Professor David made a sort of speech and I followed. Finally we were photographed, examined the dismantled observatory<sup>356</sup> and read with envy the Premier's breakfast menu card pinned

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355 King Edward VII's accession.

356 The meteorologist C.L. Wragge had set up an observatory on Mount Kosciuszko in 1896. It was closed in 1902, when the New South Wales government withdrew funding.



on the wall. About 4 p.m. we began the descent. We made a slight detour to see the last of the Alpine Lakes Lake Cootapatamba and then got onto the ridge which runs along the Valley of the Crackenback. We got back to Camp about 8 p.m. though some of the party were later as they had followed a more round about track.

Many I fancy are somewhat knocked up – foot troubles especially. The ladies of the party are the first ladies who have ascended Kosciusko on foot. Several find difficulty in sleeping at this high altitude – about 6000 ft. But I am in every way in excellent form and enjoying the whole experience greatly.

Yours affectionately,  
A. Mackie



*On top of Kosciuszko. USA: T.W.E. David P11/39/4.*

The expedition was not only symbolic but also formative in recognising the Snowy Mountains as a significant region for scientific research and tourism. When the party had returned to Sydney, Professor David published a number of articles in the press indicating that the trip had embraced ‘science and pleasure’. The expedition had confirmed that the Kosciuszko Plateau was a ‘resort both for

health, pleasure and studies in natural history'.<sup>357</sup>

Professor David's summertime adventure in the Snowy Mountains led on to an Antarctic expedition. At the end of 1907, David and two of his students, Douglas Mawson and Leo Cotton, joined the English explorer Ernest Shackleton in New Zealand to prepare for a visit to Antarctica. Aged fifty, David was given a leadership role. The group climbed Mount Erebus, the second highest volcano in Antarctica. David, Mawson and a young Forbes Mackay then dragged sleds from sea level to the ice plateau – one of the early epics of Antarctic exploration.<sup>358</sup>

Alexander Mackie's climbing adventures were less significant in international terms, but they became a way of discovering Australia. In the three years from 1908 to 1910, he travelled to Tasmania in the summer holidays. Often staying at the Tasmanian Club in Hobart, he went walking, fishing and climbing. During his first trip, in January 1908, Alexander wrote to his father that he had spent 'a long hard day' trout fishing at the Broad River near Hobart. He told William that the river was 'hardly larger than the Kirkney' near Aberdeen but the water was 'perfectly clear'; without a cloud in the sky, it was hard to get trout 'without being seen'. He fished in the middle of the stream because the banks were overgrown, and his legs were 'so badly sunburned'.<sup>359</sup>

Apart from fishing and walking, during these visits to Tasmania Alexander was often on the lookout for other immigrants. In 1908, he met an 'old gentleman' from Edinburgh who was a resident of Queensland and had first visited Tasmania in 1834.<sup>360</sup> He also encountered an emigrant from Hanover who had come to Tasmania thirty years earlier, following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.<sup>361</sup> And there were opportunities for social contact with other holiday-makers from Sydney. In 1909, Alexander had lunch near Hobart with William Cullen, who was the vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney (1908–11) and would soon become chancellor (1914–34). An eminent barrister, Cullen had just been appointed chief justice of New South Wales.<sup>362</sup>

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357 USA: T.W.E. David P11/39/4 Geological excursions – photographs/other records; 'The alpine paralysed', presented to Professor and Mrs David by the Editorial Committee, 16 February 1907.

358 Branagan 2005, 137–98.

359 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 9 January 1908.

360 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 9 January 1908.

361 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 14 January 1908.

362 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 15 January 1909. Of Irish-Protestant background, William Cullen graduated from the University of Sydney in 1880. He considered becoming an academic but became a lawyer and politician. He was a fellow of the University of Sydney Senate from 1896 and chief justice of New South Wales 1911–25. President of the Boy Scouts and the Boys' Brigade, he was fond of the 'mountain ramble, the billy tea, the camp fire' – obvi-

In 1910, Alexander spent a week ‘wandering in the wilds of Tasmania’. With two others, he explored the area around Deloraine in northern Tasmania, walking and climbing around the ‘Great Lake’. In a letter to his father, he described the lake as ‘a great sheet of water 28,000 acres of water with the tops of mountains showing all round’. He admired the mountain scenery, which he considered ‘quite equal ... to anything in Scotland’. Walking fifteen miles to the end of the lake, he took shelter in a shepherd’s hut. In the following days, the party of three ‘wandered about the moors’, took ‘trips over rough roads’ and on one day walked forty to forty-five miles, ‘crossing rivers – looked like a “highland glen” in one place’. They reached Lake St Clair, which Alexander described as ‘quite different from the Great Lake and ... really one of the finest pieces of scenery I have ever seen’. The trip ended after seven days.<sup>363</sup>

E.R. Holme, the new assistant professor of English at the University of Sydney, went with Alexander to Tasmania in January 1910. During that trip, Alexander had to forgo a climb at a spot known as the ‘Organ Pipes’ on Mount Wellington, near Hobart; as he told his father, ‘Holme has never done any climbing and indeed is too fat for anything of the sort so I had reluctantly to forego the conquest till I can find a more suitable companion for this is not an attempt that should be undertaken alone’.<sup>364</sup>

Probably unknown to Alexander, Charles Darwin had climbed Mount Wellington in 1836. After visiting Sydney as part of a five-year voyage of discovery, the HMS *Beagle* had made a brief stop in Hobart. Darwin had failed in his first attempt to climb the mountain but succeeded in his second, finding that ‘in many parts the gum trees grew to a great size’, while in ‘some of the dampest ravines tree ferns flourished in an extraordinary manner’. Due to the climate, local aspect and composition of the population, Darwin preferred Hobart to Sydney even though he knew of the fate of the Aboriginal population in Tasmania.<sup>365</sup>

Alexander had been greatly impressed by Tasmania’s physical beauty, which reminded him of Scotland. In later years, he would return with his family. But in 1910, he knew that his home was in Sydney.

## THE MARRIAGE OF ALEC AND ANNIE

In April 1910, Alexander found himself in an awkward social situation, out of place in mixed company. Following the University of Sydney’s Commemoration Day celebrations, there was a lunch party at the Hotel Australia. As Alexander

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ously a man who enjoyed similar pastimes to Mackie (Bennett 1981).

363 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 8 January 1910.

364 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 28 January 1910.

365 Keynes 2001, 408–10. See also Leaman 1999, 38–39.

told his father, attendees included ‘my old enemy Miss McDonald’ (the principal of Women’s College at the University of Sydney), various males from the university and medical and health figures, all of whom had brought ‘their respective wives’. He wrote to his father, ‘I suppose I was there to make up the necessary number of men’.<sup>366</sup>

Three months later, Alexander told his father that he had gone for a ‘motor run’ to Pennant Hills with his companion MacLeod and that he had visited Manly to see the inspector-general of the insane. Almost as an afterthought, he penned the following comment on the marital status of staff at Sydney Teachers’ College: ‘Dr Cole is to marry and I shall be left alone for all the members of the staff are married’.<sup>367</sup> This seems an obvious signal of his intentions.

According to his daughter, Margaret, Alexander first caught sight of his future wife at a school ceremony soon after his arrival in Sydney. As part of his introduction to Sydney schools, he presented the prizes at Sydney Girls High in late 1906. There he saw ‘a beautiful auburn-haired girl’ who was receiving an award.<sup>368</sup> Reputedly, Alexander kept a portrait of the young Scottish lass by his side for the rest of his life.<sup>369</sup>

Annie Burnett Duncan was the daughter of Scottish immigrants to New South Wales. Both her parents came from Keith in Banffshire, close to Huntly, where the Mackies originated. This area was in the heartland of traditional parish education, where the democratic ideal of the ‘lad o’ pairts’ flourished. In reality, as recent research suggests, only a few students continued to the end of school and even fewer went on to university. In this rural environment, many boys left school early to help on the farms.<sup>370</sup> And so it was with the Duncan family.

Annie’s father, John Duncan, was the youngest of seven sons. His family had a small farm and were tenants of the Duke of Gordon. John attended school in winter and was engaged in farm work in summer. He left school early, working on the farm and learning the craft of boot making. In 1880, he sailed ‘steerage’ for Australia. Despite his interrupted schooling, John was literate and committed to education, although not necessarily for women. In Australia, he continued his education, perfecting his grammar and becoming interested in debating and politics.<sup>371</sup>

A family link to education and teaching can be found more clearly on Annie’s mother’s side. In late nineteenth-century Scotland, opportunities were

366 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 1 April 1910.

367 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 16 July 1910.

368 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie.

369 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

370 Northcroft 2015, 171–89.

371 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie; USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

emerging for women in teaching; males, such as Alexander Mackie, were turning away from teaching and towards academia and senior positions in education administration. Aboard the ship on which John Duncan sailed were two daughters of a Scottish baker: twenty-one-year-old Jessie Stuart and nineteen-year-old Mary Stuart. Jessie was a dressmaker, but her sister Mary had completed certificates as a 'lady learned' at the University of Aberdeen. They travelled second class but had friends in first class due to Mary's talents as a singer. In Sydney, Mary presented herself for examination as a teacher and became the head of a school in Wollongong.<sup>372</sup>

Once in Sydney, Jessie Stuart married John Duncan. They settled in Manly, where John opened a boot-making shop. He later found a position with the Sydney Ferry Company, which had emerged from the North Shore Steam Ferry Company founded by Dugald Thomson and J.P. Garvan in the late 1870s. John became closely associated with Dugald Thomson, who was elected to the seat of North Sydney on a free trade platform in the first federal election in 1901. Thomson became minister for home affairs in the Reid government in 1904–05.<sup>373</sup> Jessie worked for the retail merchants Thompson and Giles in George Street (John Thompson was the great-grandfather of the author of this study). Her household was open to recent arrivals from Scotland, including George Sutherland, who soon took up a position in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Sydney and married Jessie's daughter Mary.

As new settlers, the Duncans integrated into the Scots-Australian community and culture. Scottish culture in New South Wales was initially founded on a Caledonian Society of lowlanders and a Gaelic Society of highlanders. In the late 1870s, a new Highland Society was formed to represent all Scots in the colony. The aims of this society included promoting Gaelic language, literature and music and Highland games, supporting the social and intellectual improvement of members, caring for new arrivals and commemorating Scottish days. By 1892, soon after the Duncans had arrived in Sydney, the Highland Society had over 400 members.<sup>374</sup> Dugald Thomson became a senior office holder in the society and probably helped to involve the Duncan family.

Annie Duncan, born in 1889, was the first of John and Jessie's three children. She initially attended a small school run by a Scotswoman, but soon transferred to Manly Public School. From there, she won a scholarship to Sydney Girls High School. Founded in 1883, Sydney Girls High was a secondary school with a strong academic emphasis. Many of the girls matriculated to the University of Sydney. The school's headmistress, Lucy Garvin, often had to steer a careful

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372 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

373 Marsh 1990.

374 Prentis 1983, 198.

course between parents' expectations of examination success for their daughters and the caution of the educational bureaucracy, who, as Alexander Mackie found in the 1920s, were trained as elementary school teachers with little understanding of how to teach academic subjects at a secondary level. In 1903, around the time Annie Duncan entered the school, there was an official report criticising Garvin's administration. However, Garvin survived as head until 1918.<sup>375</sup>

While her father had a low opinion of the 'female mind', her mother – and her aunt's example – encouraged Annie to consider attending university and pursuing a career in teaching. Annie entered the University of Sydney in 1909 on a bursary (awarded to high achieving students from 'modest' backgrounds). She studied in the Faculty of Arts and graduated with first class honours in both French and German. She was interviewed for a travelling scholarship to France but was told that it had been awarded to Alec Chisholm, later professor of French at the University of Melbourne. Annie taught in a small school and then enrolled in the new Diploma of Education.<sup>376</sup> Her daughter, Margaret, later claimed that completing a degree with high academic standing had become the norm within the Duncan family – all but one of Annie's generation were university graduates.<sup>377</sup>

Alexander Mackie was always keen to identify students with Scottish backgrounds. In July 1910, he wrote to his father in Edinburgh that among the recent university graduates was 'one pretty girl with honours in modern languages'. This was an obvious reference to Annie, who he may have remembered from the awards ceremony at Sydney Girls High School five years earlier. In the later part of this correspondence, Alexander reminded his father that 'I think I told you of the little Edinburgh girl who has just come from the Boroughmuir school with a charming Edinburgh accent. I nearly jumped out of my chair when she first spoke to me' (whether this referred to Annie is not clear; it mentions Edinburgh connections, while Annie's family came from North-East Scotland).<sup>378</sup>

After completing the Diploma of Education, Annie taught for a year at Fort Street Girls High School, which opened in 1911. She was then appointed to the staff at Sydney Teachers' College. Serious courting between Alexander and Annie blossomed. Annie called Alexander 'Alec', which soon became his name within his family. They went for bush walks in Frenchs Forest, across Middle Harbour. On 17 December 1912, there was an engagement tea party at 'Farmers', a retail store in the city – a small party attended by Peter Board's family, Miss Skillen and Miss Simpson (who taught the Montessori method at the college).

375 Theobald 1996, 113–29.

376 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie; USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998.

377 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 27.

378 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 19 July 2010.

From Edinburgh, William Mackie sent best wishes to his future daughter-in-law, initiating correspondence that would continue over the following years. The two shared common interests in gardening and exchanged the intimacies of daily life.<sup>379</sup>

On 13 June 1913, Alec and Annie were wed at St Peter's Presbyterian Church in North Sydney – the Duncans' family kirk. Alexander was thirty-seven; Annie was twenty-four. This was a marriage of individuals committed to academic learning, but it was not a marriage of social equals. Annie was much younger than her new husband and could not match his status. Marriage put paid to her career at the college, and as a professor's wife she did not find the stimulation she had expected from the academic world. In the words of her daughter, Margaret, 'my mother's hope that in marrying a professor she would be in a position to "meet intellectual people" was not an expectation of attending academic occasions. She wanted contact with people having her own level of education.'<sup>380</sup> In her published memoirs, Margaret Mackie suggested that her mother wanted to model herself on Maybanke Anderson, the founder of the kindergarten movement in New South Wales and wife of Francis Anderson. Denied the opportunity for a career, Annie found some comfort in the Women's Club, which was designed for university graduates and offered lectures and conversation. She also acted as a travellers' aid at Central Station, greeting incoming passengers.<sup>381</sup>

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379 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

380 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

381 Mackie 2006, 71–72.





*Postcard of Annie, 1912. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/16.*

For the first years of their marriage, Alexander and Annie lived at Neutral Bay, near the harbour. They had expected to find a house near the university, but contact with a member of Sydney's Scottish community led to a change of direction. Alexander met Margaret Thyne, who had been his neighbour in Edin-

burgh.<sup>382</sup> She was married to Andrew Reid, who had been a general importer and, in 1912, had become the sole proprietor of the manufacturing firm James Hardie, which he had joined as a bookkeeper when he came to Sydney in the 1880s. The Reids were part of a colony of Scots settlers on the Upper North Shore.

Following the opening of the North Shore railway line in the 1890s, some of Sydney's wealthy had built out of town homes on large blocks around Wahroonga. By World War One, it was becoming a more permanent and affluent suburb, part of the development of the Upper North Shore, appealing to new settlers such as the Mackies. Sydney architect William Hardy Wilson, who designed houses in the 'colonial style', built Purulia in the nearby suburb of Warrawee in 1913.<sup>383</sup> In 1927, the local historian Charles Witham wrote that the Upper North Shore's population was 'about eighty four per cent Protestants', including 'many Scots'.<sup>384</sup> Essentially, Wahroonga was becoming an upper-middle-class Scottish enclave with suburban aspirations and utilities, including new schools. Its location and ambience did not always suit Annie's expectations as a French teacher with high academic qualifications who once had hopes of a career at the teachers' college. For Alexander, there was bushland nearby and the prospect of walks.

In November 1914, Alexander asked the Sydney architect Edward N. Venard to prepare plans for a residence at Wahroonga, fronting Woonona Avenue, on a property of 132 by 165 feet, next door to the Reids. By 1916, the Mackies had taken possession of the house and property. The site was within half a mile of Wahroonga railway station, but it was far from friends, such as Miss Skillen at the college, and distant from the Lower North Shore, where the Duncan family lived.<sup>385</sup> The bridge across Sydney Harbour was still not built, and trips to the city and the university could take an hour each way by train, tram and ferry.

The Mackie house was built in the revived colonial style popularised by Hardy Wilson. It had pillars and a slate roof. The residence was named Drumgrain in recognition of the spinning wheel sent as a wedding present from a Scottish farm of the same name. For physical exercise, Alexander worked in the garden and went for daily walks. He had become interested in Australian plants and gained knowledge through his travels and treks. The Mackie garden soon produced fruit, vegetables and native flowers. For the next quarter-century, their home in Wahroonga would be the centre of the Mackies' life in Sydney.

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382 Mackie 2006, 70–71.

383 Apperly 1990.

384 Spearritt 1978, 209.

385 USA: A. Mackie P169/11 Documents relating to the Mackie house at Wahroonga.

## BRINGING UP MARGARET AND JOHN

According to her daughter, Annie Mackie did not seek to be a mother. When she became pregnant soon after marriage, she told her new husband that she had no idea how to bring up children. Alexander apparently replied that she had better learn and even brought home books to help.<sup>386</sup>

Named after Alexander's mother, who had died in childbirth, Margaret Davidson Mackie was born in Neutral Bay on 12 November 1914. In Edinburgh, William Mackie had already welcomed Annie as his daughter-in-law. A series of letters from mid-1913 suggests that since the wedding Alexander's father had been in contact with his daughter-in-law more than with his own son. Almost every month he would send a letter telling Annie of his walks around Edinburgh and at Leith, familiarising her with Alexander's childhood home and the surrounding area. For a man of his age, William was a good correspondent of changing times. In July 1913, he wrote about a 'Sabbath walk' in Edinburgh, visiting churches and encountering a 'Wild Australia' circus of horses and kangaroos as well as 'blue jackets' from the battleships in the Forth, a sign of possible war approaching.<sup>387</sup>

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386 National Library of Australia: Interview with Margaret Mackie, 2003.

387 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2027/1; William Mackie to Annie Mackie, 13 July 1913.



*William Mackie. USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023.*

William welcomed Margaret's birth with great delight. In October 1916, when the Mackie family had settled into their home at Wahroonga, he wrote to

Annie that he was grateful for all the news and photos he was receiving because they ‘bring Margaret and yourself nearer to me’. With high expectations for two-year-old Margaret, he added that ‘She is looking quite at home and I am going to have a letter from her sometime soon’.<sup>388</sup> As Christmas 1916 approached, William told Annie that Margaret ‘is seldom out of my thoughts though that is not to be wondered at as she is a dear little woman and for you to watch her development day by day will be a great joy. I wonder where she could have got the word “Fader” as I am sure I have not heard it since I was a boy at Huntly.’<sup>389</sup>

Annie was soon pregnant again. 1917 was a difficult year for her. Her close Scots-born friend, the sculptor John Christie Wright, was killed on the Western Front. He had been awarded the local Wynne Art Prize for a sculpture of Annie completed in 1913. Obviously conscious that his own mother had died giving birth to her second child, Alexander arranged for Annie to be hospitalised. On 9 August 1917, Annie wrote to Alexander from a private hospital in Killara, describing her nurse: ‘She is buxom and bonny and Macdonald by name, her voice proclaiming her origins.’<sup>390</sup> After a difficult confinement, John Leslie Mackie was born on 25 August 1917. The baby was unwell for a number of months, but within a year all members of the household were commenting on his potential.<sup>391</sup>

Alexander determined that both his children would be educated at home before being sent to school. He was attracted to the ideas of the progressive Scottish educator A.S. Neill. In 1915, Neill published *A dominie’s log*, an account of the struggles of a young teacher in a single-teacher school in Scotland. Instead of traditional discipline and punishment, the teacher sought to appeal to the interests of the children. Alexander referred to the book in his lectures to students at Sydney Teachers’ College to show that children learn willingly, and even spontaneously. He decided to use some of Neill’s methods to help bring up his own children.<sup>392</sup>

During Annie’s second pregnancy, Alexander assumed more responsibility for Margaret. In 1917, he wrote regularly to his father, describing his young daughter’s progress. In May, Alexander reported that he and Margaret were finding ‘recuperation’. The colder weather was giving her cheeks colour not often seen in Sydney children, but more frequent north of the Tweed in Scotland. Margaret was ‘becoming more talkative’ and ‘her tongue is seldom at rest for long while she is awake’.<sup>393</sup> A month later, Alexander wrote that Margaret was going with him to her grandmother’s in North Sydney at least twice a week. He noted

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388 USA: A. Mackie P169/24 Letters received by Annie Mackie; William Mackie to Annie Mackie, 5 October 1916.

389 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2027/1; William Mackie to Annie Mackie, 1 December 1916.

390 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Annie to Alec, 9 August 1917.

391 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

392 USA: 862/868; Alexander Mackie.

393 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 17 May 1917.

that she liked the outing and ‘conducts herself quite well in the train’. She was ‘speaking very energetically’; Alexander managed to keep her quiet when she came into his study to play, but ‘after a time she asks anxiously if she can talk and I allow a few minutes relaxation of the rule’.<sup>394</sup> Two months later, Alexander told his father that Margaret had recovered from a bout of illness and was now keen to help in the kitchen, cooking ‘a variety of miscellaneous objects’. He noted that ‘Make believe has begun and she now provides me cups of what she calls fresh air and takes an imaginary doll out for a walk’.<sup>395</sup>

Alexander’s letters to his father mentioned some of the academic forms of child study that had become popular in the field of education from the late nineteenth century. In some ways, these letters were Alexander’s own ‘dominie’s log’. They captured his young daughter’s growth, at least through the eyes of a parent. The adult Margaret had a different view of her early upbringing. In her unpublished manuscript *A Wahroonga childhood*, she wrote: ‘It was fairly clear that at this time that my father’s expertise in looking after very young children was not highly developed ... My father had once, at a much earlier stage, been left in charge when I was in my pram, strapped in apparently securely. He had gone on with his gardening, believing that nothing untoward could possibly happen.’<sup>396</sup>

Much of the actual child rearing was left to Annie. After John’s birth, she began to make notes on the progress of both children.<sup>397</sup> The Mackies also employed ‘housekeepers’, who helped Annie to look after the young children. Initially, a South African of Dutch descent, Mrs Termousheyen – who Margaret called ‘Toby’ – had much of the responsibility. In her memoirs, Margaret described Toby as one of her ‘early friends’. Another housekeeper, ‘Annie’, taught Margaret to read, concentrating on individual letters in a ‘rag alphabet book’. Margaret then passed her word skills on to her brother.<sup>398</sup> Alexander was sceptical of such an approach, lest it lead to a distaste for learning. But these lessons fostered the children’s interest in words, even if they could not yet read text.<sup>399</sup>

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394 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 19 June 1917.

395 USA: A. Mackie P169/2; Alexander Mackie to William Mackie, 20 July 1917.

396 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

397 USA: A. Mackie P169/28 Mementos of Margaret and John’s childhood kept by Annie Mackie; Memoirs of Margaret and John’s childhood.

398 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

399 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.



*Margaret Mackie, 1918. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/55.*

Margaret and John also attended Sunday school at the Wahroonga Presbyterian Church. Modern methods of kindergarten teaching were practised at the Sunday school, although the local teacher was shocked when Margaret challenged the Adam and Eve story, presenting the view of human evolution she had learned from her father. Alexander had little interest in Presbyterian services and sermons but seems to have accepted that the Sunday school would introduce his children to the local congregation, many of whom were Scottish Australians.<sup>400</sup>

In 1921, Alexander and Annie travelled to Britain, taking seven-year-old Margaret and John, soon turning four, with them. Alexander was on study leave, intending to visit universities and attend the Imperial Education Conference. The trip was also an opportunity to visit his family in Edinburgh and Huntly and introduce them to Annie and the children. On 12 February 1921, the family sailed from Sydney on the *Ormonde*, a 14,000-ton Orient Line Royal Mail steamer bound for Toulon in the south of France. They disembarked in Toulon and made their way across France to Britain.<sup>401</sup> Their time in France was obviously in

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400 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

recognition of Annie's interest and university qualifications in French.

Just before the family left Sydney, they received news that William Mackie had died. This undoubtedly influenced the homecoming, which proved difficult in many ways. For several months in 1921, the family was based in Edinburgh, where Alexander's sister, Maggie, still lived. As an eager academic – but perhaps a less dutiful husband and father – Alexander often left his family alone while he journeyed to conferences and visited university colleagues in England. Annie frequently felt deserted. Soon after arriving in Edinburgh, she suggested that her absent spouse should make more effort to write to her and should send a telegram when he arrived at his destination, lest she be 'left anxious too long'. In August, while staying with Alexander's aunt near Aberdeen, Annie wrote of sunny days and happy children but closed her letter with 'You will be on your way to Thetford [in Suffolk] today. I hope you will have a pleasant time with your ideals and idealists.'<sup>402</sup> Back in Edinburgh, as the dark winter nights closed in, she wrote to her husband 'I had your letter this morning telling me of your further educational adventures. Won't you soon have had enough of this wandering around?'<sup>403</sup>

Relations with Alexander's extended family in Scotland complicated the journey. According to Margaret's account, her mother had expected to stay with the children in a hotel in Edinburgh. Instead, Maggie offered them the use of the Mackie family home, where William Mackie had lived until his recent death. Maggie had worked hard to clean the house (including throwing out the extensive letters Annie had written to her father-in-law). She believed that having a home would make Annie and her young family independent. Annie felt obliged to take up this offer and therefore had to clean and maintain a house during her 'holiday' under conditions that were different from what she had known in Australia.<sup>404</sup>

Annie continued to find the ways of her Scottish in-laws difficult. When she accompanied Alexander on trips to London and Oxford, Margaret and John were left with Alexander's sister, who lived within walking distance of Dean Terrace. Maggie was married to Robert Chisolm, but they had no children. She bought and dressed John, still aged three, in a kilt, but without underpants. He complained of the cold and developed a chill and a high temperature. Annie was then summoned by telegram and decided to return with the children to Dean Terrace, where they lived on 'half a loaf of yesterday's bread' until she was able to replenish her housekeeping funds.<sup>405</sup> Annie told Alexander 'I didn't think we are not "wanted" at Marjie's place'.<sup>406</sup> She was obviously missing her own family and the warmth

401 USA: A. Mackie P169/14 Records relating to Alexander Mackie's European trip in 1921; Orient Line passage ticket.

402 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Annie to Alec, 3 August 1921.

403 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Annie to Alec, 18 November 1921.

404 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

405 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.



of the Australian summer.

Alexander tried to maintain good relations with his sister and brother-in-law, but there were continuing differences and confusions, particularly concerning the children attending church. Maggie wanted to show her young niece and nephew off to the local congregation, but Annie was not warned of the proposed visit and would not let them attend because they were not properly dressed. Maggie tearfully reproached her brother, leading Alexander, ‘who disapproved of uncontrolled behaviour in children, let alone adults’, to tell Annie that ‘he had thought Maggie would have been beyond that sort of behaviour at her age’. When Maggie was able to take the children to church, she gave John an object to play with but expected Margaret to listen to the sermon, which meant nothing to a seven-year-old.<sup>407</sup>

A trip to Huntly to see Alexander’s aunt proved equally awkward. Alexander remembered his days fishing in the Bogie and Deveron rivers with great affection. He pointed the ‘beautiful and undulating’ country out to Annie and took the children fishing for trout. His Aunt Jemina still lived in the family cottage, with a fuel stove and unplumbed bathroom fittings. When he was on leave in 1911, Alexander had arranged to give his aunt a bathroom, but a decade later it was still not installed. Annie found Aunt Jemina’s house very inconvenient, and not just for the lack of washing facilities. The ‘sabbath’ was strictly maintained – play was not allowed and children were expected to be quiet in the local kirk. To avoid such restrictions, Annie took the children to the nearby riverbank, but they fell into the river and returned to the house wet.<sup>408</sup>

In *A Wahroonga childhood*, Margaret has suggested that the tension between Annie and Aunt Jemina may have arisen because Alexander was no longer able to cater for his aunt now that he had a wife. Also, like Maggie, Jemina had no experience with children, and Annie, who had trained as a teacher, had strict standards regarding her children’s upbringing. Overall, Alexander’s relatives in Scotland had little understanding of the progressive views on education that Alexander and Annie preached and practised. Rather, they remembered the young Alexander, who had achieved so much in Scotland and had been an intimate part of the Mackie family. His sister, Maggie, found Alexander much changed from his days in Edinburgh, commenting about people ‘coming back with their professor ways’ while she had been left to take care of domestic duties for their father and her husband.<sup>409</sup>

Before the family left Britain, Annie turned once again to the children’s ed-

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406 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Annie to Alec, 18 November 1921.

407 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Annie to Alec, 18 November 1921.

408 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Annie to Alec, 18 November 1921.

409 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

ucation. In Edinburgh, John had begun to practise reading, not only at home but also in the street. On one occasion, he asked his mother to pause while he worked out the meaning of a sign above a shop. He discovered that it said ‘cigarettes’, impressing passers-by.<sup>410</sup> Annie began formal two-hour lessons with Margaret, who had now turned seven – the compulsory age for school attendance in New South Wales. These lessons continued when the family left Edinburgh and settled in Hove, near Brighton, for a short period. When Annie was sick with the flu, Alexander took over teaching, giving lessons not just on identifying words but also on ascertaining the meaning of sentences. Believing that the best form of English was that spoken in Edinburgh, with an educated Scottish accent, Alexander emphasised the importance of correct pronunciation. Margaret also learned multiplication tables in Hove, helped by the use of Montessori rods, which Margaret Simpson had introduced at Sydney Teachers’ College.<sup>411</sup>

The family sailed for home in early 1922, departing from Toulon aboard the *Orvieto*. Margaret could now read text fluently, including Cyril Burt’s academic study, *Mental and scholastic tests*, which had just been published in 1921. Alexander tested both children; Margaret came to understand the principles behind the tests, while John achieved far beyond his age. Margaret even began to take an interest in astronomy. This was the beginning of her attraction to education and learning, which was stimulated by the books Alexander brought home and by her own work as a junior Sunday school teacher at the local Presbyterian church.<sup>412</sup>

## DRUMGRAIN SCHOOL

When the Mackies returned to Sydney in 1922, a more formal homeschooling regime commenced. Margaret completed two hours of unsupervised study each day while Annie continued with housework. Margaret’s school work was based on the formal New South Wales syllabus. When she told her father that she wanted to go to an actual school with other children, Alexander wrote ‘Drumgrain School’ on her lesson book, associating the name of the family home with a form of education.<sup>413</sup> When John started formal lessons, both children began to write verse, which was reproduced in the *Drumgrain News*. Some of their work was later published in *Schooling*, the journal of Sydney Teachers’ College.

Alexander and Annie were united in their academic expectations for their

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410 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

411 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

412 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 49.

413 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

children. But there were some differences in their perceptions of the children's individual potential, based in part on gender, but also on the parents' views of their own academic achievements. Overall, Alexander saw potential in both children. Annie tended to hold high expectations for John but less for Margaret. Margaret later wrote that she had felt she was being 'singled out' and even blamed for her mother's disappointments in her own career. Margaret's biographer, Kerin Power, points out that the records Alexander and Annie kept on Margaret's and John's progress suggest that as the children grew up, they were almost equal in vocabulary and intellectual development. Margaret was using two-word sentences at twenty months of age. By her second birthday, she was using five- and six-word sentences – within the expected range for a child of an educated family. Yet Annie, in particular, believed that John was special (when he was seven, she even asked the artist George Lambert to paint his portrait, just after the formal portrait of Alexander had been unveiled at the teachers' college).<sup>414</sup>



*Drumgrain. USA: M. Mackie Acc 2027.*

In other ways, perceptions of gender roles played a part in the family. John had an interest in 'mechanical objects' but was not asked to help the family by going shopping. Margaret was found wanting in female accomplishments such as sewing and singing. Unlike her mother, she was not seen as 'a beauty'. But she had a predilection for realism that would lead to an interest in philosophy and a career in teaching.<sup>415</sup>

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414 USA: A. Mackie P169/24; George Lambert to Annie Mackie.

In the mid-1920s, Professor John Adams stayed with the Mackies. Now retired from the University of London, he was on a world tour. Following his visit, he wrote to Annie, describing himself using the English slang term ‘roofer’: someone writing to acknowledge the ‘courtesy of a friendly roof – and yours has always been friendly in all conscience’. He described the children as ‘delightful youngsters under such a charming roof’. Adams worried about the ‘burden’ Annie’s husband had to bear and hoped ‘he will put the brakes on a bit’. It gave him ‘great joy to hear the warm praise of [Alexander] that I encountered on all sides – above all the recognition of [his] unusual combination of perfect courtesy with inflexible firmness’. Adams closed his letter with love to Margaret and John; ‘What an interesting pair they are, and “from interestinger to interestinger[”] – as Alice would say – they will get until they reach their majority’.<sup>416</sup>

## MARGARET AND ABBOTSLEIGH

In 1924, Margaret Mackie was enrolled at Abbotsleigh, ‘five minutes’ walk’ from the family home. Marian Clarke, an English migrant who had experience teaching in girls’ schools in her homeland and who held a Cambridge Certificate of Higher Education, had founded Abbotsleigh as a private venture school in 1886, following the example of other educated women in Sydney, including her sister Ellen Clarke, who had already opened Normanhurst at Ashfield. Abbotsleigh was established in North Sydney but soon moved to Parramatta, before settling at Wahroonga, where enrolment of both boarders and local day girls increased. The growing enrolments reflected the academic status of the school and the reputation of the headmistress.

The founding of Abbotsleigh, and its subsequent history, demonstrated a shift in Australian girls’ schools from a focus on the ‘polite accomplishments’ expected of future married ladies towards a formal academic curriculum that allowed access to the public examinations administered by the universities. In 1913, on the eve of World War One, Australian-born Margaret Murray bought the school. With the war bringing about social change, she emphasised religious faith, encouraging her pupils to think about the importance of ‘service’ for women, while continuing to highlight Abbotsleigh-educated university graduates as role models. By that time, Abbotsleigh was formally recognised as a secondary school, accepting state registration and allowing its students to sit for state bursaries.<sup>417</sup>

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415 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 39–40.

416 USA: A. Mackie P169/24; John Adams (on board RMS *Tahiti*) to Annie Mackie, 15 August 1924.

417 Emilsen 2000, 1–72.

When Margaret Mackie arrived at the school at the age of nine, her headmistress was Miss Murray, who was in her final year at Abbotsleigh. After being homeschooled, Margaret now had a new identity; she was told by the headmistress that, dressed in her school uniform, she ‘looked just like an Abbotsleigh girl’.<sup>418</sup> Initially, Abbotsleigh found it difficult to judge where Margaret belonged. In her first week, she was first placed in the ‘elementary’ grade, which was designed for children as young as six. She was transferred almost immediately to first form and quickly on to second form. By the following week, she was in third form, which was essentially the beginning of secondary school at Abbotsleigh. Some of the girls in the form were much older than Margaret, as it was still common practice in many secondary schools to grade by ability and achievement rather than age.<sup>419</sup>

When Margaret entered Abbotsleigh, the school was on the cusp of transition. The Church of England had bought Abbotsleigh as part of a program of acquiring private venture schools in Sydney during the interwar years. The new headmistress, Dorothea Poole, had qualifications that stretched across the Empire. A graduate of the University of Adelaide, with qualifications from Cambridge University and Bedford College in London, she had taught in Adelaide and Melbourne before becoming the founding headmistress of Ballarat Church of England Girls’ Grammar School. Working with the Abbotsleigh Council, Poole insisted that the school remain (non-denominationally) Christian, continuing to accept pupils from the many Presbyterian families in the Wairoonga area. During the 1920s, the school built more facilities and increased its enrolments to almost 300 students. Poole continued to emphasise social service as a form of work for women, while recognising that opportunities for paid employment were slowly developing.<sup>420</sup>

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418 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wairoonga childhood*.

419 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wairoonga childhood*.

420 Emilsen 2000, 73–102.



*Margaret and Alexander Mackie at Abbotsleigh.*  
USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023.

With her experience in other Church schools in Australia, Miss Poole brought greater regularity to Abbotsleigh's procedures and routine, which Margaret welcomed, provided that she could become familiar with what was required. In *A Wahroonga childhood*, Margaret noted that 'Having spent much of my earlier years learning informally and not in organised lessons I delighted in organisation'. Since Abbotsleigh was 'always orderly', 'lesson time was spent on lessons'. Discipline was not overt. Under Miss Poole, 'troublesome girls' were helped rather than expelled. If necessary, the girls were told that their behaviour was 'not Abbotsleigh'. Overall, the school's ethos was founded on the Christian ethic of service and correct conduct, reinforced in chapel and school assemblies.<sup>421</sup>

Abbotsleigh offered sport as well as drama and debating, all of which attracted Margaret, even though she had little experience of such group activities.

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421 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

At the same time, she found recognition for her academic achievements and encountered other girls with academic associations and aspirations. She completed the Intermediate Certificate with ‘A’ passes in six subjects and a ‘B’ in one. She later claimed that her achievements were an effort to demonstrate her intelligence to her parents. But she also recognised that her family life was of an ‘educative kind’, which conferred advantages on children. This was also the case for some of her classmates. Denise Dettman, who would go on to the University of Sydney and then to Oxford, was the daughter of the headmaster of Sydney Grammar School; Beatrice Brereton came from a distinguished academic and legal family and would go on to study psychology at the University of Sydney and pursue a career in child guidance. Margaret carried an understanding of the advantages of an educative home life into her career as a teacher, emphasising the importance of middle-class family values.<sup>422</sup>

Following illness, Margaret took the opportunity to repeat part of her secondary schooling, sitting for the Leaving Certificate examination twice and gaining an extra year at Abbotsleigh. In *A Wahroonga childhood*, she wrote ‘I was never bored with schooling. This may have been partly because of my late start, but the quality of the school is also a relevant factor’.<sup>423</sup> Margaret left Abbotsleigh at the end of 1932, after completing the Leaving Certificate the second time. She won an exhibition to the University of Sydney, intending to become a teacher. Margaret’s history teacher, L.A. Greenwood, wrote to Annie that Margaret had brought ‘honour to her home, her school and herself, and I rejoice with you on her fine achievement. I shall always be interested in her career and wish her much joy in the profession she has chosen.’<sup>424</sup>

## JOHN AND KNOX GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Knox Grammar School opened in 1924, just down the highway, south of Abbotsleigh. One of its founders was the prominent industrialist Andrew Reid, the Mackies’ neighbour. The school was associated with the Presbyterian Assembly, catering for many of the new settlers on the Upper North Shore. Knox’s first headmaster was Neil Harcourt MacNeil, the son of a Presbyterian minister. MacNeil was educated at Scotch College in Melbourne; he rowed in the school eight, played in the first cricket eleven and was dux. After studying classics at the University of Melbourne, he was selected as Rhodes Scholar for Victoria in 1914. In England, he enlisted in November 1914 and was awarded the Military Cross.

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422 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

423 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

424 USA: A. Mackie P169/24; L.A. Greenwood to Mrs Mackie, 28 February 1933.

He was transferred to the Royal Flying School in 1917. After the war, MacNeil studied history at Balliol College at Oxford, where he won a blue for rowing. In 1920–21, he studied divinity at the University of Edinburgh. He then turned to teaching, receiving a teacher's diploma from the University of London. MacNeil taught at Cheltenham College before returning to Australia to become the foundation head of Knox. The Knox College Council promised a 'liberal education' at the school, and MacNeil was committed to a curriculum that included 'all manly sports'.<sup>425</sup>

MacNeil was of a younger generation than Alexander Mackie, which may have hindered close personal associations between them. Further, MacNeil's support for the English public school tradition of 'athleticism' may not have appealed to Alexander. But there were some obvious points of convergence: their strong scholastic backgrounds; the tradition of liberal Presbyterianism; their respective periods of study in Edinburgh; and MacNeil's commitment to professional qualifications in teaching, which was uncommon in Australian corporate or independent schools in the 1920s. MacNeil also supported similar curriculum and examination reforms to Alexander.

On these grounds, Alexander may have felt confident in enrolling his son, John, at Knox, initially in the preparatory school. While there are no surviving reminiscences of John's experiences, school reports detailing his academic progress are still extant. Knox was a small school when John was enrolled in 1925, but by 1930 it had over 300 students. In 1926, John was in the upper prep; he was almost nine years old, the average age for the class. Among nineteen boys in the form, he was placed second. His only problem seemed to be arithmetic, but his abilities in this area were improving. The next year John was first in his class. His form master commented that John had 'gained 1st place against very strong and keen competition. His excellent work is the result of steady effort and a clever young mind. To teach him is a pleasure.' John's headmaster, MacNeil, added, 'We expect much of this young man'.<sup>426</sup>

In the secondary school, John's achievements exceeded his peers'. By 1927, aged just ten, he was placed first in the second form; the average age of the form was twelve and a half. A similar age gap (between two and three years) was maintained throughout John's school career, and he remained top of his class. Although he was not a sportsman, it was noted that, at just under twelve, he was willing to play rugby, despite his small size and lack of experience, and to take his 'share of the knocks and kicks'. By 1930, aged twelve years and eight months, he was first in the fifth form; most of the boys in this form were fifteen years old. His form master commented that John already had a 'keen appreciation of literary

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425 Mansfield 1986. See also Mansfield and Richardson 1974.

426 USA: A. Mackie P169/32 School papers of John Mackie; Knox Grammar School reports.



values, a good memory and sound and independent critical judgment. I can report in equally favourable terms of his mathematics. His conduct and demeanour are always exemplary.’<sup>427</sup>

Studying academic subjects helped to transform the intelligent John into a scholar and intellectual. Staff at Knox only expressed two reservations about John in his school reports. Some thought that he needed ‘more balance’, which could be achieved by taking games more seriously, even though he was a willing participant in rugby. And some found his emerging style difficult, noting that he had ‘a questioning and logical mind but he should avoid becoming unduly argumentative’. To this, MacNeil added, ‘A nice analytical mind that must not be allowed to become penickity [sic]’.<sup>428</sup>

In 1931, at age fourteen, John was already preparing himself not just for university but also for the academic life of a philosopher, following his father. From 1932 to 1934, he repeated the Leaving Certificate three times to gain a scholarship, eventually enrolling at the University of Sydney in 1935.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Margaret and John Mackie had grown up in Wahroonga with little understanding of what their father did across the harbour, at the college and the university. According to Margaret, this was partly due to Annie’s influence. Their mother often emphasised what she could have achieved, failing to indicate what Alexander was doing as college principal and university professor.<sup>429</sup>

When they enrolled in the 1930s, both Margaret and John were soon caught up in the environment of the University of Sydney. The university was still a small community, with just over 3,000 students, almost one-third of whom were in the Faculty of Arts. The student body had become increasingly active from the late 1920s, when a Student Representative Council was established. The onset of the Great Depression and the deterioration of international affairs in Europe often divided student opinion, separating conservatives and radicals. By the early 1930s, with a growing crisis in the economic and political world order, there was amplified and intense politicisation among the students. In this climate, there was increasing focus on the views of John Anderson, who had been appointed professor of philosophy in 1927. A friend of Alexander Mackie, Anderson, even more than Alexander, adopted the role of the intellectual critic within and outside the university. An enemy of the ‘establishment’, Anderson was a fierce advocate of

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427 USA: A. Mackie P169/32; Knox Grammar School reports.

428 USA: A. Mackie P169/32; Knox Grammar School reports.

429 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

free speech and the right to protest against religion, as well as against capitalism and imperialism. There was strong student support for his views, leading to the emergence of a student movement calling itself ‘Andersonian’.<sup>430</sup>

The Mackies and Andersons lived near each other on the Upper North Shore. But Margaret only encountered John Anderson’s views after she entered the university. They came as almost an epiphany. As Margaret wrote in her memoirs, she was attracted to Anderson’s claim that there was ‘no central purpose’ in life – an assertion that ran counter to all she had previously believed.<sup>431</sup> Accepting his views as a new authority, and without consulting her parents, Margaret joined the Freethought Society, which was supported by Anderson’s followers.<sup>432</sup> In 1934, Anderson was president of the Freethought Society; Margaret Mackie and J.A. Passmore were vice-presidents. Margaret was also prominent in the Andersonian-influenced Literary Society. Here she encountered Oliver Somerville, a ‘flamboyant poet’ and bohemian radical. When Margaret eventually broke with him, Somerville published the following poem:

I lost my love for taking  
 The title anarchist  
 Her solid alms forsaking  
 For moonshine, myth and mist.<sup>433</sup>

Over the next three years, between 1934 and 1937, Margaret Mackie became prominent within university student politics, making numerous public appearances, including standing on a lorry in Moore Park on Labour Day, representing the Sydney Joint Committee for Peace and supporting the Trotskyists against the Stalinists.<sup>434</sup>

These activities reinforced Margaret’s desire to become a teacher, although she was not sure of her parents’ views on her choice of occupation. Ironically, this decision would eventually distance her from John Anderson. According to Kerin Power, at first Anderson responded to the idea of Margaret becoming a teacher with the claim that ‘All you need is to do something no one else is doing’. However, in effect, he distanced himself from Margaret and tended to support his student and mistress Ruth Walker, who was given preferment and a position in the Department of Philosophy.<sup>435</sup>

Margaret’s immediate aim was to graduate from Oxford. She achieved first

430 Franklin 2003, 7–156.

431 USA: A. Mackie P169/40; Margaret Mackie, *A Wahroonga childhood*.

432 USA: Alan James (Jim) Baker personal archives Acc 2436; Letters to *Heraclitus*, Margaret Mackie to Jim Baker, 11 November 1996.

433 Barcan 2002, 73, 90.

434 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 57–58. For general context, see Barcan 2002.

435 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 59.

class honours in English and philosophy in her final year at the University of Sydney. With financial support from her parents, and after a formal entrance exam, she was admitted to Somerville College at Oxford – the most significant of the women’s colleges founded in the nineteenth century – in 1937. At John Anderson’s suggestion, she studied the ‘modern greats’ of philosophy, politics and economics.

John Mackie was less visible than his sister as a student activist, though he generally adopted an ‘Andersonian’ outlook and even organised the vote for the Communist Party. Interested in classics and mathematics at school, John became an avid student of philosophy under John Anderson’s supervision.<sup>436</sup> He graduated from the University of Sydney in 1938 with first class honours in Greek and Latin and the G.S. Caird Scholarship in philosophy. Winning the Wentworth Scholarship, John was admitted to Oriel College in 1938. Both his parents came to Oxford to see him begin his new academic studies.<sup>437</sup>

Their experiences at the University of Sydney in the late 1930s were formative for both Margaret and John, albeit in different ways. When Anderson died in 1962, John offered his own careful analysis of his former teacher’s significance. He noted that Anderson’s ‘central doctrine is that there is only one way of being, that of ordinary things in space and time, and that every question is a simple issue of truth and falsity, that there are no different degrees or kinds of truth’. Furthermore, Anderson saw ethics as ‘a study of the qualities of human activities; there can be no science of what is right or obligatory, and the study or moral judgments would belong to sociology, not to ethics’ – this would become a central tenet of John Mackie’s own philosophy.<sup>438</sup>

Another student of Anderson, P.H. Partridge, who became professor of philosophy at the Australian National University, later argued that Anderson’s early commitment to idealism in Scotland – before he became a materialist and communist – had shaped his view that philosophy provided the necessary mental apparatus for understanding and criticism illuminating all fields of enquiry. Criticism of beliefs and social institutions was Anderson’s fundamental method of analysis, supplemented by speculation and theoretical imagination. But according to Partridge, Anderson was no disinterested scholar; he saw controversy and polemic as conditions of intellectual vigour. In the end, Anderson’s influence was provincial, confined to the University of Sydney. Anderson had sought to create his own school of philosophy, while many of his students (including Partridge and John Mackie) had pursued international or transnational paths.<sup>439</sup>

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436 Franklin 2003, 104.

437 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 65.

438 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 15.

439 Partridge 1980, 1–10.

## OXFORD

Some see the years from 1914 to around 1950 as a golden era for undergraduates at the University of Oxford. Even more than Cambridge, Oxford was a destination for students from across the Empire. This international interest was stimulated, in part, by the award of Rhodes Scholarships.<sup>440</sup>

Margaret Mackie found life at Oxford far different from the radical student life she had known at Sydney. In the 1930s, an upper-class masculine culture still permeated the university and colleges. Per university statute, women could only comprise one-fifth of undergraduates. Australian women at Oxford were rare, marked by their accents, like Australian men. Margaret approached the Labour Club, expecting to be welcomed, only to find that her views were not wanted. According to her biographer, she told her brother, John, that the Labour Club was composed of ‘Communists with ancestral estates’. The philosophy taught at Oxford was still based on Kant’s moral imperatives and included none of John Anderson’s ‘realism’.<sup>441</sup>

Even her brother’s arrival did little to make Margaret feel welcome in Oxford, although the siblings travelled to Europe together in 1938, at the time of the Munich crisis. John introduced his sister to Professor Enoch Powell, who had returned to Oxford after a brief period at the University of Sydney. John’s introduction of Margaret was an indication of how women were regarded at Oxford at the time: ‘I have invited my sister. She is moderately intelligent, for a woman!’<sup>442</sup>

The nascent feminist atmosphere at Somerville rescued Margaret. The head of the college reminded her of the ‘oppressed women’ of Oxford. At the same time, the college maintained a strict moral code, ‘sending down’ a student who had a man in her room after 10 pm.<sup>443</sup> The Somerville tutor Lucy Sutherland replaced Anderson as Margaret’s mentor. Australian-born and educated in South Africa, Sutherland was conservative in politics, but grounded in history as an academic discipline and the importance of evidence, rather than exposition of the philosophy of John Anderson. A scholar of the eighteenth century, she and Margaret remained lifelong friends. Sutherland rose to become the first pro-vice-chancellor at Oxford in 1960.<sup>444</sup>

Despite Lucy Sutherland’s support, Margaret struggled with her final exams in 1939; the exams occurred at almost the same time as her father’s stroke during

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440 Halsey 1992, 167.

441 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 58–62, 65.

442 USA: A.J. Baker Acc 2436; Letters to *Heraclitus*, Margaret Mackie to *Heraclitus*, 16 April 1998.

443 USA: A.J. Baker Acc 2436; Letters to *Heraclitus*, Margaret Mackie to *Heraclitus*, 16 April 1998, 61–63.

444 Mackie 2006, 176–77.

his visit to England. Margaret gained second class honours in PPE (philosophy, politics and economics), rather than the first class results she had desired. Arriving home the day World War Two broke out, she confronted the need to take care of her parents and enrolled in the Diploma of Education at the University of Sydney.<sup>445</sup>

As a male with strong academic credentials, John Mackie had an easier time at Oxford. But he was still required to overcome certain hurdles. Despite his brilliant academic career at Sydney, John undertook an undergraduate degree in the classical greats (*literae humaniores*). Requiring students from the dominions to complete an undergraduate degree was common practice at Oxford. In 1922, W.K. Hancock, a Rhodes Scholar from Victoria who soon became the foremost historian of Australia and the Empire, had wanted to begin his research by enrolling in the recently established DPhil, but he was persuaded to take an undergraduate degree first, like other ‘colonials’. This practice persisted until the 1960s.<sup>446</sup>

John graduated from Oxford in 1940 with first class honours and immediately began working towards his DPhil, studying ‘Logic and the method of modern physics’. In late 1941, he abandoned this research to join the army, doing technical work on ‘radiolocation’. H.H. Price, a fellow of New College and Wykeham professor of logic at Oxford, wrote a reference indicating that he had never seen John’s written work but had heard him ‘read several papers on philosophical subjects’. Price had ‘no doubt’ of John’s ability, regarding him as ‘one of the three or four ablest young philosophers who have emerged in Oxford in the past year or so’. According to Price, John was ‘clear-headed and ingenious, and very pertinacious in argument; and there is no doubt about his keenness or his power of hard work’. Moreover, John had ‘classical’ and ‘scientific’ training, an ‘unusual advantage which few philosophers in this country, young or old, can claim to share’.

In Classics his potential is seen in not only his First in Greats but the award of the Cromer Prize by the British Academy for his essay on Greek Philosophy. His scientific attainments may not be as high but he knows enough maths to handle math technique of modern symbolic Logic and enough Physics to study Philosophy of Physics. If he wishes to be a Professional Philosopher he has the ability and training and I believe he would make an excellent teacher and lecturer. Have no doubt he could do various administration work. He strikes me as being business-like and eminently dependable. He has plenty of common sense, as well as a sense of humour;

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445 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 64–65.

446 Davidson 2010, 46–47.

he has pleasant and unassuming manners, and I believe he would co-operate readily with other people, and would be a loyal and energetic member of any institution to which he belonged.<sup>447</sup>

## MARGARET'S POSTWAR CAREER

At the end of World War Two, universities and colleges in Britain and Australia still catered for an intellectual and social elite constituting less than one-tenth of school leavers. By the 1970s, increased government intervention and spending initiated the transition to mass higher education, increasing access to a variety of tertiary institutions. Margaret and John Mackie were partly caught up in this process, although their experiences, values and networks were largely tied to the prewar academic world.

The siblings followed different paths in academic life. Margaret was committed to improving teaching in schools as part of the move towards universal comprehensive secondary education in the 1950s and 1960s. John became a prominent scholar, pursuing academic research in philosophy. In the early post-war years, the two were still drawn together as part of the Mackie family. But by the 1970s, they were drawn apart by separate academic lives.

Like many families in Australia, the war disrupted the Mackie family in numerous ways. Under strained financial circumstances, Alexander and Annie had sold their family home in 1939 and moved to Annie's parents' residence at 15 Priory Road, North Sydney. The two often lived apart, each spending time near Mittagong in the Southern Highlands.<sup>448</sup> The end of the war led to an improvement in Alexander's health. He even began to visit Sydney Teachers' College. But he never fully recovered from the stroke he had suffered in 1939, while in England.

Margaret had returned to Sydney at the beginning of the war to complete her studies and be near her parents. After finishing a Diploma of Education at the University of Sydney, she began her teaching career in state schools, commencing in Sydney and then moving to the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. When she had attended Abbotsleigh, she had little interest in teaching in middle-class schools. Her aim was to bring progressive education to students in rural areas. Even during her teaching practice, she sought to introduce democratic forms of communication, including sitting down to talk, rather than standing

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447 USA: A. Mackie P169/33 University papers of John Mackie; H.H. Price reference, 19 September 1941. Born in Wales, H.H. Price had gone to Oxford in the 1920s. In 1940, he published a book on the Scottish philosopher Hume – as John Mackie did almost forty years later.

448 See USA: A. Mackie P169/24; Correspondence from Annie to Alec, 1943 and 1946.

before the class.<sup>449</sup>

In 1949, Margaret returned to Britain, where she re-established contact with Lucy Sutherland, acting as Sutherland's research assistant. She enrolled for an Oxford BLitt on the *Education Act 1944* for England and Wales, which had helped to lay the foundation for a tripartite division between grammar, technical and modern secondary schools. Her thesis was rejected, but the experience seems to have stimulated a continuing interest in education research and publication.<sup>450</sup>

Before leaving for Britain, Margaret had visited the Department of Education in Sydney to enquire about future job prospects. She had met with a number of officials, including Harold Wyndham, a former student of her father's and now secretary of the department. Upon her return to Australia in 1951, Wyndham informed Margaret that she had been appointed to a lectureship at Armidale Teachers' College.<sup>451</sup> Ironically, S.H. Smith, her father's nemesis, had established this residential college in 1928. Co-educational but with segregated living for men and women, the Armidale college was, in many ways, designed to counter the progressive views that Alexander Mackie promoted at Sydney Teachers' College. By the 1950s, Armidale Teachers' College had become progressive under its new principal, G.W. Bassett. Margaret taught the history and philosophy of education at the college and lectured in the Diploma of Education in the extramural program of the University of New England (which had been established in 1939 as a college of the University of Sydney).

The city of Armidale in northern New South Wales became Margaret's home for the next half-century. She stayed in touch with her family by correspondence and visited her mother in Sydney during college holidays. Her family background and her education, including an Oxford degree, could be considered an advantage, but Margaret was conscious of the suspicions directed towards those who had once followed John Anderson. In the anti-communist climate of this period, she was determined not to be seen to be attached to any social movement, and she did not reveal her political or religious beliefs.

Margaret kept a low profile in Armidale and had few career ambitions. She was appointed head of department at the teachers' college but stepped aside when a male complained about her appointment.<sup>452</sup> Instead, she concentrated on teaching and worked towards becoming a published author, writing books appealing to both academics and teachers. Few other lecturers at the college had similar goals; they relied on the publications of others in teaching their classes. Margaret soon demonstrated that teaching should be research-based, drawing on the lecturer's

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449 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 66.

450 USA: M. Mackie Acc 2023, Box 1; Power 1998, 73–74.

451 Mackie 2006, 254–55.

452 Mackie 2006, 79–80.

own enquiries. In this way, she carried on the traditions of scholarship and research that had been established at Sydney Teachers' College.



*Margaret Mackie in Armidale, 1950s. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/80.*

According to her biographer, three prominent influences shaped Margaret's worldview. The first was her father, who had educated her at home and whose values continued to shape hers. Alexander died five years after Margaret had started at Armidale. According to Margaret, his legacy to her included his liberalism, his philosophical foundations in the Greeks, his communication skills and his intellectual development within the Scottish traditions of frugality and hard work. The second was Professor John Anderson, who had become less significant for her after she left the University of Sydney, but who had introduced her to the 'secular ethic', whereby people saw ends in themselves. Third were other philosophers who she saw as more significant than John Anderson in the area of education, including the American John Dewey, who had raised the question of human capabilities.<sup>453</sup>

In just over a decade, beginning in the mid-1960s, Margaret wrote five books on education. *Education in the inquiring society* was published in 1966 by the ACER, which her father had helped to found in 1931. The book was based on the premise that increased leisure allowed for more learning. Influenced, in part, by the views of John Anderson, Margaret argued that taking time to think rationally could lead to 'objective truth'. The publication of this book resulted in invitations to overseas conferences and other contacts. Margaret visited the University

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453 Mackie 2006, 75–78.



of York in England, where her brother was a professor. He had sent a copy of *Education in the inquiring society* to the professor of education at the university, who was apparently impressed. John believed that it was his sister's connection with John Anderson that impressed student audiences at York.<sup>454</sup>

Margaret's most significant publication was *Educative teaching*, released in 1968. This book was written for a readership comprising teachers, parents and the general community. It was divided into two parts. The first part, entitled 'The theory of education', explored the history and philosophy of education since the Greeks, recent social and educational change, including her own experiences, and the contributions of twentieth-century philosophers such as Dewey. In this part, Margaret asserted that the main purpose of education was fostering 'understanding', which was developed through the stimulation of learning with a focus on enquiry and creative thinking. This emphasis undoubtedly reflected her own early education at Drumgrain. For Margaret, the idea of education fostering understanding became the aim for schools in postwar Australia. Harold Wyndham, then director-general of education in New South Wales, had designed a system of comprehensive schools that had begun to operate from 1962.<sup>455</sup> With the introduction of the Wyndham scheme, all students had access to secondary education, thereby overcoming some of the earlier concern about the effect of social class on educational opportunities.

In keeping with interwar progressivism, including her father's views, Margaret believed that students should be the focus of education and learning. She also followed her father in emphasising teaching as a profession committed to student learning. Like her father, she saw progressive methods as supporting an academic curriculum, rather than the emphasis on 'social adjustment' in postwar American schools. Issues of the mind were 'good', in an ethical sense; Margaret believed that goodness was not relative but could be imparted through learning. Despite her past association with John Anderson, she claimed that teaching religion could be educative and that church schools should be part of a diverse society. Accepting that matters of social class were becoming less prominent in education, she still saw the need to provide for different groups to participate in the provision of education. The final section of 'The theory of education' outlined Dewey's view that democracy was the appropriate aim for society and his advocacy of a school curriculum focused on activities that would help to achieve social change by bringing people together.

The second part of *Educative teaching* was on 'The classroom', showing how the theory of education that Margaret had outlined should be related to teaching. The opening chapter on 'The first lesson' was directed at beginning teachers.

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454 Mackie 2006, 217.

455 Hughes 2002.

It outlined ways for a teacher to form a relationship with a class by avoiding excessive discipline and to use lesson plans to engage students in co-operative ‘Deweyan’-type activities. Most of the following chapters focused on understanding students. Margaret argued that classroom discipline should arise from order and the common and co-operative efforts of students. Young people were becoming seen as ‘teenagers’, and this could lead to discussion in class of the social and other pressures they were facing. Margaret accepted the need for examinations to satisfy employers and universities but emphasised a curriculum built around the humanities and sciences. The final chapters of ‘The classroom’ indicated that comprehensive schools were replacing more elite secondary schools. Margaret contended that those in teacher education should recognise that it was not so much method as social understanding that created good and successful teachers who helped to produce ‘interested and active thinkers’.<sup>456</sup>

Margaret wrote two further books on educational theory and practice. In 1970, she co-authored *What is right* – a series of case studies considering the ethics of education, written as constructed narratives – with Gwen Kelly. In 1977, three years after retiring from Armidale Teachers’ College, she published *Philosophy and school administration*. Drawing upon her earlier books, this work was designed for school principals and those involved in school administration. Outlining both theory and practice, Margaret pointed out the significance of ‘critical incidents’ in the life of a school and discussed ‘current controversies’ in educational policy and administration.

After her retirement from the college, Margaret continued to play an active part in the Armidale community. In her eighties, she participated in adult education at the college for students from the Pacific Islands. She also taught philosophy to school children. Her memoirs, entitled *Is there a difference between thinking, believing and knowing?*, were published in 2006, a century after her father’s appointment as principal of Sydney Teachers’ College.

In many ways Margaret Mackie was Alexander Mackie’s best academic disciple. She transposed many of his ideas into publications based on research and teaching. Margaret died in 2009.

## JOHN’S TRANSNATIONAL ACADEMIC CAREER

During World War Two, there was much concern in the Mackie family about John’s whereabouts and wellbeing. John served in the British Army, working with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He was stationed in England until mid-1942 and then in the Middle East, where he was fascinated by Egypt. In

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456 Mackie 1968.

Italy, he was involved in the fighting to capture the peninsula. He was promoted to lieutenant in October 1942 and to captain in April 1945, and was mentioned in despatches for distinguished service. With hostilities ceasing in Italy by the end of 1944, John began preparing to return to academic life.<sup>457</sup> He generally remained quiet about his wartime experiences, but they probably affected his postwar views, particularly in the areas of ethics and moral judgement.

In January 1945, John applied for lectureships in philosophy and moral philosophy that had been advertised at the University of Sydney. His applications included a written reference provided by Professor Price at Oxford before John joined the army. Professor John Anderson also wrote a testimonial:

His classical training gives him special competence in a vital field of philosophical study; and along with this, it should be noted, he has kept up a critical interest in the problems of physics ... This breadth of interest has been characteristic of Mr. Mackie throughout his student career, and it has been combined, in my experience of him, not only in his class work but in his participation by addresses and articles in student affairs, with a remarkable lucidity of expression and forcefulness in argument. Engaging in his personality and energetic in his work he should prove a valuable contributor to the activity of any scholastic institution.<sup>458</sup>

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458 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.

458 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.



*John Mackie at Mount Vesuvius, 1945. USA: A. Mackie P169/37/76.*

At that time, John Mackie was still with the British Army; his mother, Annie, acted as an intermediary with the University of Sydney. In March 1945, the registrar informed her that John had been appointed to the lectureship in moral and political philosophy. It was a further nine months before the British Army allowed John's release. He arrived back in Sydney in January 1946.<sup>459</sup>

In the immediate postwar years, the University of Sydney was being transformed by the first wave of ex-servicemen supported by the Commonwealth Reconstruction Scheme. Increasing costs and uncertain salaries were concerns of both the university Senate and the Association of University Teachers (formed in 1944).<sup>460</sup> Despite the growth in student numbers, there were many continuities

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459 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.

with the University of Sydney John had known before the war. Many previous staff were still at the university; courses and programs of study remained the same as in 1939.

In 1938, John Anderson had been joined in the philosophy department by another Scot, Alan Ker Stout, who was appointed professor of moral and political philosophy – the area in which John Mackie became a lecturer. Some inside and outside the university expected Stout to be a moderating influence on Anderson. But in 1943, Anderson delivered an address before the New Education Fellowship claiming that religion had no place in education because it limited enquiry. Members of the New South Wales parliament saw this as an attack on the Christian foundations of the University of Sydney. The university Senate defended the principle of free speech, but there was opposition from the churches, which increasingly saw the teaching of philosophy at the University of Sydney as anti-religious.<sup>461</sup> John Mackie's close association with John Anderson would create difficulty in his academic career in Australia.

Once home, John Mackie wrote two articles that demonstrated a concern for the postwar world and a willingness to express views that might cause controversy. The first was a short piece published in *The Australian Highway*, the journal of the WEA (the Workers' Educational Association, which offered adult education). Entitled 'Some impressions of Palestine', the article recounted his experiences in 1943, when he spent a brief period on a Jewish collective farm. Describing the Jews' way of life as 'European in standards and outlook' and the Arabs' as 'still entirely medieval', John suggested that his aim was not to take sides but to give a 'clearer idea of the interests involved'.

Most of John's time in Palestine was spent at the Jewish settlement (essentially a *kibbutz*, although he did not use this term). The collective farm had its origins in the socialist experiments of the early Zionist settlers in the region. The community took collective responsibility for the upbringing of all the children on the settlement. John found mutual respect between the settlement and local Arab farmers. But the Zionist ideal of Israel as a Jewish homeland was competing with the ideal of a federation of Arab states supported by the wealthy classes in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere. According to John's account, the present troubles arose from the desire of many European Jews, 'the survivors of Nazism', to immigrate to Palestine. Australia and America could relieve the pressure by taking in more Jewish immigrants. John hoped that the experiment of the Jewish collective could continue while America and Britain supported the economic development of Palestine.<sup>462</sup> Two years after the publication of John's article, the

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460 Connell et al. 1995, 35.

461 Connell et al. 1995, 27–28.

462 USA: A. Mackie P169/34 Other papers of John Mackie; 'Some impressions from Palestine', *The Australian Highway*, 1 August 1946, 54–55.

creation of the state of Israel would lead to ongoing conflict with the Palestinians.

John's second article, published in 1946 and entitled 'The refutation of morals', related, in part, to the continuing controversies in which John Anderson was involved. Anderson had criticised planning during the war and in the early postwar years as an indication of the 'servile state', distancing himself from his earlier support for communism. Of more interest to the University of Sydney Senate was his attack on religion and the churches in 1943, leading to the university censuring him for his remarks.<sup>463</sup> In 'The refutation of morals', John Mackie claimed that 'We have shown that the great mass of what is called moral thought is, not nonsense, but error, the imagining of objective facts and qualities of things where there exists nothing but our feelings of desire and approval'.<sup>464</sup> This was his first postwar public statement asserting that ethics were subjective, rather than objective. The article distanced him from most postwar Andersonians, who saw religion as 'nonsense', but it also made new enemies among supporters of Christianity.

In effect, the articles on Palestine and ethics show John reaching out to the community in an effort to explain current issues in the postwar world. During the war, the University of Sydney had commenced publishing a *Current Affairs Bulletin* each fortnight. A Department of Adult Education was formed in 1946, which enrolled students in extramural programs. John also took the opportunity to use radio broadcasts.<sup>465</sup>

In 1947, John married Joan Armiger Meredith. Born in 1927, she had attended Fort Street Girls High School and matriculated to the University of Sydney in 1943 with first class honours in English, Latin and French. In 1946, she had graduated with first class honours in English and philosophy, having been a student of John Mackie.<sup>466</sup> Like William Mackie's warm response to Annie when she married into the family, John's marriage brought joy to Alexander, who was delighted by his new daughter-in-law's charms. By 1949, the newlyweds had a son named Alexander, called 'Sandy' after John Anderson's son. They were living in the Burley Griffin-inspired suburb of Castlecrag. In the interwar years, Castlecrag had attracted artists and others, many of whom were probably known to, if not friends of, the Mackies. By the 1940s, it was attracting a new generation of residents, such as the Mackies. John and Joan lived at Wildflowers at the end of Edinburgh Road – the house that the artist Bim Hilder had built for his mother in 1930.<sup>467</sup>

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463 Connell et al. 1995, 27–28.

464 Franklin 2003, 104.

465 Connell et al. 1995, 234–35.

466 USA: Student record cards G3/210; Joan Meredith.

467 Spathopoulos 2007, 260.

Correspondence from Joan Mackie in 1949 described her life at Castlecrag and revealed her close relationship with her father-in-law. On 15 March, she wrote to ‘Professor Mackie’, thanking him for three jugs he gave her as presents. She assured him that young Alexander was ‘thriving’, even though he had been told by local boys that Santa Claus did not exist. On hearing this story, according to Joan, John had replied that this would be ‘one disillusionment that Alexander would be spared as he would be never encouraged in the illusion in the first place’. According to John, Santa Claus was a ‘symbol of gratuitous present giving’ that had a pernicious influence on the ‘young’s morals and ... in his place should be set the ideal of present giving as a reward for virtue’.<sup>468</sup> Obviously, John had become the ‘philosopher father’.

Joan wrote again to ‘Professor Mackie’ on 27 March, thanking him for his letter and for a gift of Pyrex dishes. Her correspondence on this occasion was more playful. Both gifts, she wrote, would solve ‘problems associated with Alexander’: the dishes would prove invaluable when the ‘aforesaid gentleman has reached the stage of demanding variety in his diet’ and her father-in-law’s advice on ‘an important metaphysical problem, should save the little craft, near the outset of its voyage of the Rocks of Idealism and the Whirlpool of Scepticism. What in particular appeals to me is the rejection of the doctrine of Adult conscience – a dangerous doctrine responsible for more extravagant error (if that is possible) in later life.’ The letter continued in a light-hearted, philosophical fashion for a few more paragraphs, touching on subjects such as the biography of the novelist John Buchan.<sup>469</sup>

By April 1951, John Mackie had applied for promotion to senior lecturer at the University of Sydney. With Stephen Roberts, the vice-chancellor, in the chair, the committee considering his application noted that, since his appointment in 1946, John had completed six articles and eight reviews and had been the assistant editor of the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*. The committee unanimously recommended that he be promoted.<sup>470</sup>

A year later, John was indirectly involved in one of the great Australian academic scandals of the postwar period. During the 1940s, academics in Australia had gained status through contributions to the war effort. The idea of the modern Australian university was linked to nation building through research and professional expertise.<sup>471</sup> By the early 1950s, with the election of the Menzies Liberal government, there was a new campaign against communism and a call for ‘moral re-armament’. When the small University of Tasmania created its first chair in

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468 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Joan Mackie to Professor Mackie, 15 March 1949.

469 USA: A. Mackie P169/3; Joan Mackie to Professor Mackie, 27 March 1949.

470 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.

471 Forsyth 2014. See also Spaul 1982.

philosophy, Sir John Morris, the university chancellor and chief justice of Tasmania, decided that he would not appoint atheists or moral relativists. His view received support from the prominent liberal intellectual Frederic Eggleston. Born in 1875 – the same year as Alexander Mackie – and a follower of philosophic idealism in his youth, Eggleston believed in the role of the state in areas such as education. He had played a major role in the planning of the Australian National University. But the moral relativism of the early postwar years disturbed him.

Two of the four candidates for the chair were part of the linguistic analysis school based at Melbourne. The third was John Mackie; Eggleston saw John's 1946 paper on morality as a 'typical example of the superficial way in which present day students dispose of questions of such importance'. Eggleston recommended the remaining candidate, Sydney Sparkes Orr, even though Orr's head of department at Melbourne ranked him well below the other three candidates. A year after his appointment, Orr was accused of seducing a student, leading to a decade-long controversy that was fought out in the courts.<sup>472</sup>

In 1955, the year his father died, John was appointed professor of philosophy at the University of Otago in New Zealand. Located in Dunedin, on the east coast of the South Island, Otago had been established as part of the Scottish diaspora of the 1850s. Philosophy and a medical school were part of the founding traditions.<sup>473</sup> J.A. Passmore was professor of philosophy at Otago from 1950 to 1955. A graduate of the University of Sydney, Passmore had been a student of John Anderson and had taught philosophy as an assistant lecturer at Sydney from 1934 to 1949. After Otago, Passmore went on to Oxford and then to the Australian National University, where he was a reader and then a professor (appointed as reader in 1958 and retiring in 1979), becoming Australia's most published and decorated academic philosopher.

An article of John Mackie's was published in *Mind* in April 1955, while he was in Dunedin (published in Oxford, *Mind* was one of the leading international journals in philosophy for almost a century). Entitled 'Evil and omnipotence', the article considered the question of a deity and the problem of evil. John argued that the existence of evil made the idea of monotheistic religion untenable. Opposing Christians and others who held to the idea of 'free will' as a way of justifying an omnipresent god, John argued that human free will was no defence for believing in such a god: an omnipresent god would have endowed all of us with free will and moral perfection, resulting in humans choosing good in every situation. Reprinted on many occasions, 'Evil and omnipotence' became a defining statement for those who questioned the existence of a god.

John only stayed in New Zealand for four years, but he was very active at the

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472 Franklin 2003, 53–62. See also Osmond 1985.

473 Sherington and Horne 2010, 44.



university and in the local community. He was the head of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at Otago and became dean of arts in 1957. In 1958, he was elected to the Academic Board and Curriculum Committee of the proposed University of New Zealand. As at Sydney, John's activities also included radio broadcasts as a way to reach into the community.

Following John Anderson's retirement, John Mackie applied for the vacant chair of philosophy at the University of Sydney. He nominated Anderson and Professor Stout from Sydney, Professors Partridge and Passmore from the Australian National University, Professor Prior from the University of Canterbury and Dr F.G. Soper, the vice-chancellor at Otago, as his referees. He later added G.E. Hughes, professor of philosophy at the University of Wellington. All of these referees were Australasian, demonstrating John's reputation in Australia and New Zealand. His application for the chair indicated his formal academic qualifications and the breadth of his teaching experience at Sydney and Otago. His education and experience reflected his interest in a number of areas, including Greek philosophy, political and legal philosophy and the logic of ethics. He had recently been working on logic and metaphysics and had studied the 'formal analysis' of arguments used in various fields, 'especially in scientific and historical investigation, in ethics and metaphysics'. He was also interested in how to teach philosophy and in the 'linguistic movement' of contemporary philosophers. But he admitted that he had not 'undertaken any large scale research work'. Apart from the Cromer Prize of 1941, his only research was embodied in articles, discussions and reviews, of which he listed twenty-seven individual items.<sup>474</sup>

The selection committee for the chair was composed of the vice-chancellor, the deputy vice-chancellor, the chair of the Professorial Board and eight professors from the university, including Stout, who was one of John's referees. There were eight applicants for the position. John Anderson and Professor Partridge were asked to give their opinions, and, as a result, the list of applicants was reduced to three: H. Putnam, D.A.T. Gasking and John Mackie. The committee agreed to appoint John, highlighting his academic record and previous appointments, and noting that his referees spoke highly of his 'intellectual ability and of the breadth and thoroughness of his scholarship' and believed that, on 'personal and academic grounds', he was well suited for the position. John's 'main strength' lay in criticism, with one referee stating that he had 'never known a man more acute philosophically or more lucid'. The committee described John as 'a superb expositor and teacher and to be an admirable administrator' who had made a contribution to the 'whole academic life' of the University of Otago.<sup>475</sup>

So the University of Sydney had chosen one of its own who already had an

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474 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.

475 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.

outstanding record as an academic, even if he had yet to fulfil his potential as a scholar. The decision was not unanimous; two of the committee members argued that the American scholar Putnam had better qualifications. Born in Chicago in 1926, of Jewish background, Hilary Whitehall Putnam's early life was spent in France. Putnam studied philosophy at the University of Chicago and completed a PhD at Harvard in the area of logical positivism, then the dominant school of philosophy in America. He was teaching at Princeton when he applied for the chair at Sydney. Putnam would go on to have a distinguished career in America, focusing on areas such as the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mathematics and becoming an emeritus professor at Harvard.<sup>476</sup>

For the University of Sydney in the late 1950s, Putnam's background and qualifications may have been a little too exotic – they were certainly outside the British world of scholarship with which Sydney academics were familiar. The committee made enquiries about Putnam in America, but it seems that none of its members knew him. In contrast, most knew John Mackie, and his personal qualities, which continued to stand him in good stead throughout his career. The philosopher Keith Campbell later wrote that John was: 'Meticulous, courteous, industrious, with a degree of devotion to duty striking in one who held that moral values lack any objective foundation, he was universally admired as an outstandingly capable and committed philosopher's philosopher'.<sup>477</sup>

Sections of the Catholic Church in Sydney, as well as Archbishop Gough of the Sydney Anglican Diocese, condemned John's appointment, arguing that it undermined religion and posed a threat to moral standards in the community. They saw him not just continuing the views of Anderson but also expressing his own opinion that the presence of evil in the world was a clear indication that god did not exist. They began a campaign to pressure the university to ensure that there was room for more diverse opinions not only in the Department of Philosophy but also in other areas, such as psychology (which had a continuing attachment to philosophy).<sup>478</sup> The campaign died out in the early 1960s, but it may have affected John's decisions as to where his future lay.

John had returned to the University of Sydney in the wake of the Murray Committee's 1957 report. Chaired by the Scottish economist Keith Murray, who was educated at Edinburgh University and was the chair of the University Grants Committee in Britain, the Murray Committee produced a short report on the state of Australia's universities. Its major suggestion was that the Commonwealth government should prepare for the growth of the student population by creating an Australian University Grants Committee, which would make recommendations

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476 'Hilary Putnam' n.d.

477 Campbell 2010.

478 Franklin 2003, 63–110.

to the prime minister, including on the award of triennial grants for buildings and capital development.<sup>479</sup> Accepted by the Menzies Liberal government, the Murray Committee's report led to financial endowments for Australia's universities. Fifteen buildings were constructed at the University of Sydney in the 1960s, including the Fisher Library, which soon became the best resourced academic library in the southern hemisphere. In almost all departments, staff numbers increased at least fourfold.<sup>480</sup>

John was obviously aware of the potential impact of the new endowment, but he seemed less interested in the Murray Report's significance for Australia than in what Keith Murray had achieved in Britain as chair of the University Grants Committee. In eleven years, from 1952, Murray had initiated a program that involved building seven new universities in England and Scotland and influenced the construction of another in Northern Ireland. Architecturally, these institutions were 'plateglass' 'concrete brutalist constructions' on 'greenfield' sites. As educational institutions, they were 'residential' and usually collegiate, emulating Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>481</sup>

In 1961, John took his first study leave since the war, returning to Britain to see the changes occurring in higher education. Residing with his family, mainly in Oxford, he spent much of his time attending conferences, giving lectures throughout Britain and investigating new teaching methods and arrangements of courses in philosophy. He was also

much interested in the different patterns of Arts courses followed or projected in the present universities and in the new ones that are being established, and the wider questions of university organisation, development, and expansion which are being much discussed at all levels.<sup>482</sup>

In May 1963, John informed the registrar of the University of Sydney that he had been appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of York, which had been established on 500 acres to the south-east of the cathedral city of York. He indicated that he was sorry to resign the Challis chair at Sydney; he had long been attached to the university and it had always treated him with generosity. There were

personal reasons why I shall find it easier to live and to work in a smaller city and in a smaller university; also I am sorry to have to say that one rea-

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479 Committee on Australian Universities 1957, 5–6. See also Forsyth 2014, 56–58.

480 Sherington and Horne 2012, 224.

481 Anderson 2006, 136–37.

482 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie; Report on sabbatical leave, 1961.

son why I wish to go to England is that I think my children will be better suited by the system of school education there than by that of New South Wales.<sup>483</sup>

John's comments on the 'system of school education' in New South Wales were probably a reference to the Wyndham scheme of comprehensive schools, which formed much of the context of Margaret Mackie's publications. In contrast, and in the wake of the *Education Act 1944*, which had been Margaret's study, the English education system continued to divide students into different schools according to their academic abilities, measured by their performance in the Eleven Plus examination, which was based on IQ tests. In this way, the selective academic grammar schools were preserved. For an academic and intellectual such as John Mackie, who had experienced challenges to the idea of academic freedom in Sydney, the prospect of a grammar school education for his children, providing a foundation for studies in classics and philosophy at university, probably had some appeal.<sup>484</sup>

The Mackie family's move to England became permanent. After a brief period as foundation professor of philosophy at York, John became a fellow of University College at Oxford in 1967. The university had changed in the thirty years since he had studied there. Social access had widened to include more students from state grammar schools. Entry to Oxford was based more on merit than on social class. There was increasing criticism of the college system, which opponents believed fragmented the endeavours of the university.<sup>485</sup> Despite the changed environment, the move from York to Oxford allowed John to focus more on publications in his discipline.

Just as his sister had become Alexander Mackie's prime disciple in education, so John Mackie was, in some ways, returning to the field of moral philosophy that had engaged his father in the late nineteenth century. In his long career as a professional philosopher, John had developed interests in a number of areas that engaged both his academic colleagues and the general community. In 1974, he was made a fellow of the British Academy, recognising his contribution to areas such as metaethics and the philosophy of religion.

A moral sceptic since the 1940s, John had worked principally within British intellectual traditions, having no empathy for postwar American trends emphasising the philosophy of language. In five years, he produced a core of books examining major and fundamental problems. *Truth, probability and paradox*, published in 1973, was a series of essays that reflected a faith in 'fairly sim-

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483 USA: G3/187; John Leslie Mackie.

484 Mackie 2006, 220–21.

485 Halsey 1992, 158.

ple, common sense, perhaps old fashioned ways of thinking'.<sup>486</sup> *The cement of the universe*, also released in 1973, was a study of causation, relying heavily on the views of the eighteenth-century Scottish 'common sense' philosopher David Hume.

John's 1976 book *Problems from Locke* discussed the philosopher John Locke, who many see as the foundation of ideas of liberalism, liberty and toleration in Britain. John's best received book was the 1977 work *Ethics: inventing right and wrong*, which began with the bold statement 'there are no objective values'. In this book, John pointed out that his moral scepticism was formed by the 'Kantian and post-Kantian tradition of English moral philosophy'.<sup>487</sup> In his next book, he turned not so much to the traditions of English moral philosophy as to the Scottish scepticism of David Hume, who had provided the theory that morality was based not so much on reason as on sentiment.<sup>488</sup> This book was, in some ways, a return to the world of the Scottish Enlightenment that had formed much of Alexander Mackie's worldview.

John's sustained analysis of moral theory was a tour de force, elevating him to a highly significant intellectual not just in Britain but across the transatlantic world. Some in Britain saw his strength as 'his sympathy, his faith in common sense, and the shining clarity of his thinking'. His writing was 'fluent and unpretentiously lucid; it puts everything in the open'. John's approach was more at home with analysing Locke and Hume than the philosophy of continental Europe.<sup>489</sup> Australian philosophers might suggest that John Mackie had adapted John Anderson's view of 'realism, and produced, through a rigorous analysis, a theory of morality based on empiricism'.<sup>490</sup> No one recognised that much of what John had learned about philosophy and philosophical approaches might have begun with his father and mother at Drumgrain School in the 1920s.

John Mackie died of cancer in 1981. Two of his children, Penelope and David, have become philosophers in Britain and another daughter teaches at Rice University in Texas. The Mackie family's association with Australia has not been revived.

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486 McDowell 2004.

487 J.L. Mackie 1977, 15, 46.

488 Mackie 1980.

489 McDowell 2004.

490 Menzies 2012.

# Epilogue

Alexander Mackie grew up in Edinburgh at the end of the nineteenth century, when long-established Scottish educational traditions were being reframed. Since the Reformation, Scottish parishes and schools had been part of a public education system linked to the universities. Teachers in the parishes, called ‘dominies’, were part of this system, helping to identify pupils of talent who would go on to university. Social and demographic changes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including increasing urbanisation, created a demand for education among the middle class and led to calls for the provision of mass schooling for the general population. Teaching was increasingly recognised as a profession based on extended education and training. Education emerged as an academic discipline, underpinned by both theory and practice, and drawing not only on Scottish traditions but also on the transnational world of research that was developing in Europe and North America.

Mackie was part of an early generation of Scottish academics who were committed to promoting education as an academic discipline that provided a foundation for the teaching profession. In his studies at the University of Edinburgh, Mackie’s academic supervisors emphasised the significance of education as an area of liberal enquiry. Philosophic idealism – which was drawn, in part, from German philosophic traditions – was an early foundation of the academic discipline of education. Mackie began his university teaching career in Wales. Through networks of Empire, he soon became part of the Scottish academic diaspora, arriving in Australia in 1906.

As the inaugural principal of Sydney Teachers’ College, Mackie sought to shape teacher education and training in New South Wales to reflect what he had known in Edinburgh. Of particular significance was the close association between the college and the University of Sydney, created in part by Mackie’s role as both college principal and university professor. For more than a decade, Mackie’s alliance with Peter Board, the director of education, and Francis Anderson, the Challis professor of philosophy at the University of Sydney, sustained and consolidated his efforts. Mackie promoted the academic discipline of education by

appointing staff committed to both teaching and research. By the early 1920s, the status of education at Sydney Teachers' College and the University of Sydney was celebrated across the Empire – these institutions provided a model for the future of teacher education.

During the interwar years, Mackie strove to maintain the study of education as an academic discipline despite increasing antagonism and indifference. S.H. Smith, who succeeded Peter Board as director of education, had little sympathy for Mackie's views, preferring a more traditional approach to teacher training that focused on teaching practice, in accordance with the old pupil teacher system. Mackie continued to defend Sydney Teachers' College's position as an autonomous institution within the University of Sydney. Smith strove to humiliate Mackie personally and to assert bureaucratic control over the college's curriculum and students. Within the university, Mackie lost an ally when Professor Anderson retired.

Responding to these changes, Mackie turned to the general public to gain support for the college. He drew on ideas from overseas – particularly American progressivism. Whereas his education in Scotland had emphasised idealism and the role of the state, Mackie now looked to the teaching profession to bring about change. By the late 1930s, organisations such as the New Education Fellowship were providing models of change involving academics, teachers and community organisations.

Changes in Mackie's academic life were paralleled by the emergence of academic values within his family. In raising their children, Alexander and Annie Mackie initially embraced progressive methods, applied through homeschooling. Alexander and Annie retained faith in formal academic subjects and in the idea of academic merit that had been ingrained in their own school and university educations. Significantly, they avoided sending their children to state schools, even though state high schools in New South Wales were the most successful in the state administered exams in the 1930s. Alexander and Annie chose to enrol Margaret at Abbotsleigh and John at Knox, in part because of the schools' proximity to their home, but also because these schools were academic in orientation and non-state in governance, avoiding the centralised state bureaucracy that had hampered Alexander as college principal.

Alexander and Annie's academic values were, in part, passed on to the next generation, albeit in new contexts. At the University of Sydney, Margaret and John came under the influence of John Anderson, who presented himself as an example of the academic as sceptic and critic. But in some ways, they followed the approach to academic life that their father represented – a continuing commitment to progressive forms of teaching and to research. Following their father's example, both Margaret and John chose to pursue philosophy.

Attending the University of Oxford opened up opportunities for academic careers, although Margaret's and John's experiences at the university were very

different. As a woman, Margaret found her time at Oxford difficult. She returned to Australia and focused on many of her father's aims, studying the philosophy and practice of teacher education. In contrast, his years at Oxford helped to shape John as a professional philosopher. His career followed a transnational path, including professorial appointments in Australasia and Britain and culminating in a chair at Oxford, where he achieved international prominence through his publications on moral education.

The academic lives of Alexander Mackie and his family spanned almost a century, from the 1890s to the 1980s, across universities and colleges in Britain and the Empire. Within this context, the Mackie family demonstrated certain values that they saw as the foundation of academic life; these included autonomy, independence and freedom of expression. In different ways, Alexander, Annie, Margaret and John fought hard to protect these values. Their lives still offer lessons for academics in the 'mass universities' that have emerged in the twenty-first century.



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