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PICNICS IN NEW ZEALAND
DURING THE LATE NINETEENTH
AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES:
AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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May you all experience many enjoyable picnics.

Abbreviations

ATL Alexander Turnbull Library.

LC no Listening copy number.

Neg no Negative number.

NZJH *New Zealand Journal of History.*

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Introduction

Three Interpretations

[A] 'Great Day' was the Annual School Picnic to Waipara Beach or as it was called, 'The Rocks'. It was organised by the school committee. Everyone went there in carts or drays. Sometimes they let the children drive the horses. The farm people usually had their own traps and could pile in all the family. But some children just sat on the straw in the drays and enjoyed jolting along. At the beach there were races, sports, prizes and paddling in the sea. There were buns and soft drinks of course, but "no beer was permitted" our father said. Everyone seemed to eat all the time as each family had brought a huge hamper of food, chicken pies, pork pies, steak and kidney pies, as well as apple or rhubarb pies and cakes.

What with running races, building sand castles and climbing rocks, everyone was hot and tired when four o'clock came and the horses were all standing shaking their harness and wanting to get away to their stables. Most little kids were tired and drowsy and were soon asleep on the straw in the drays or wagons. Next day I always had a peeling nose although I had been careful to keep my sunbonnet on.¹

The turn of the century school picnics that Gwendolen Somerset went to with her family share features in common with most other family and community picnics. It was a regular event, held annually; it was eagerly anticipated in the weeks and days beforehand. It was held away from the town centre, the picnickers had to travel out to the beach. The event required a great deal of organisation; in this case it was a school committee who was responsible for the preparation and running of the picnic. The

¹ Gwendolen Somerset, *Sunshine and Shadow* (Auckland, 1988), p. 55.

picnic sanctioned extraordinary behaviour. Some children were allowed to act as adults and drive the drays or traps. In addition, the children, and sometimes the adults, were allowed the freedom to behave in a spontaneous and unreserved manner by playing games and joking around. There was plenty to do on the picnic: organised games, building a sandcastle, snoozing, or a bit of private exploring. There was also an abundance of food and drink. The big day usually ended in time for everyone to be home before nightfall.

This thesis studies the popular New Zealand institution of the picnic during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It will look at all kinds of Pakeha picnics from around New Zealand, although, from necessity, sources have been concentrated on the North Island. Picnics were events held by family and friends, community groups and, sometimes, entire communities. In the days before the development of leisure facilities, they were events that could be held by any community, requiring only an open space for spreading the food out and playing games. Picnics were significant events in people's lives providing them with many hours of enjoyment through anticipating the picnic, participating in the event itself and in remembering them in the following years.

Sources are unfortunately rather vague on the thousands of details that made up the ordinary picnic. They are largely impressionistic and are scattered throughout newspaper reports, local histories, personal letters and journals, and recollections, both oral and written. The most abundant evidence of picnics in New Zealand are photographs and these present their own particular problems as sources. A visual representation of a picnic party gives only a small portion of the total experience of the picnic. Records indicating the names of the picnickers, who they were, where they were or when the photograph was taken very often do not accompany the photograph. Photographs, moreover, are no different from all other historical sources, which require the historian to impose meanings upon them. Unlike Keith Sinclair, who claimed that the data and themes he had uncovered in his search for a Pakeha national identity displayed a pattern of "historical reality", I cannot assert that my sources speak for

themselves.¹ Instead, this study will consciously approach picnics in a number of different ways. In order to advance our understanding of picnics it will subject the evidence gathered from sources to various interpretations (some historical, some sociological, some anthropological) made of different, if possibly related, forms of behaviour.

Three different interpretations of the significance and meaning of picnics will be explored. The first chapter will look at picnics as a form of leisure. It will consider picnics in the light of the changing patterns and perceptions of leisure in the western world from ancient times until the twentieth century. In New Zealand, leisure activities were initially based around the pioneering experiences of the settlers but as the settler society became more organised and social networks developed so, too, leisure became more organised and formalised. The picnic reflected this trend. The picnic was a Victorian invention, transported by British settlers to New Zealand. It had three different forms. One was the family picnic, where nuclear or extended families and friends socialised together. Often these picnics were located at favourite, nearby spots. The Taylor family from Wellington picnicked at the local beach at the turn of the century:

[D]uring the week, my mother and little grandmother who stayed with us a lot, would pack baskets of food and we would walk down to Evans Bay to have a picnic on the beach, a few hundred yards along from where the Post Office stands now, there were plenty of sheltered places and the long beach was all fine sand and not very deep, we gathered huge quantities of cockles and boiled them in the Billy or cooked them on a piece of flat iron over a fire, we also caught flounders on the sandy floor of the bay, swam and generally got very

¹ Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity* (Wellington, 1986), p. x.

sunburned and then we walked home happy but very tired.¹

There was also the holiday picnic, where people went on day excursions while staying away from home. People were very likely holidaying with members of their immediate family and would picnic with strangers, the other tourists. The third type of picnic was the large community picnic comprising the members of various organisations, such as firms, churches, unions, clubs, and Sunday schools. A great variety of different groups held annual, or more frequent, picnics. Sometimes entire communities gathered at a picnic, although this was more usual in rural areas.

All picnics, but especially the larger community group picnics, required a great deal of preparation and organisation. Fundraising often had to be undertaken weeks, sometimes months, in advance. A location had to be organised. The spot had to be close enough to be accessible by carriage, train, tram or car, but far enough away from home to seem exotic to the picnickers. Food also had to be prepared the day before, involving a lot of work for the responsible women. At the picnic itself games and entertainment had to be organised and supervised. Although they were leisure activities, picnics required a great deal of work.

The second interpretation of picnics considers the events as rituals which reinforced existing community groups and communities. This interpretation will be informed by anthropological studies of other rituals: the pilgrimage and the carnival. As a ritual, the picnic can be divided up into three phases. In the first phase, the picnickers signalled the beginning of the ritual through the rites of the procession and the masquerade. In the second phase there was a dissolution of order. Role reversals occurred. Picnickers had the freedom to act out informal behaviour. Adults acted like children and children briefly pretended to be both adults and barbarians. Inversions of

¹ Charles William Taylor, 'Tales of Early Kilburnie', MS-Papers-3794, ATL, p. 6.

gender and class roles also occurred. Picnics fostered a feeling of unity and solidarity, strengthening already-existing networks of association. The group solidarity gained on the picnic had the potential to challenge the ordered society by seeking political change. But generally this did not occur, because the third and final phase was the restoration of order. The community was fortified and invigorated because social tensions had been temporarily eased.

The final interpretation considers picnics in relation to a spectrum of colonisation. At one end of the spectrum, the picnic had a transformatory effect on the land. It altered the land from a wilderness to a leisure landscape. It rendered the bush harmless through 'looting it', lighting fires and eating in it. Pakeha picnics were acts of colonisation because they used any site, regardless of the appropriateness, as a picnicking spot; Pakeha often picnicked at wahi tapu sites. In addition, Pakeha tamed the land by taking photographs while out picnicking. Although they perceived the bush as a dangerous and disordered place that threatened their physical and moral safety, they created safe spaces for themselves by picnicking within it. Gradually they destroyed the bush; at the same time, their attitudes towards the land changed. They turned it into landscape. They acquired knowledge about it which, in turn, influenced and inspired the creation of their cultural identity. At the other end of the spectrum, the threat of the bush diminished entirely at the park. A picnic in the park was a very safe experience. Colonisation was complete, and successful at minimising the power of the bush to threaten.

This thesis will analyse the various acts involved in picnicking in the light of these varied interpretations. It will seek to link the experience of picnics with what they might mean for individuals, the Pakeha community and Pakeha culture generally. It will conclude by evaluating the effectiveness of the various interpretations and by measuring their explanatory value and usefulness.



Plate 1

Palmerston North Public Library Photographic Collection
PIC 21

The Butchers' Union picnic procession, Palmerston North, 1898. The butchers and their families parade through the Square before a small audience of interested boys and adults. The leader of the procession wears an animal-head mask, while the other participants' horses and carriages are decked out in festive garlands. The Butchers' Union held regular annual picnics at locations which included Ashhurst Domain and Foxton Beach.

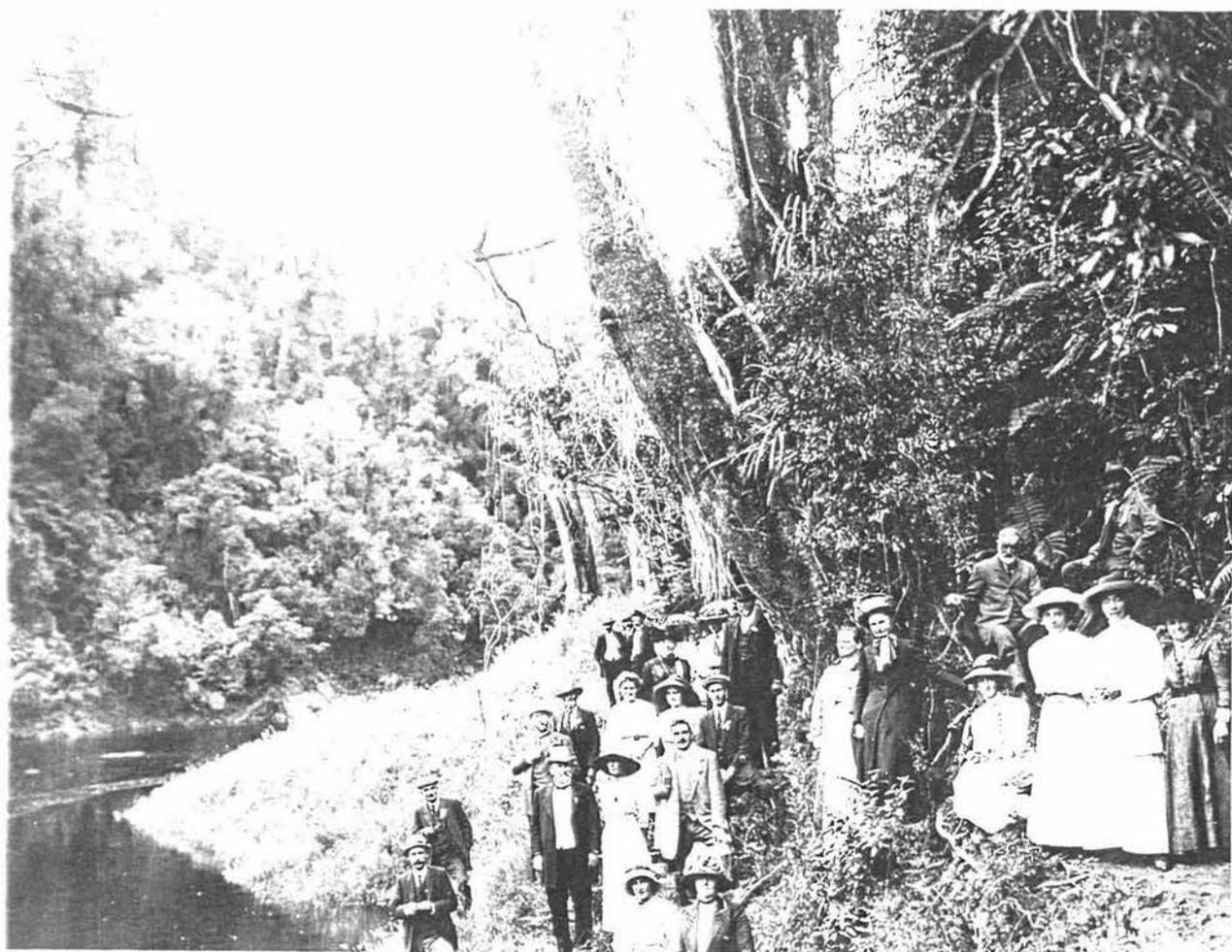


Plate 2

Palmerston North Public Library Photographic Collection
PIC 6

A picnic on the banks of the Tiritea Stream, hosted by the mayor of Palmerston North J.A.Nash, c1910. Nash is standing in the centre without a hat. This photograph is part of a larger panoramic shot of the stream surrounded by native bush. The bush, about three miles from Palmerston North and across the Manawatu River which bounded the city on the south side, was a popular location for picnics.

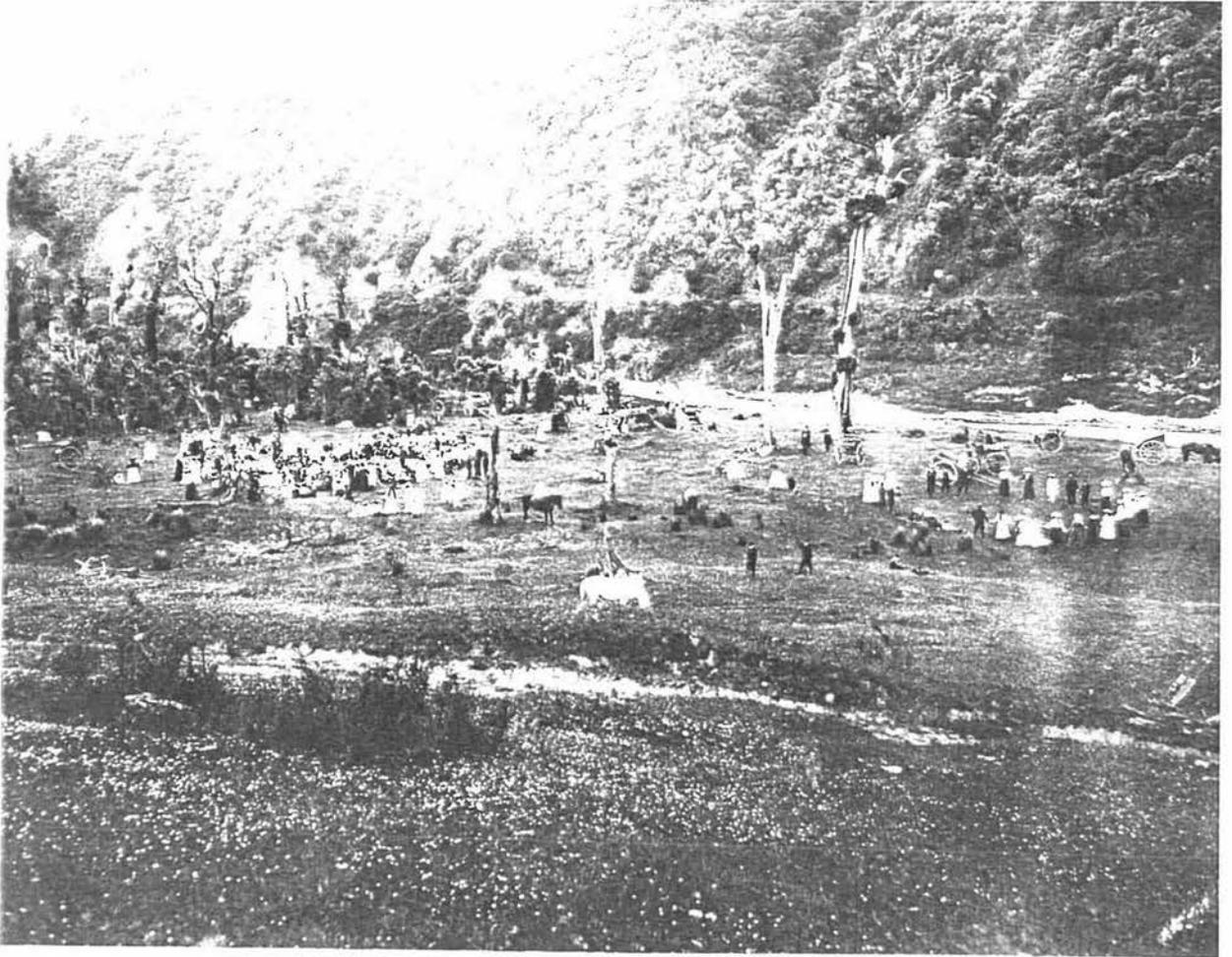


Plate 3

Palmerston North Public Library Photographic Collection
PIC 19

A picnic on the banks of the Manawatu River by the Ballance Bridge, c1906-1910. This was a very popular location for picnics because of the large flat open space suitable for games, such as the ones being played here. The bridge is located between Palmerston North and Woodville. This photograph looks like a school or Sunday school picnic. The older children play a game by themselves in a ring on the right hand side of the picture; while a larger group of younger children have a game going on the left hand side. There are a few children who are engaged in activities of their own and who are not part of the organised games, notably the two or three children by the white horse in the centre of the photograph. These picnickers have come in carriages, but other picnicking parties came to the Manawatu Gorge in chartered trains. The railway line is visible in the background.



Plate 4

Hardinge Collection

ATL

Neg no: 55983 1/2

A picnic at Greytown, c1900. Open spaces were required not only for the games. Parking space was also a consideration. Here the families and individuals have all made their own way to the picnicking spot -- a remnant of bush.



Plate 5

Collection of Mrs Aileen Emanuel
Palmerston North

Wanganui United Sunday schools picnic, Matarawa Valley, c1908-1912. Adult women had permission to play at the picnic. The women in this photograph are encumbered by ties around their legs. They are about to engage in some strenuous exercise that could possibly do some damage to their white clothes. A man supervises the start of the race.



Plate 6

Eastcott Collection
ATL
Neg no: G94795 1/2

An intimate family picnic, probably in Auckland, c1900. This photograph gives a good indication of the kind of fare that was typically served up at the family picnic. There are three different types of cake: fruit, iced and jam slice cake. Also on the menu are scones and sandwiches, with fruit -- apples and pears -- for afters. The picnickers also have on hand everything they need for making tea: a billy, a teapot, milk and cups.



Plate 7

Palmerston North Public Library Photographic Collection
PIC 12

A picnic of Palmerston North residents at the Manawatu Gorge, 1907. These picnickers have an abundance of different food including, sandwiches, cake, fruit and jellies. The picnickers have chosen a comparatively wild spot in which to eat; the bush overhangs them and they have laid their tablecloth out over the long grass.



Plate 8

Telsa Collection
ATL
Neg no: G16505 1/1

A Fire Brigade picnic, location and date unknown. This is an all-male gathering, which explains the presence of a cask and a flagon of beer. All-male picnics would have encouraged a higher degree of informality than would normally have been tolerated, which is evident in the state of undress that several of the men are in. It is very unusual to see men without their shoes and jackets at a mixed picnic. This group may have had another picnic or social occasion to which their spouses and children were invited. This may simply be an all-male gathering because most of these young men were single.

Chapter One

Picnics as a Form of Leisure

As a girl, Marion Ruddock went to a picnic with her young friend Katherine Mansfield and her family. The appointed day was a "bright and clear" Monday in 1901. They caught the steamer from Wellington across to Days Bay. The trip took half an hour, during which the children imagined the sailing ships were actually pirate ships. The first thing they did after they arrived at the pier was to go down to the beach for a swim. There were no changing sheds, so they took turns undressing under Aunt Belle's sunshade. "It was a novelty to swim without the restrictions of the Thorndon Baths, and with a whoop we raced for the water with cries of 'First in' and squeals from Katie". They practised floating, diving for white shells, side strokes, back strokes and dog paddle, "free for once from the roars of the instructor."¹ "Refreshed and hungry" they went in search of a suitable picnicking spot, following a creek up the hill until they came to a waterfall and pool. There they lit a fire and boiled the billy for tea. Sandwiches and plum cake were unpacked and eaten. After putting out the fire, the children went exploring with strict instructions not to wander off into the bush. The adults stayed behind to snooze and pick flowers. The girls followed the creek up the hillside; stopping to wade in the little pools they had discovered. It was there that they saw a kiwi, or thought they did; when they returned to the picnic spot Aunt Belle told them it was just a woodhen. Finally the picnic baskets were packed up and the family headed home on the five o'clock steamer.²

Riddock's account is an excellent example of the typical New Zealand picnic. It provides a description of the type of group that picnicked, their mode of transportation, the games they played, the location of the picnic spot, the food and their explorations. These are all elements of the picnic that will be examined in this chapter, which will also attempt to understand the practice of

⁴ Marion Ruddock, 'Incidents in the Life of Katherine Mansfield', MS-Papers-1339, Alexander Turnbull Library, pp. 45-47.

² Ruddock, pp. 48-52.

picnicking by examining it as an aspect of leisure. Picnics became popular in Europe and the United States after the industrial revolution. In New Zealand too, as society became more settled, more highly organised and more urban, picnics became popular events for the burgeoning numbers of community groups. New Zealanders had increasingly more opportunities to picnic as holidays for paid workers became more frequent. The development of transportation networks, particularly railways, increased people's range of picnicking locations. The picnics themselves, whether they were relatively small family affairs or large community events, required a great deal of preparation and organisation. Location, transport, food, drink and entertainments all occupied the organisers' minds. People obviously enjoyed picnicking immensely for, by the turn of the century, picnics were increasingly popular forms of entertainment.

Leisure is "a concept which continues to be difficult to describe and interpret comprehensively."¹ 'Leisure' is defined in relation to two things: time and activity. Leisure time is "free time, spare time, uncommitted time, discretionary time, choosing time", it is the time left over after work and other obligations are finished with.² Sociologist Joffre Dumazedier has analysed leisure activities and discerned four characteristics. Firstly, leisure must be liberating, it must free the participant from occupational, family and social obligations. Secondly, leisure must be disinterested, it cannot serve any material or social end. Thirdly, Dumazedier characterises leisure as basically hedonistic because it is ultimately a search for satisfaction. Lastly, leisure is personal, it frees the individual from physical or nervous strains; it also frees the individual from the daily boredom of repetition and it enables the individual to escape the stereotypes imposed by the operation of basic institutions and frees their creative powers, "whether to conform with the dominant values of civilisation or to challenge them."³

¹ Harvey C. Perkins and Grant Cushman (eds), *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism* (Auckland, 1993), p. xi.

² Byron Dare, George Welton and William Coe, *Concepts of Leisure in Western Thought: a Critical and Historical Analysis* (Duduke, 1987), p. xix.

³ Dare et al, p. xix.

Picnics fit partly within these defining features. The events did not entirely free individuals from their obligations. Parents, teachers and older children still had to supervise young children. Women were still responsible for the food and men for the billy. Vicars or elders still had to organise the planning of the picnic. People were still in charge of the games and the transport. However, there were periods of time on the picnic when even the most involved organiser had time to sit back, relax and savour the liberation they felt from ordinary, everyday social, family and occupational obligations. Since normal hierarchies of the company or community group were transported to the picnic it is unlikely that the events were entirely free from social gain, but it shall be demonstrated in Chapter 2 that these hierarchies were temporarily modified, even inverted, at the picnic. Picnickers, particularly the fleet of foot, certainly had the opportunity for material gain at picnics as substantial prizes were sometimes given out to the winners of races. At the 1890 picnic of the Tailoresses' Union in Dunedin, for example, a first, second and third prize was awarded for eighteen different races. The games included a "ladies' tug of war", a "pressers' obstacle race", a "parliamentary candidates' race" as well as races and skipping rope competitions for women and girls. The prizes ranged from three yards of Mosgiel tweed to books and biscuits.¹ People did not solely attend the picnic because of the prizes, however. There were other benefits. The temporary freedom from everyday concerns and worries, for example, or the community solidarity felt as a result of the event. Picnics were hedonistic activities even though there always existed some inhibitors which prevented people having too good a time. Many people seem consistently to recall how much they loved picnics, particularly as children.² Picnics also correspond to Dumazedier's last point, individuals certainly had a great deal of freedom on a picnic. Like the children enjoying a swim before their picnic lunch -- "free for once from the roars of the instructor" -- other picnickers had freedom from

¹ Bert Roth and Janny Hammond, *Toil and Trouble: the Struggle for a Better Life in New Zealand* (Auckland, 1981), p. 31.

² See, for example, Joy Vickers, *Early Brooklyn* (Wellington, 1983), p. 44.

their normal cares and responsibilities.¹ Picnickers may have been free of some obligations, but they were never entirely free to please themselves and pursue pleasure. They were always subject to some constraints.

Picnics were an important form of leisure. Definitions of 'leisure' or 'recreation' have changed over time. The Western concept of leisure is derived from the Classical world of the Greeks and Romans. The Greeks used several different terms. They saw leisure as the state of being free from the necessity of work. It was a quiet, peaceful time without distractions. It involved the cultivation of the mind through the contemplation of music or poetry. This kind of leisure had a serious side, the meditative understanding of the nature of truth -- it was the goal of life. Quite different from work and leisure, were amusements and recreation. The Romans, in contrast, had a work-non-work dichotomy. 'Otium', vacation or retirement, depended on the existence of 'negotium' or work. Leisure lost its contemplative element and for the Romans became fused with amusements and recreation.² The Greek attitude that leisure was the most important human activity, "enabling the pursuit of human potential" was sustained through the middle ages but was challenged during the Reformation.³ The sixteenth century writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin argued that the only human potential was the glorification of God. Frugality, diligence, thrift and sobriety were seen as the characteristics that reflected morality and virtue. In the next century John Locke "conceived human potential as actualized through labor and accumulation" and thus valued work over leisure.⁴ So, from being a necessary and valued part of life, leisure became merely an auxiliary part, time which was left over after the much more important work was finished.

Recreation underwent a profound change in the Western world during the nineteenth century as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Medieval forms of leisure that still lingered were radically changed, replaced by mass recreation

¹ Ruddock, p. 47.

² Dare et al, pp. xvii-xix.

³ Dare et al, p. 116.

⁴ Dare et al, p. 116.

developed for the urban environment. During the eighteenth century, leisure activities had become much more secular; a trend which was apparent in the changes in customary holidays in the United Kingdom. The annual parish feast or wake, for example, celebrated the anniversary of the church's dedication on or about the feast day of the saint to whom the church was dedicated had, by the eighteenth century, become secular carnivals with eating, drinking, dancing, sporting contests and entertainments.¹

Customary recreational spaces were under threat from enclosures and increased urban growth. During the early nineteenth century the large numbers of medieval customary holidays disappeared forever. Although the traditional holiday seasons had been Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, with some local holidays, Sundays and Christmas were the only holidays allowed by industry. Bank holidays also show the decreased holiday time for workers. The Bank of England closed for forty seven days in 1761, forty in 1825, eighteen in 1830 and only four in 1834.² There was intensified criticism of working class leisure activities.

Manual and factory workers were criticised by clergy and members of the merchant classes for their 'idleness' and 'frivolity'. This was in part due to the puritan regard for regularity, orderliness, sobriety and discipline, coupled with a suspicion of worldly pleasures. In 1802 one writer argued that "[g]reat writers had placed the summit of human happiness, not in picnics, but in the cottage of the peasant, surrounded by his smiling family. This was the happiness, and this the recreation, varied and combined with manly exercises abroad, which belonged naturally to people of England."³ Picnics were disapproved of because, as at carnivals and wakes, the individuals who took part in them were believed to lack the discipline expected of the moral person. But recreation was also seen as an impediment to productive labour.

Churchmen and Sabbatarians who in some ways sought to have leisure return to the Greek ideal and be spiritually uplifting were, however, fighting a losing battle. Although they had been successful in having the Crystal Palace reclosed on Sundays in

¹ Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 18-19.

² J.A.R. Plimlott, *Recreations* (London, 1968), p. 39.

³ Wilberforce in Malcolmson, p. 104.

1852 and worked hard to oppose the spread of the 'Continental Sunday', Sabbatarian groups such as the National Sunday League or the Lord's Day Observance Society were unable to police suburban croquet and tennis lawns and the thousands of young people taking part in bicycling trips out into the country from the late 1880s.¹

A similar metamorphosis occurred in the United States at the same time. Hand in hand with the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution went stricter working hours. As more people shifted from rural work to urban factory jobs their leisure activities changed. In North America this was expressed in the 'Gospel of Work' as industry exploited the huge resources of the continent to build up economic and political independence.² Leisure, interpreted as 'idleness', came to be tied to immorality and churches supported long hours of labour for the sake of wage-earners' welfare. The liberalism of the eighteenth century was forgotten and Sabbath observances were revived.³ Sunday sports, games and travel were not permitted in some parts of the United States. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, prompted in part by increased prosperity, there was a nation-wide cultural re-awakening. Organisations such as unions and churches initially pushed for a reduction in working hours in order that wage-earners might 'improve' themselves; but by the second half of the nineteenth century 'popular' leisure activities flourished as workers had more time and money to travel, holiday and amuse themselves.⁴ The growth in urban populations, supported by increased manufacturing, initially restricted working people's opportunity for leisure; however, increased prosperity during the latter part of the nineteenth century resulted in decreased working hours which, in turn, led to an expansion of recreational opportunities.

By the end of the nineteenth century people in both Britain and the United States had a diverse range of leisure opportunities open to them. Holiday hours increased, prompted in part by

¹ Pimlott, p. 41.

² Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), p. 86.

³ Dulles, pp. 86, 90.

⁴ Dulles, pp. 91-92.

raised prosperity and by pressure exerted by unions and humanitarian groups working on behalf of women and children employed in industry. The sixty hour working week arrived in Britain in the 1860s and 1870s with its weekly half holiday. The 'weekend' was a term in use by 1878. At the same time, a fortnight holiday became common in many offices. In the Lancashire cotton towns factories closed for day holidays and thousands went on excursions to holiday resorts. Shorter working hours, longer holidays and better communications and transport led to the development of a flourishing leisure industry. People could attend music halls, pantomimes, whist drives, freak shows, working men's clubs, circuses and christy minstrels. There were also hurdy-gurdies, billiard halls, wax works, reading circles, sewing bees, betting dens, rat-killing matches and picnics, all offering entertainment and recreation during leisure hours.¹ The Victorian age also saw the first major developments of modern tourism. In 1845 Thomas Cook began his excursion business mainly to the coast but extended to Continental tours a decade later. Of the thousands who boarded an excursion train at Whitsuntide in 1845, the Manchester Guardian wrote:

The birth of this new and cheap means of transit is as if the wings of the wind have been given for a week to the closely confined operative, the hard-working mechanic, and the counter-riveted shopkeeper. They enjoy the needful relaxation from the toil or care and confinement of business; they see new scenes and acquire new tastes for the beautiful in nature as, whirled along by the steam-car, they rush 'forth to fresh fields, and pastures new.'²

The traditional carnival week had been replaced by the holiday away from home. The journey away from home, which was central to the picnic, had become a part of the leisure experience.

Pakeha leisure in New Zealand reflected a similar development to Britain and the United States. Changes in leisure patterns mirrored social change which began to occur from the

¹ Pimlott, pp. 40, 42.

² Pimlott, p. 43.

late nineteenth century and involved the movement of the population into the expanding towns and cities.¹ By the 1890s 28% of the Pakeha population lived in the four main centres of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Only about 1% of the Pakeha population lived in towns with populations of over eight thousand. This figure rapidly increased so that by the mid 1920s 12.5% of Pakeha lived in large towns. The total percentage of Pakeha living in urban areas at this time was just over 49%.² Between the 1870s and the 1920s "a new society was emerging characterised by towns and cities, bureaucracy , specialisation, and organisation. The social structure became more complex, the division of labour more intricate, the distinction between rural and urban more obvious."³ Leisure also became more organised.

Historians of leisure have seen recreation in New Zealand as beginning with activities grounded in the 'frontier', engaged in by the predominantly male population that reflected values associated with colonisation. In many areas of settlement the population was predominantly male, leisure activities for men included drinking, smoking, gambling and whoring.⁴ Women's pastimes often revolved around the needs of their families, involving sewing, weaving, cooking and decorating.⁵ Special recreational events developed locally that reflected the lifestyle of the settlers: curling and skating in the South, shooting in bush areas, axe-chopping competitions in cleared areas, boating and boxing on the West Coast.⁶ The qualities and skills that were valued in work were also valued in leisure, skills from the farm and bush were adapted to competition, celebration and entertainment. Athleticism and sport, which valued discipline,

¹ Claire Toynbee, *Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand, 1900-1930* (Wellington, 1995), pp. 21-22.

² Erik Olssen, 'Towards a New Society', *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Ed. by W.H.Oliver and B.R.Williams (Wellington, 1981), p. 254.

³ Olssen, p. 250.

⁴ Bob Gidlow, Harvey Perkins, Grant Cushman and Clare Simpson, 'Leisure', *New Zealand Society: a Sociological Introduction*, Ed. by Paul Spoonley, David Pearson and Ian Shirley (Palmerston North, 1990), p. 242.

⁵ Pip Lynch and Clare Simpson, 'Gender and Leisure', *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism*, Ed. by Harvey C.Perkins and Grant Cushman (Auckland, 1993), p. 59.

⁶ J.R.Barclay, 'An Analysis of Trends in New Zealand Sport from 1840 to 1900', BA (Hons) research exercise (Massey University, 1977), p. 31.

strength and resilience, were respected over art as leisure activities.¹ People on the 'frontier' were generally rather isolated from other settlements or families so had to make their own entertainment which included family picnics, music making and parlour games.² Team games during this time took place in any available space with a wide variety in team members and game rules.

After that initial period, recreation became much more settled, like the Pakeha population. Organised recreational bodies and sporting activities developed which mirrored the new kind of structured society which evolved from the 1870s. The organisation of city life changed the spontaneous and informal form of country recreation to match the structured lifestyle of the urban population. Organised sports were introduced into schools. Sports clubs were formed with uniforms and special sporting outfits. An administrative structure was created around sports and sport positions, equipment and facilities became more specialised.³ This was the era of mass recreation at beaches, racecourses, agricultural and pastoral shows, industrial fairs, exhibitions and openings. There was a growth in team sports and clubs were formed on the basis of locality, workplace or school membership. Businesses organised annual excursions for employees; churches, trade unions, friendly societies and other community groups also held social events, such as picnics for their members. The popularity of social occasions was a reflection of the lack of facilities available for individual recreation. When time off from work was limited, travel was expensive and few people could afford their own sporting equipment one-off community festivities were very popular.⁴ Community and to a lesser extent private picnics were part of this move towards more organised forms of leisure.

¹ Allan Laider and Grant Cushman, 'Leisure Participation in New Zealand', *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism*, Ed. by Harvey C.Perkins and Grant Cushman (Auckland, 1993), p. 1.

² James Watson, 'The History of Leisure, Recreation and Tourism in New Zealand', *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism*, Ed. by Harvey C.Perkins and Grant Cushman (Auckland, 1993), p. 17.

³ Rosemary Gardiner and Scott A.G.M.Crawford, 'A Time to Play: the Impact of Industrialisation on New Zealand Recreation and Sport 1840-1900', *New Zealand Legacy*, 1:2 (1989), pp. 20-22.

⁴ Watson, p. 21.

The New Zealand picnic was not an indigenous event, it originated from the British or European picnic. Eating outdoors became particularly popular in Britain during the Victorian era after a change in attitude towards the outdoors in general. Influenced by Jean Jacques Rousseau's 'cult of nature' and the Romantic poets, the English developed a taste for wild and picturesque scenery and with it a liking for outdoor meals. Picnics became fashionable at the same time as mountains, lakes and the 'wilderness'.¹

The picnic itself developed in the first decades of the nineteenth century, although its origins had been earlier. A 1575 woodcut entitled 'An Assembly in the Presence of Queen Elizabeth', for example, shows the Queen seated on the ground under a tree with people grouped around her eating and drinking. A cloth is laid out before them on which is a hamper of cooked chickens and some casks.² Although this may have merely been a meal outside, it is so similar to a picnic it can be called one. The more modern picnic was a Victorian invention, the term 'Pic Nic' or 'Pic Nick' was given to an alfresco meal. Derived from the French, 'pique-nique' in the eighteenth century, the juxtaposed syllables were first used to describe any number of different things. A Picnic Club, which had a slightly improper reputation, performed an assortment of theatricals, charades and music for a private audience. A 1802 picnic supper recorded in the *Times* was made up of a variety of dishes; each of the 'subscribers' received a number which in turn was linked to a dish which they had to provide.³ The picnic eventually evolved into a fashionable outdoor party where each of the guests contributed a share of the provisions.⁴ Picnics gained in popularity during the nineteenth century and were often held in conjunction with other events such as race meetings, agricultural shows, sports days and regattas, a pattern which was repeated in New Zealand. Picnics were also combined with bird watching, collecting (shells, flowers, fossils and rocks), sketching, rowing, pony trekking and gathering

¹ Claudia Roden, *Picnic: the Complete Guide to Outdoor Food* (London, 1981), p. 57.

² From Turberville's *The Noble Art of Venerie* (1575) in Plimlott, plate 36.

³ Roden, pp. 57-58.

⁴ *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* in Plimlott, p. 71.

berries.¹ Despite sometimes occupying a marginal position in wider social occasions, picnics were frequently held as a main social event.

In Britain picnics became elaborately constructed and prepared for social events with some commercial benefits. Menus were frequently varied and generous. Specialist food stores such as Harrods sold hampers, traditional wicker baskets, for the picnic. They contained food such as pies (ham and chicken, game and pork), cold meats (chicken, ham and beef), salads, cheeses, biscuits, rolls and butter, fresh fruit, fruit salad and, of course, strawberries and cream. Condiments, champagne, wine or fruit juices, cutlery, plates, glasses, table napkins and a corkscrew were also included. For the more modestly provided for, household management books provided menus and recipes for picnic meals created at home. In Mrs Beeton's book of household management a picnic menu for forty people involved a staggering amount of food, thirty four different varieties including twelve different sorts of meat. Tea was included in preference to coffee which was not thought suitable for a picnic because it was so difficult to make. *The Girl's Own Paper* (1880) offered hints on how to pack a picnic basket, recommending that the tablecloth, knives and forks be placed on top of the first basket to be unpacked. As well, there were suggestions on the aesthetics and practicalities of the picnic food. "Cabbage leaves pack well around cool dishes, and contrast well with the pure white of the table napkins... Butter should be moulded into balls, and parsley taken to garnish it after being set out."² Writers could become quite enraptured about the amount of planning required to make a satisfactory picnic. Singing the praises of the sole "dear old lady" who is to attend the best kind of picnic, one writer urged 'his' audience to "[o]bserve her little bottle of cayenne pepper! Mark each individual cruet as it gleams forth from its separate receptacle! Look at the salt box! Look at the corkscrew! Bless her dear old heart! She has forgotten nothing."³ The picnic was no longer a mixed bag where everyone contributed

¹ Roden, p. 17.

² Roden, pp. 18, 18 and 60.

³ Roden, p. 59.

but a carefully planned and executed social occasion with the hostess fussing over every small detail.

It was not only the British who had organised the picnic into an art form, picnics were also popular on the Continent. Two painters of the French Impressionist school immortalised the picnic in works completed in the 1860s. Edouard Manet and Claude Monet both painted works entitled 'Dejeuner sur l' herbe', but the two were very different in conception. Manet's is the most famous (and notorious) of the two, illustrating two women, one naked and another partially naked, picnicking with two fully clothed men. Manet had attempted to exhibit his painting at the Salon but it was rejected by the judges. At a later exhibition most of the audience were offended by the *risque* subject matter, particularly that female nudity should be portrayed in such a contemporary setting.¹ Monet's work is in complete contrast to Manet's. Monet's 'Dejeuner sur l' herbe' is a very bourgeois vision of a picnic. A group of people, some standing, some sitting, are grouped around a cloth containing fruit, cake, bread, meat and wine. In the background, dappled light shines through the trees. The subject matter is genteel leisure; it is a "nineteenth-century middle-class version of the aristocratic idyll of a bygone day."²

The Americans also developed traditions of picnicking, specialising in huge gatherings on a grand scale. The camp-meeting or revival meeting has been described as a giant community picnic.³ At election time in the nineteenth century there would be parades and then mass-meetings followed by a public banquet in the cities or a picnic or barbecue in rural areas. The fourth of July became an especially significant holiday and races, sports, dances, picnics and fireworks displays would be held. The picnic would be the setting for some flamboyant oratory as politicians had the opportunity to impress the gathered community.⁴

New Zealand picnics were predominantly social occasions. The events were dependent on community-based groups; they relied on the prior organisation of social groups. The smallest

¹ John Richardson, *Manet* (Oxford, 1982), p. 17.

² Joel Isaacson, *Monet: Le Dejeuner sur l' herbe* (London, 1972), p. 41.

³ Dulles, p. 81.

⁴ Dulles, pp. 163, 166.

groups of people to picnic were families. They could be school holiday outings devised to amuse children, such as the one described by Ruddock at the beginning of this chapter. These usually consisted of a female adult and a few children. On public holidays or weekends extended families and friends would get together and visit a park or patch of bush to picnic. Over a period of the nine years that he lived in Wellington, Herbert Spackman went on nine picnics that he recorded in his diary; all of them except one were private. He picnicked in nine different locations so it seems evident that the events were used by Spackman to explore greater Wellington. All the picnics he attended either by himself or later, after he was married, with his wife, were also with the Spackman's boarder or groups of friends, as he had no other family in New Zealand.¹ In contrast, another Wellington family, -- the Taylors from Evans Bay, much larger than the Spackmans, consisting of five boys and three girls by 1903 -- seem to have picnicked together as a family only by themselves.² Families picnicked, whether alone or with friends, during their holidays. The picnic was a convenient, relatively inexpensive family outing that allowed them to explore new surroundings or to reacquaint themselves with familiar ones.

In addition, there were holiday picnics which were neither private family-type picnics nor group community picnics. A picnic lunch was very often combined with a days sightseeing or excursion while on holiday. The picnic had a secondary function in that the primary purpose of the days outing was to view the surrounding countryside. One guide book authoritatively affirmed Rotorua as "the greatest picnic ground of a truly picnic land." The visitor to Rotorua could mount day trips to Whakarewarewa's geysers, "the infernos of Tikitere", "steaming Rotomahana", "suffocated Waimangu" or "sparkling Hamurana".³ Similarly, tourists staying at the Hermitage, Mount Cook, over the Christmas holidays from the turn of the century had the opportunity to go on a series of picnics each day for a week

¹ Herbert Spackman, 'Extracts From (Shorthand) Diary in Wellington, 1891-1900', Folder 5, MS-Papers-1788, ATL.

² Charles William Taylor, 'Tales of Early Kilburnie', Charles William Taylor Collection, MS-Papers-3794, ATL, pp. 5-6.

³ Paul Gooding, *Picturesque New Zealand* (Cambridge, 1913), p. 82.

to various pleasant picnic spots: to Kea Point to watch the avalanches on Mt Sefton: to the Hooker Valley to see the alpine flowers: or to Black Birch Creek.¹ Nearby, at the Red Lake picnickers would happily "laze here the whole afternoon watching the clouds chase one another over the Copland Pass, telling stories, or dreaming in perfect contentment."² For many, picnics were an integral part of their holidays.

Then there were the larger, community picnics held by existing groups. A diverse range of different groups picnicked, from church groups to sports groups, to schools and workplaces, and unions and clubs. Sometimes the picnics were single-sex events as single-sex organisations such as the YWCA, workingmen's clubs or workplaces picnicked together. Very often, however, picnics included spouses and children of the people who belonged to the organisation hosting the event; picnics were seen as family events. Many groups had a tradition of an annual picnic which was a highly organised affair with a procession, games and prizes, and food and hot water provided. Other groups had more informal, and frequent, picnics such as the Christchurch Girls' Boating Club which had regular picnic teas after their weekly 'pull' up the Avon River in 1893³ or the Auckland Socialist Party which had occasional picnics on Saturdays after the turn of the century.⁴

Groups often had a philosophy of providing recreational opportunities for their members, and picnics were part of that. The Butchers' Unions of Palmerston North held an annual picnic from the late 1890s; from 1908 to 1923 they held the events at the Ashhurst Domain nine times.⁵ From their inception in the 1870s the Butchers' Union were concerned for the profitable recreation of their younger members. To that end the Wellington Branch of the Union sought to establish a reading room "to divert the

¹ P.Graham, *Peter Graham: Mountain Guide* (Wellington, 1965), p. 84.

² Freda Du Faur, *The Conquest of Mount Cook* (London, 1915), p. 62.

³ Charlotte Macdonald, 'Organisations in Sport, Recreation and Leisure', *Women Together: a History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand Nga Ropu Wahine o to Motu*, Ed. by Anne Else (Wellington, 1993), p. 407.

⁴ Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave: a Biography of Michael Joseph Savage* (Auckland, 1986), p. 77.

⁵ Ashhurst Domain Board Minute Books, Vols. I-III, 3/16/2, Palmerston North City Archives.

attention of the younger members of the trade from the ways of error into which they might otherwise exhibit a proneness to fall."¹ Arranging picnics for the Butchers' and their families was perhaps due to this concern to provide worthwhile leisure opportunities for the members. Other groups to provide recreational opportunities for their members included workingmen's clubs and friendly societies. The Club Garibaldi formed by Italian residents in Wellington in the 1880s provided for its members, among other things, meals, a library and social occasions including an annual picnic.² Picnics were considered to be a decent and proper recreation for children and young people, as was demonstrated by the popularity of church and Sunday school picnics. Picnics were wholesome leisure activities, especially if they combined games with hymns, as was so often the case at the Sunday school picnic.

In addition, the picnics also had the added function of strengthening the groups by uniting all members for one day. Workers such as the butchers were scattered across town in different shops and would normally have had some associations with each other but few opportunities to gather together at one time. Plate 1 shows that the Butchers' picnic in Palmerston North was a relatively small affair. But some union picnics, such as the Tailoresses Union picnics in Dunedin were much larger events necessitating the hiring of a train to transport the thousand picnickers who attended the first picnic at "the Charming Watering-place" of Parakanui in 1890.³ The tailoresses were another union with a dispersed membership that would have been temporarily brought all together by the annual picnics. Picnics allowed people who were members of a group to mix socially. At the company picnic, for example, the bosses socialised with the workers which may not have ordinarily happened. This would have promoted a sense of company solidarity. This

¹ J.D.Salmond, *New Zealand Labour's Pioneering Days: the History of the Labour Movement in New Zealand From 1840 to 1894* (Auckland, 1950), p. 28.

² Paul Elenio, *Alla Fine Del Mondo To the Ends of the Earth: a History of Italian Migration to the Wellington Region* (Wellington, 1995), pp 72, 75.

³ Roth and Hammond, p. 31 and Melanie Nolan and Penelope Harper, 'Dunedin Tailoresses Union, 1889-1945', *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand Nga Ropu Wahine o to Motu*, Ed. by Anne Else (Wellington, 1993), p. 208.

function of picnics to generate social cohesion is explored thoroughly in Chapter 2.

Picnics could be expensive events to run. They were often supported financially by businesses. The prizes at the Dunedin Tailoresses' picnic were supplied by ten different companies including D.I.C and Braithwaite's Book Arcade. The Club Garibaldi picnics were also sponsored by firms that were owned by Italians or that had some associations with Italians, such as Turners and Growers. The financial support allowed the Club to provide free ice cream and drinks.¹ Churches provided food and drink for Sunday school picnics. Often fundraising was required for the events. The children of one Northland school wandered far and wide for many miles canvassing the local people for donations for their local picnic. Their routes included the gumfields where the gum diggers, although hard-up, "invariably" contributed to the funds.² The Martinborough Drivers' Union would raise three to four hundred pounds in the 1930s to spend on their family picnics.³

Picnics were usually held on public holidays and weekends. Although Sabbatarians fought to have all leisure activities banned on Sundays, there were others who defended people's right to leisure pursuits on that day. The editor of the Auckland Socialist Party's monthly paper, William Pierpont Black, attacked Presbyterians for complaining that too many people "spend the Sabbath riding tramcars, visiting friends, going for picnics and excursions..., [and] listening to a band play immoral, secular music."⁴ That picnics could be seen as a threat to the established order is something that will be examined in Chapter 2. But there was always a section of the community, not just socialists like Black, who enjoyed leisure activities on a Sunday. Saturday was generally a working day or half day for most town workers, so public holidays were the only opportunity people had to travel and to picnic. Prior to the turn of the century most workers were

¹ Elenio, p. 77.

² Ian B.Madden, *Riverhead: the Kaipara Gateway* (Auckland, 1966), p. 195.

³ Henry Hudson, 26 January 1982, Interviewed by Judith Fyfe, Oral History Centre, ATL, LC no: 524-526.

⁴ Erik Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1913* (Auckland, 1988), p. 111.

entitled to just four public holidays; Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Years Day and Good Friday. The Labour Day holiday was introduced in 1899, and Anzac Day in 1920. The picnicking season began in October with the Prince of Wales' Birthday or Labour Day.¹ Other popular picnicking days included Saint Patrick's Day and the Provincial anniversary days which were held from November through to March. Children's picnics were held any day during the week convenient for the organisers. The picnicking season generally extended to Easter if the weather permitted.

Sometimes picnics continued despite bad weather. At a 1871 Sunday School picnic recorded in Vicesimus Lush's journal: "Still unsettled weather: high winds and frequent showers, but the buns and cakes being made there was no alternative but to have our school picnic."² Often parks had shelters for just such an eventuality, like the picnicking shed constructed at the Ashhurst Domain in 1907.³ One school allowed a Khandallah Sunday School to use their hall in wet weather at the turn of the century and in 1929 Sanson School held their annual picnic in their own hall because of the bad weather.⁴

A survey of picnics sites indicates that they were located in both urban and rural areas and in both public and private spaces. Public picnicking spaces - parks and domains, beaches, lakes, dams, rivers and creeks - outnumber the private spaces, generally a paddock on a farm. Whether people lived in cities, towns or in the country they were in close proximity to a range of picnic areas. Many New Zealand towns or cities are located on the coast or nearby rivers or lakes, so there were plenty of leisure areas available in which to hold picnics. Even small rural towns had parks and playing fields. Ashhurst, for example, had a sizeable

¹ *New Zealand Official 1990 Yearbook Te Pukapuka Houanga Whaimana o Aotearoa*, 94th ed. (Wellington, 1990), p. 390.

² Alison Drummond (ed), *The Thames Journals of Vicesimus Lush 1868-82* (Christchurch, 1975), p. 101.

³ 'Ashhurst Domain Board Minute Books, Vol. 1, 1905-1911'.

⁴ Joseph M.Kenneally, *Khandallah, Looking Back: the Changing times of a Prominent Wellington Suburb* (Wellington, 1979), p. 14 and *Sanson School and District Centennial, 16, 17 and 18 November 1973, "Least We Forget"* (Sanson, 1974) p, 24.

domain of over 46 acres.¹ Another small Manawatu township, Bunnythorpe, had its domain gazetted in 1905. The town had a recreation ground containing tennis courts, a football and cricket field, a running and cycling track, as well as native shrubs and amenities which made it an ideal picnic area.² Community groups often chose to hold their picnics at these kind of locations, no doubt attracted by the facilities provided by the Domain Boards: seats, running water, and (usually by the 1920s) toilets. At other times groups were lured to locations by more natural attractions such as a stream or bush.

Bush areas were popular picnic sites but picnics were generally held in areas of land that had been modified in some way by humans. Photographs of picnics occasionally show wild sites bordered by thick bush such as plate 2 showing the mayor of Palmerston North's annual picnic, which is part of a large panoramic photograph of the Tiritea Stream. In one account of a picnic, Wellington resident E.H.Wilkins talked about how a background of a cabbage tree and a stream was chosen for a photograph.³ The significance of these sites is examined more fully in Chapter 3. Bush areas were not always available to picnickers as more and more tracts were destroyed. Some cities and towns such as Wellington, maintained areas of bush or 'green belts', allowing citizens to picnic in comparatively wild areas. It was more usual for picnic sites to be open land, whether farmland, parks or spaces at beaches or by rivers. Open ground was essential for the larger community picnics because games were such an integral part of the entire event. One Manawatu picnic (plate 3), was held in a very large area of cleared land next to the Manawatu River and a bush-clad hill. Two large groups are playing separate games on opposite sides of the paddock. Wide open spaces would have also been necessary at the times where a picnic was coupled with another event such as a race meeting or sports day. At the annual Saint Patrick's Day Sports Day and Picnic in Palmerston North the games were highly organised on a grand scale. In 1908 the event included cycling, running and

¹ *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives, Annual Reports, Public Domains Boards, Vol II, 1908, C10, p. 22.*

² R.E.Clevely, *Bunnythorpe and District 1872-1952* (Wellington, 1953), p. 153.

³ E.H.Wilkins, 'Letters to Mother', MS-Papers-4660, ATL, p. 6.

walking races, tug-of-war, a "hunters competition" and seven-a-side football.¹

In common with English picnics the New Zealand community picnic, and to a lesser extent the family picnic, also required a great deal of preparation and organisation. Organisers had to arrange a location, which often required writing to a Domain Board or council asking for permission to use a park. In rural areas a farmer could usually be relied on to lend a paddock for the day. Sometimes a paddock was so frequently used for events it became almost public domain like the a paddock next to the cowshed on the Phillips' farm in the Hunua Ranges, South Auckland, which came to be known locally as 'Picnic Flat'.² Large picnics must have presented a logistical challenge for organisers, especially when trains, trams or ferries were involved. Making sure there was enough parking space for the picnickers carriages, and later cars, was another consideration as illustrated in plate 4.

People employed a diverse range of transportation to attend picnics both public and private: horses, trams, trains, boats, ferries, barges, bicycles, traction engines and, later, motorcars and busses. If the picnic site was nearby, or the picnickers were not well off, they could walk to their picnic, carrying their picnic or washing baskets full of food and drink. Charles Taylor's family had many picnics by walking down to Evans Bay in Wellington. They got around the problem of carrying all their picnic food by collecting cockles and fishing for flounder down at the beach.³ Taylor went on another school picnic which illustrates how many picnics required people to use more than one means of transport. At his school's 'blackberry picnic' getting to the farm involved a walk from school at Kilburnie over the hill to the Te Aro Railway Station, a train trip out through the Hutt Valley to Kaitoke and finally, another walk to the farm to pick berries. Happily for the tired (and full) children, the trip back was not quite as strenuous. Most of them slept through the return journey in the train and were then met at the station by the family carriage or taken home

¹ *Manawatu Evening Standard*, Vol XLI-8511, 13 February 1908, p. 1.

² Ian Barton, *Auckland's South Eastern Bulwark: a History of the Hunua Ranges* (Auckland, 1978), p. 61.

³ Taylor, p. 6.

in an 'express'.¹ Arranging transport was part of the responsibilities of the picnic organiser. Sometimes it was merely a matter of borrowing a large cart, which is what Taylor's father did during the school holidays at the turn of the century, bringing home one of his delivery vans, conveniently fitted with side seats so that the family could go off to one of the nearby bays for a picnic. But for the larger community picnics, entire trams, buses or trains had to be hired or borrowed. At the 1883 Oamaru Garrison Band picnic two whole trains were required to transport the four thousand picnickers to Waianakarua.² Transportation provided its own difficulties. Plate 4 shows a 'monster picnic' in Greytown c1900 with a paddock full of grazing horses and parked carriages. The availability of parking space, in this case, must have influenced the choice of location.

People's range of picnicking locations increased with the improvements in public transport. At the weekends and at public holidays day time commuter services -- trains, trams or later, buses -- were converted into excursion transport. On the Wellington Anniversary Day in 1894, Spackman recorded how he and his wife Daisy caught the 11.25 pm train out to Khandallah for a picnic. It was Daisy's first ride in a New Zealand train, having just immigrated from England, and it was "far better than she expected." Spackman noted on the way home that night that the carriages were very full.³ Obviously Khandallah had been a popular destination for excursions that day. Wellingtonians could also take the tram. By the mid-1880s horse trams were used in the Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill. Wanganui and New Plymouth also later installed tram systems. Public transport was a much more inexpensive alternative than the other forms of transport that they overtook, such as the stagecoach.⁴ People could travel greater distances by public transport than they could privately, making a greater range of locations available to them.

At towns and cities beside the coast, ferries were another popular form of transportation for picnickers. David Johnson has

¹ Taylor, p. 51.

² C.W.S.Moore, *Waianakarua: Land of Promise 1883-1983* (Oamaru, 1983), p. 89.

³ Spackman, 22 January 1894.

⁴ *Official New Zealand 1990 Yearbook*, pp. 544, 550.

traced some of the picnics that were held in Auckland on Boxing Day 1902.¹ Ferries and coastal steamers left the Quay to go to destinations which included St. Heliers, Devonport and the islands in the Hauraki Gulf. The day began early with the first steamer leaving for St. Heliers at 7.15 am. By 8.30 am the wharves were full of crowds queuing for ferries. Several churches were holding annual picnics. The Church of Christ and the Saint John's Parish went to Pine Island. The Franklin Road Primitive Methodists went to St. Heliers. The Union Free Church and the Tabernacle Church chartered three steamships to ferry them to Maraetai. Motutapu -- whose owner fiercely protected his right to deny unauthorised picnicking parties access -- hosted the Auckland, Newtown, Parnell and Onehunga Corps of the Salvation Army. They arrived with "two brass bands, a supply of hot water at a penny a quart, tea with cake and sandwiches for threepence, drinks, fruit and lollies."² In addition, there was at least one firm picnicking on the same day -- Macky, Logan and Company chartered the 'Kapui' to take the firm to Waiheke for the day. On the Manukau, the Manukau Yacht Club chartered the 'Weka' for a picnic excursion. There were also numerous ferries taking private picnickers around the region. They ran all day to Takapuna, Northcote, Chelsea and Devonport, as well as to Riverhead, Mission Bay, Maori Bay and Rangitoto.

The job of coordinating the preparation often fell to one person or sometimes a committee. Vicesimus Lush, a Thames vicar, got up at 4.30 am to begin preparations for a Sunday School picnic on 30 January 1875. His tasks included sweeping out the school room and filling a 400 gallon tank with water for the picnickers.³ There was usually a gender division in the delegation of tasks in picnics that women and men attended together. Women were generally in charge of the food, men organised transport, the music, games and location. Plate 5, for example, shows a man managing a women's race at the Wanganui United Sunday Schools picnic c1908.

¹ David Johnson, 'The Edwardian Picnic', *Bearings*, 4:1 (1992), p. 5-9.

² Johnson, p. 6.

³ Drummond, p. 156.

Preparing the food was a job that had to be done either the night before the picnic or early in the morning of the appointed day. Lush recorded how his daughters joined the Sunday school teachers the evening before the Combined Thames Sunday schools picnic to cut up sandwiches. Well over a thousand children attended that particular picnic and they required a vast amount of food which Lush took the trouble to record: "120 lbs of rich cake: 100 dozen buns: 100 lbs bread: 25 lbs lollies: 50 lbs ham: 6 lbs tea: 25 lbs sugar: 10 lbs butter: 6 gallons milk" plus peaches. The teachers got sausage rolls.¹ Picnic fare was usually pretty standard: sandwiches and buns, cakes and lollies, (see plate 6 for a good illustration of picnic food) Food was wrapped up in paper or napkins and packed into wicker baskets or biscuit tins (see plate 7). Drink consisted of ginger ale, lemonade or ginger beer, stored in stone jars that kept it cool all day.² Occasionally beer was on the picnic menu as is evident in plate 8. Picnickers did not always bring all their food with them. From the 1890s small businesses revolved around the picnic grounds selling buns, ginger beer and lollies.³

Brian Sutton-Smith, in *A History of Children's Play: the New Zealand Playground*, provides numerous examples of games played at picnics by young and old alike.⁴ Men and women, boys and girls had their own games, sometimes played separately, sometimes together. The men would play games like tug of war, tossing the caber, high-jump, wrestling, throwing quoits or horseshoes, obstacle races through horse collars, Hop Step and Jump, long jump, wood-sawing, nail-driving and the sack race. At the annual picnic at Salisbury on the Taieri Plains, Otago, the men would cheat in the sack race by putting a hole in their sacks and generally fool around and tumble over.⁵ At another annual picnic arranged by the Flaxbourne Settlers Association, activities included: 'pig' sticking: needle threading on horseback: catching a

¹ Drummond, p. 157.

² Vickers, p. 44.

³ Brian Sutton-Smith, *A History of Children's Play: the New Zealand Playground 1840-1950* (Wellington, 1982), p. 154.

⁴ Brian Sutton-Smith, *A History of Children's Play: the New Zealand Playground 1840-1950* (Wellington, 1982).

⁵ Sutton-Smith, p. 165.

greased pig: and, by 1919, a motor driving competition which necessitated a change of venue to a more open park. The settlers' picnic was superseded in 1923 by the Agricultural and Pastoral Association shows which carried on and augmented the tradition of the picnic sports day.¹ At a Morrinsville picnic a blindfold contest was held where anyone who could manage to strike a leg of mutton donated by the local butcher could claim it as a prize.²

Women also had their own games. As time went on, women participated in more and more of the games, but initially in many places their participation was restricted to the role of spectators. The female participants at a 1866 Albertland picnic objected to the introduction of cricket because it meant the withdrawal of the gentlemen from the ladies "thus throwing the latter too much on their own resources for amusement."³ Certainly by the turn of the century the situation was very different for women and they were expected to join in fully. Married women too, had their own running races. Behaviour that would not have normally been acceptable, such as married women running around, was considered to be appropriate at the picnic. "Although normally these [female] competitors would deem it immodest to display more than an ankle beneath their voluminous skirts, from the moment they heard the starting shot, all thought of modesty was thrown to the winds. Skirts would be gathered above the knees, and be she mother of two or ten, only one thought occupied the mind - to breast that tape first!"⁴ This modification of norms will be explored in Chapter 2. There were also special races for women such as the one run at the Wanganui United Sunday Schools picnic at the Matawara Valley c1908 (plate 5). The women were hobbled by ties around their skirts and are about to run (with difficulty) or jump their way to the finishing line.

Children also took part in many different kinds of games. The children at what looks like a Sunday School picnic at the

¹ A.L.Kennington, *The Awatere: a District and Its People* (Blenheim, 1978), p. 153.

² *Kiwitahi School Jubilee*, p. 44.

³ A.H.Reed, *The Story of Northland* (Wellington, 1956), p. 326.

⁴ Agnes Bryant, 'Reminiscences and Reflections about Reikorangi', MS-Paper-3899, ATL, p. 33.

banks of the Manawatu River (plate 3) are playing games in a ring. There are two groups of them, the larger group to the left comprises the younger children and most of the adults. To the right a girl runs around the outside of a half formed ring, although some of the boys seem to have lost interest and are lying down. They could be playing any one of a number of games: Oranges and Lemons, Drop the Handkerchief or French Tig. Games involving lollies played a prominent part in most picnics. Frequently an adult, sometimes dressed up as a clown, with bags of lollies sewn to their clothes would be chased around the picnic ground by the children.¹ At the Salisbury picnic "the day generally began with a lolly scramble. It was a joke to start things off. The lollies were thrown out of an enormous canister containing boiled lollies and conversations, mixed with half a bag of hazel nuts. Up would go the lollies and the gathered folks roared with laughter as the lads and lasses scrambled and dived, the more timid ones skirmishing on the outskirts with little success."² Other games played by children at picnics included egg and spoon races, the three-legged race, the Jolly Miller, Nuts and May, Twos and Threes, Mulberry Bush, Green Gravels, Pop Goes the Weasel and Rounders.³ Young adults also had the opportunity to flirt at these gatherings. The picnic must have provided the determined with plenty of opportunity to elude the watchful gazes of their chaperones. For the particularly adventurous, there were some kissing games such as Kiss in the Ring.

Picnics provided people with cherished memories. Children in particular seemed to have vivid memories of picnic spots which they remembered for the rest of their lives. Late in life Harold Thomas was able to give a detailed account of a particular picnic site on the western side of Mt Camel in Northland.

Pohutukawa and Karaka trees provided shade and if the ground was somewhat stony, a solid mat of buffalo grass made a reasonably clean, comfortable inviting

¹ John R. Grigg, *The Last Ripple: a Century of Methodism in the Manawatu* (Levin, 1972), p. 117.

² Sutton-Smith, p. 165.

³ Sutton-Smith, p. 167.

surface. The distinctive smell of that combination of pohutukawa blossom, ripe Karaka berries and buffalo grass in hot dry sunshine is one that has stayed with me as an almost haunting memory in itself and as a most effective spur to a host of other memories.¹

Agnes Bryant had such intense memories of a 1907 picnic she went on with her aunt and uncle that she returned to the district fifty years later in order to see her "vision of a lake situated within the line of foredunes" so connected in her mind with that "joyful excursion".² This is a clear example of the significance picnics often had in people's lives resulting in treasured memories.

Sometimes what people remembered most about picnics were the mishaps that occurred. Spackman recorded "a most amusing incident" that happened at one picnic he attended in 1891. The butter was mistakenly boiled in the kettle. When they tried to amend matters by putting the butter in a bottle in the river, the bottom of the bottle came off prompting "fresh bursts of laughter".³ At one picnic 'Hannah' attended in 1885 it was too wet to eat outside so the host spread rugs about the entrance hall and verandah of his house allowing the guests to picnic inside on the floor or on the stairs. "It was a jolly gathering, I think I never laughed more in my life", said 'Hannah'.⁴ Sometimes the stories surrounding picnics were more sombre. Occasionally children were lost or drowned. At one Martinborough picnic a man lost his eye in a nail driving competition which quickly broke up the party.⁵ Whether the mishaps were serious or not, they ensured that picnics were events that were remembered for months, even years, afterwards through tales and stories.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, leisure in New Zealand was changing along with the society. Recreation was becoming more organised. Picnics reflected this trend. There were three different types of picnics in New Zealand during the

¹ Harold T. Thomas, *Way up North* (Auckland, 1970), p. 54.

² Bryant, p. 30.

³ Spackman, 26 December 1891.

⁴ B. Ristori (ed), "'Hannah's" Diary, Part II, 1884-1888', Bridget Ristori Collection, MS-Papers-90-113, pp. 85-86.

⁵ Hudson, LC no: 524-526

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first was family orientated, or private picnics where families -- sometimes nuclear, sometimes extended, sometimes with a few family friends -- engaged in fairly spontaneous visits to nearby locations. These were relatively inexpensive excursions that allowed the families to explore the surrounding countryside. The second were picnics that individuals or families went on while on holiday away from home. The third type, was the community picnic which was organised by pre-existing community groups. These groups were often concerned with providing 'wholesome' or worthwhile recreation for their members. Usually held on public holidays, these picnics were extremely well planned events that required a great deal of preparation. A location had to be found, money had to be raised, transport had to be arranged and games had to be supervised. The overall outcome of these picnics was to provide the participants with many happy memories of the times they spent together picnicking. The great deal of preparation and organisation that picnics required indicates that they depended on already-existing social networks within communities. What picnics might mean for these communities will be more fully explored in Chapter 2.



Plate 9

Palmerston North Public Library Photographic Collection
PIC 1

A picnic party procession with the Palmerston North Brass Band, returning from Terrace End to Palmerston North, c1882. All the picnickers -- including members of the band, a lodge or friendly society and numbers of interested children -- join in the procession. This particular parade marks the end of the picnic, the long shadows indicate a setting sun.



Plate 10

Ben Irons Collection
ATL
Neg no: F82373 1/2

A spectacular picnic procession. E.Jones' traction engine tows six wagons full of children across the north branch of the Waipoua River (as the engine was not allowed over the Waipoua bridge). The children are off to the Kuripuni Sunday School picnic in 1910. Banners on the carriages publicly announce the event. Over 150 people are in attendance, including a number of adults and older children. This was just one of many ways picnickers could travel to their chosen location. In keeping with the high levels of cooperation that picnics engendered within communities, it is likely that Jones provided his traction engine for free. If he did not, the money for his payment, along with all other expenses for the picnic, would have been paid by the church which may have fundraised for the event.



Plate 11

Bett Collection
Nelson Provincial Museum
6x8 9

A family picnic at Delaware Bay, Nelson, c1900. There is a wide range of ages at this event, from small children to an older couple, demonstrating that picnics were often occasions where different generations could socialise together. The picnickers have set out their picnic lunch at a spot where they have a view of the bay. This photograph shows clearly the gender inversions that occurred in the 'liminal' space of the picnic. Four of the picnickers have swapped hats; two women wear men's bowler hats, one of the men wears a women's hat and another wears a bonnet. The picnickers were obviously very conscious that they were being photographed; they all face the camera and many of them are toasting each other.



Plate 12

McAllister Collection

ATL

Neg no: 9470 1/1

A group of boys picnic in 1905, names and location unknown. Here is another example of inversion, this time of age. The boys 'drink' for the camera, pretending that their ginger ale is something stronger. These picnickers have entered the bush and 'looted' it. They have gathered 'spoils' that demonstrate their mastery over the bush.



Plate 13

Sumpler Collection
ATL
Neg no: 72221 1/2

A large picnic, location and date unknown. Games were an integral part of the picnic. Here the large group observes a game. Many of them -- women, men and children -- seem to be running to the centre in front of the shed where all the action is taking place.

Chapter Two

Picnics as Community Rituals

The children and I went for a picnic. We lunched in the spot marked x on the strand and then, putting our kit into a bush, we struck up the hillside. The youngsters eagerly climbed to the top of the ridge and on to its highest point 815 feet. We ran and jumped and shouted in the wind along these heights, their hair like wisps of flax in the strong northerly wind. They would both be shouting and talking to me at the same time, one on each side, their eager imagination having plenty of scope and material. We in the end went all the way to the Pencarrow lighthouse and back-first time that I had been there. The wind was strong against us on the return trip and it impeded our progress considerably. We got back to our camp by 5.30 and partook of our evening meal.¹

This was a picnic enjoyed by E.H.Wilkins and his family on Boxing Day 1921. It involved the participants travelling a considerable distance, walking to the lighthouse and back. In addition to a terrestrial voyage, they made a metaphorical journey to a different state. The picnickers were journeying to a condition of wildness that mirrored their wild surroundings. Both the children and the adult 'ran', 'jumped' and 'shouted'; they behaved in a more spirited manner than would normally have been tolerated in their everyday lives. The picnic allowed them the freedom to behave in an uninhibited way, to be creative and to enter imagined states. In common with all other picnickers, they made the return journey home on the same day: their excursion, with all the freedoms that it brought, was only temporary. Their outing ended on the same day; they were home before dark.

People at community picnics had similar experiences:

¹ E.H.Wilkins, 'Letters from New Zealand to Mother', MS-Papers-4160, Alexander Turnbull Library, p. 7.

For many years a Creamery picnic was held annually on Waikanae race-course - an ideal venue, since it was surrounded by beautiful bush which provided those lovely shady nooks so appreciated by picnickers on hot mid-summer days. A variety of sporting events made this the most popular outing of the year - such as wood-chopping and sawing; tossing the sheaf; perhaps a pillow-fight on a slippery pole and a tug-of-war, all adding excitement and hilarity to the occasion.

There were lolly-scrambles, and races not only for the children, but for men and ladies too. The prizes for the married ladies were well worth competing for, in those days of large families and meagre incomes: a 100 lb of flour, a 70 lb bag of sugar or a 5 lb box of tea. Although normally these competitors would deem it immodest to display more than an ankle beneath their voluminous skirts, from the moment they heard the starting shot, all thought of modesty was thrown to the winds. Skirts would be gathered above the knees, and be she mother of two or ten, only one thought occupied the mind - to breast that tape first!¹

People who attended this community picnic, young and old, female and male, all had the chance to participate in activities they would not ordinarily have enjoyed. Adults, in particular, had the opportunity to play. Women were able to ignore usual conventions and run in order to win the prizes. The Creamery picnic was an opportunity for a community to unite and affirm their common identity through shared experience.

Picnics can usefully be understood as a social ritual. Rituals are events where prescribed patterns of behaviour are enacted and shared values are elaborated.² Picnics have features in common

¹ Agnes Bryant, 'Reminiscences and Reflections about Reikorangi', MS-Papers-3899, ATL, p. 33.

² Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: a Critique of Turner's Theory of Liminality', *Fragmentation and Redemption : Essays on*

with two other kinds of rituals: the pilgrimage and the carnival. The pilgrimage is a journey to a sacred site. It is a quest for a place or state that embodies a valued ideal.¹ Pilgrims undertake a metaphorical journey as well as a terrestrial one. The metaphorical journey is a journey towards both the 'centre' and the 'margin', providing both the opportunity to reinforce cultural values and to challenge the moral order. The pilgrimage 'centre' becomes a sacred place of healing and rejuvenation, re-creation, grace and exaltation.² It is the place where heaven meets the earth, where cherished visions of what life can be like are realised. In contrast, the 'margin' or site of the Other is by its nature ambiguous being both threatening and alluring.³ It represents moral confusion and promises a life unrestricted by moral order. Those undertaking the pilgrimage were seeking a better life for themselves through the journey; the pilgrimage had the potential to change their lives.

Similarly, picnickers also undertook a journey to both the 'centre' and the 'margin'. They were also on a quest for a valued ideal. By gathering together at the picnic they were fostering values of family and community harmony and solidarity. Sometimes specific values were celebrated, as in 1919 when the British victory was celebrated in Mangamahu with a picnic and sports day where an effigy of the Kaiser was burned.⁴ At the same time picnickers were also journeying to a site of Otherness, where, like the people in the two accounts at the beginning of this chapter, they had the opportunity to play. There was a temporary dissolution of order as boisterous and unruly behaviour was tolerated for the duration of the picnic.

The carnival was an event traditionally held in Europe before Lent. Over a period of one or two weeks restraints were lifted and disorder reigned under a comic 'king'. A commoner

Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York, 1992), p. 29.

¹ Alan Morinis, *Sacred Journeys: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage* (Westport, 1992), p. 4.

² Erik Cohen, 'Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence', *Sacred Journeys: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Ed. by Alan Morinis, (Westport, 1992), p. 51.

³ Cohen, p. 51.

⁴ M.H.Campion, P.M.Garland and J.D.Morris, *The Road to Mangamahu* (Wanganui, 1988), p. 303.

was elected to be 'king' and 'ruled' over the town or village. Inversions were a traditional part of the event. For example, a satirical price list of goods was drawn up. Sour, salty or rotten food, common meats and animal feed were given expensive prices.¹ During the carnival, people had the opportunity to challenge the prevailing order in a ritual manner. In common with the carnival, the picnic presented people with the temporary space in which to invert the normal order of things. Picnickers inverted normal gender and age distinctions. At the end of the carnival, as at the picnic, order was restored. The community was strengthened and revitalised as a result of the restoration of order. There was always the danger, however, that picnics might encourage groups to form such a strong sense of community that they might carry that strengthened sense of self over into their normal lives. This danger will be explored in more depth later.

In order to understand more fully these rituals, each of them can be divided up into three separate phases. The idea of phases derives from anthropologist Victor Turner's work on pilgrimages. He looked at the three specific moments of time which Arnold van Gennep had identified within a transitional ritual which accompanied changes within a culture. According to van Gennep, time swung like a pendulum between the various states: 'separation', 'margin' (or 'limin', from the Latin meaning 'threshold') and 'reaggregation'. The first 'separation' phase detached the subjects from their old places in society, the second was a transitional phase, the third installed them (inwardly transformed and outwardly changed) to a new place in society.² Turner's work on pilgrimages concentrated on the second, transitional period, which was a crossing of the threshold to where time ran backwards and ordinary roles were accordingly reversed.³ The 'liminal' phase was "a moment of suspension of normal rules and roles, a crossing of boundaries and violating of norms".⁴ Turner argued that the pilgrimage created a 'liminal'

¹ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival: a People's Uprising at Romans 1579-1580* (London, 1980), pp. 316-317.

² Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford, 1978), p. 249.

³ Ladurie, p. 306.

⁴ Bynum, p. 30.

space which allowed participants to experience what he called a 'communitas', a temporary group unity that was more egalitarian in nature than the usual associations they experienced in their daily lives. In the 'liminal' state participants were briefly released from the anxiety occasioned by status and authority.¹

In the first, 'preliminal' phase, the participants separated themselves from their normal lives. During the carnival this phase was signalled by the masquerade which expressed the breaking into fictive or sacred time.² At the masquerade, people put on disguises and attended a dance. Their individual identities were abandoned in favour of a group display. In New Zealand, picnickers often held a procession before the main event of the picnic which also signalled the transitional phase. Like the masqueraders, the picnickers were demonstrating their group identity. Decoration was an important part of the processions; picnickers bore banners, flags, flowers and greenery. Plate 1 shows the Palmerston North Butchers' Union pre-picnic procession with horses at the front of the line garlanded with flowers and decorative bridles. Further back, in the carriages for the families of the butchers, flowers are draped around the wheels and bodies of the vehicles. The photograph also shows a man disguised in a steer's head leading the procession down the road, much to the delight of a small crowd of interested boys. Music was an important part of these picnic processions, as it was of masquerade. Another Palmerston North photograph, c1882, shows the town's brass band parading down a road at Terrace End (plate 9). The band members themselves are surrounded by a crowd of children, and seem to be followed by members of a lodge or society, men wearing sashes and carrying poles. Following up the rear are the rest of the picnickers, men, women and children. They must have attracted attention marching through the streets of Palmerston North. Also very visible, were the members of the Kuripuni Sunday School picnic who were identified by two large banners on the side of the trailers in which the children were being transported (plate 10). The Central Fire Brigade of Wellington held an annual Christmas picnic which in 1875 saw

¹ Turner and Turner, p. 249.

² Ladurie, p. 306.

them meet at the station at ten o'clock making a "grand" display of flags and banners and then set out for the Hutt Valley in "vehicles of all descriptions, taking also one of the engines."¹ At one St Patrick's Day picnic at Greymouth, proceedings began with a procession of the district's amalgamated societies which included a twenty piece band, followed by the Foresters' banner, with Robin Hood and Little John on horseback with the members of the order, and then the Oddfellows in full regalia. The entire procession was followed by sixty children.² Even private parties of picnickers, travelling in more than one vehicle or by more than one means, were a kind of procession as they travelled in tandem to their destination. Processions were very public ways of signalling the transition to the 'liminal' time of the picnic where inversion could occur. At the Methodist picnic at Ashhurst Domain where a clown with bags of lollies sewn to his costume was chased by children.³ In this the children were inverting the normal role they were expected to play. Instead of being deferential to the adults they were pursuing them wildly; instead of being disciplined in the presence of an abundance of lollies, they were allowed to give into greed. Inversions such as these, signal that the picnickers had made the transition to the 'liminal' phase.

The rites of role reversal indicated that the second, transitional phase had begun.⁴ Normal life was parodied or ridiculed through inversion. Thus the carnival had the Lord of Misrule. At the picnic, there were inversions in normal gender roles. Men and women sometimes signalled this by exchanging clothing. A photograph of a Nelson picnic c1900 shows two men and two women have swapped hats (plate 11). Two of them stare solemnly at the camera while the other two joke with each other. In addition, men were usually in charge of the normally domestic, and therefore feminine, role of boiling the billy and cooking on the fire (a tradition which still persists in the modern barbecue). Inversions in age roles were another feature of the role reversals

¹ Millar, p. 77.

² A.G.Bagnall, *Old Greytown 1854-1954* (Greytown, 1953), p. 82.

³ John R.Grigg, *The Last Ripple: A Century of Methodism in the Manawatu* (Levin, 1972), p. 117.

⁴ Ladurie, p. 306.

on the picnic. Children could pretend to be adult, like the boys playing at drinking and smoking for the benefit of the camera (plate 12). Adults, too, could briefly pretend to be children. The liminal space was one that provided both young and old with the temporary freedom to play. Like the small girls swimming at the beach before their picnic lunch, "free for once from the roars of the instructor", picnickers cast aside the normal business and responsibilities that governed their lives.¹ Behaviour that would not normally have been acceptable, was considered to be appropriate at the picnic because the violating of norms was part of the extraordinary behaviour tolerated in the 'liminal' space.

Games were part of this role reversal. Picnics provided adults with a socially legitimate occasion in which to play. The experience had a beneficial effect on both individuals and the wider community. "Play has the power to create a coherent sense of experience which is radically different from that of everyday life." Play fosters human creativity and emotional development. It is "able to dissolve normal restraints, sanction what on other occasions would be inadmissible."² Restraints on acceptable adult behaviour were temporarily loosened, so it became admissible for men to 'cheat' at the sack race by poking their feet through holes in the corners, or for women to lift their skirts and run. People literally had the opportunity, by playing at the picnic, to let off steam, to free themselves from the ordinary stresses they were subject to. During the games, adults were able to let go of their status' (whether that status was high or low) and therefore become more equal. Status depended not on wealth, birth or occupation, but on physical skill, strength and speed. Sometimes alcohol helped loosen adult inhibitions. Some picnics had kegs and drinks for sale. The presence of a Temperance stand did not prevent the publican's booth from doing a brisk trade at a Greytown picnic in 1883.³

When the adults were relaxed, the children had even more freedom. Children had the chance to be boisterous and noisy, whether running around at a lolly scramble or 'behaving like

¹ Marion Ruddock, 'Incidents in the Life of Katherine Mansfield', MS-Papers-1339, ATL, p. 47.

² Malcolmson, p. 75.

³ Bagnall, p. 82.

Huns' and shouting their heads off like Helen Wilson did at a Timaru picnic.¹ To behave like a 'Hun' was the antithesis of normal, acceptable behaviour. Instead of having to be seen and not heard, children were given the freedom to behave barbarically without censure from adults. High spirits were accepted as part of the normal behaviour on a picnic as the following account of a Palmerston North combined schools picnic at Foxton Beach in February 1926 illustrates:

We were conveyed on a very long train to the Foxton wharf where we went aboard large flax carrying barges that were propelled by motor launches down stream to the river estuary flats. There we enjoyed a wonderful day with lunches, hand out sweets, drinks and ice cream and various sports events and swimming. Towards evening tired and happy it was back onto the barges that were assisted up stream on the incoming tide to the waiting train. The carriages next to ours bore a group of exuberant highschool girls. A young assistant guard boarded the train at the front end to make his way back to the guard's van and found himself having to run the gauntlet of the young ladies who seized him, removed his pants and passed them from one end of the carriage to the other with the victim in frustrated pursuit.²

The girls were able to use the 'liminal' space of the picnic to effectively challenge an authority figure. They inverted the normal rules and roles; instead of being under the control of the guard they made him the victim of an embarrassing incident. They were empowered in some way by the 'liminal' space of the picnic.

Picnics were also occasions where people were sometimes able to form associations with people of a different class, gender, age or, more occasionally, a different ethnicity from themselves.

¹ Wilson, p. 44.

² Bren Campbell, Personal correspondence, 27 April 1995.

Turner called this association 'communitas', where the ritual fused the group into a more egalitarian model. The shared experience of the group temporarily had more importance than the perceived differences. At a picnic, there was sometimes an opportunity to socialise with a wide range of people from different backgrounds. On company picnics, for example, bosses mixed with their employees, joining in games with them or serving them. The picnic provided them with the temporary freedom of the 'liminal' space where roles were reversed and the boss could socialise with the workers without the normal anxieties and problems this might ordinarily provoke. On family picnics, servants were sometimes included as guests at the picnic. Herbert Spackman, for example, went on one picnic with two young bachelors and their housekeeper in 1893.¹ People of both high and low status found that their roles were temporarily reversed at the picnic, thus the differences in status arising from their roles were temporarily relaxed.

Occasionally, picnics allowed people of different ethnic groups to mix and bond. Italians immigrants and Pakeha New Zealanders picnicked together at the annual Club Garibaldi picnics in Wellington.² Picnics were also sometimes occasions for Maori and Pakeha to gather and fraternise although Maori were seldom present at picnics organised by Pakeha.³ Picnics were not all-embracing events. Only in very small rural communities did all members of the community attend a picnic. In other localities, especial in urban areas, there was a limit to the capacity of this ritual to generate 'communitas'. Picnics generally were held among people with similar background and interests.

One occasion where Maori and Pakeha did meet at a picnic was at Pigeon Bush in the Wairarapa in January 1896. Local Maori hosted the Premier Richard Seddon, his family and the local settlers, to mark the end of a dispute over land bordering a nearby lake. The Seddons and other guests were welcomed with haka

¹ Herbert Spackman, 'Extracts from (Shorthand) Diary in Wellington, 1891-1900', MS-Papers-1788, ATL, 23 January 1893.

² Paul Elenio, *Alla Fine Del Mondo, To the Ends of the Earth: a History of Italian Migration to the Wellington Region* (Wellington, 1995), p. 78.

³ For an account of social events attended by both Maori and Pakeha see Angela Ballara, 'Wahine Rangatira: Maori Women of Rank and Their Role in the Women's Kotahitanga Movement of the 1890s', *NZJH*, 27:2 (1993), p. 128.

followed by speeches. The meal was a hangi: "eels sewn up in flat baskets and cooked under heated stones, mutton and potatoes were cooked in the same way."¹ But even at this cross-cultural picnic the characteristic features of inversion and 'communitas' were reported.

The serving [of the meal] was unique and caused a good deal of amusement. Tall strapping Maori men in pinafores capered about between the tables, passing lively jokes with Native and white girls alike. The Premier appeared to enter into the spirit of the affair, and partook of most of the dainties prepared in his honor, he displayed tact, endurance and energy during the whole proceedings... All helped to promote the feeling of good fellowship.²

This picnic was an exceptional event. It marked the end of hostilities between Maori and the local Pakeha settlers. But it was a typical picnic in that it generated goodwill and brought the Maori and Pakeha communities together. The two groups shared a common experience and settled their differences with an event that promised mutual enjoyment.

There was sometimes conflict at the picnics where two ethnic groups met. At both the Pigeon Bush and Club Garibaldi picnics there was some antagonism between the two groups. At Pigeon Bush amiable feelings that had built up over the course of the picnic was tried somewhat by Seddon's overly-political after-dinner speech which seems to have contained something offensive for everyone, Maori and Pakeha alike. And at the Club Garibaldi picnic there was some objections when a New Zealander won a race and received a prize, as some of the Italians believed that prizes should be for them only.³ The friction at both these occasions was managed within the confines of the event, which leads credence to Turner's notion that in the liminal space a

¹ 'Maori and Pakeha: At the Pigeon Bush Picnic', *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 20 January 1896, p. 2.

² *Wairarapa Daily Times*, p. 2.

³ Elenio, p. 78.

unified 'communitas' could form. But it is questionable whether the picnic was, as a social ritual, sufficiently powerful to achieve an enduring, wider, sense of community. The strength of its function as a generator of community seems contingent on the existence of a prior community core.

This core could be comprised of the small family unit, made up of family members and friends who were well acquainted with each other, or it could be a larger community group, made up of individuals who shared common interests, experiences or backgrounds. The existence of picnics therefore indicates that there was both family and community solidarity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Where people did live in towns or cities or relatively close to each other in the country during the late nineteenth century, they met together to socialise at occasions such as a picnic. Families like the McKenzies of Lower Rangitikei, struggling to establish farms, initially spent their leisure visiting friends, family or neighbours or picnicking at nearby spots. Prosperity meant a far more active social life. In the 1860s New Years Day became an important social gathering for the McKenzies. Family and visitors attended their annual gathering, often numbering over a hundred. They played sports, cricket, tilting the ring, and foot and horse races, followed by a dance that often went on until the next morning.¹

It was not only families who socialised together during this time. The burgeoning numbers of urban community groups and institutions also held regular or annual gatherings attended by a cross section of the surrounding population. The Central Fire Brigade of Wellington, for example, held an annual Christmas picnic from the 1870s. In Lower Hutt, the St. James Anglican Church held annual fetes to raise money for a new church; hundreds of Wellingtonians attended, arriving on specially arranged trains.² By the twentieth century social networks were well established and cemented by regular social events, such as community picnics. From 1905, community groups held picnics

¹ Rob Knight, *Poyntzfield, the McKenzies of Lower Rangitikei* (Lower Hutt, 1975), pp. 127, 129.

² Millar, p. 77.

at the Ashhurst Domain with great regularity. Local school and church groups in particular returned to the Domain for many years to hold their annual picnics.¹ Many groups - workplaces, unions, lodges, schools, churches, friendly societies and sports clubs - had only one gathering a year, a chance for members and their families to get together.

It was not just the transitional journey itself, the pilgrimage to the 'liminal' space, which generated 'communitas' but the practical assistance members of the community gave each other so that the journey could be made. Transport to picnics was something many people shared with their friends and neighbours and sometimes with strangers. Those families without boats at Mt Camel, Northland, would be given rides to the favourite picnic ground with those who did, so that no one missed out on the community picnic held each year at Christmas.² Similarly, picnickers from Levin and the surrounding area would co-operate to travel the seven miles to the beach. "It was usual for the country people who had horses and traps to offer seats to the townspeople. One could lend a mount, one could offer a couple of seats."³ An Anglican vicar was surprised when one of the Methodists in his parish, a coachman named Rymer, offered to transport the children at the church's first annual picnic or 'treat' in 1876. "On asking Rymer what he would charge me to bring the children from Mecarree and Puketapu, and take them home again, his reply was, 'Nothing. And I'll do the same for you every year.'"⁴

The organisers of picnics depended on a network of associations because so much voluntary help was needed to mount a successful community picnic. In a small town like Ashhurst, for example, picnic organisers had a personal relationship with the members of the Domain Board which they relied on when securing the Domain for their events. Members of the Board, themselves members of other organisations, allowed

¹ Ashhurst Domain Board Minute Books, Vol I, II & III, 3/16/2, Palmerston North City Archives.

² Harold T. Thomas, *Way Up North* (Auckland, 1970), p. 54.

³ Wilson, p. 173.

⁴ P.C. Anderson, 'Reminiscences of Many Years in the Life of Clericus', qMS-0068-0069, ATL, p. 146.

themselves preferential use of the Domain for picnics. Board member G. Searle applied for permission to use the Domain for the Ashhurst Methodist Sunday School picnic on 26 December 1921, the same date requested by Mr Wilsher of Kelvin Grove. Although both parties were permitted to use the Domain, it is recorded that, the Kelvin Grove party were to be informed that the Methodists had already been granted permission.¹ Picnic organisers depended on the networks and goodwill that already existed within the community in order to mount a successful occasion.

For a picnic to be successful as a generator of community, there had to be mutual implicit agreement that everyone would join in. Grudging or hesitant picnickers were under a lot of pressure to join in the games and feasting heartily. 'Hannah', who participated in one particular picnic with a great deal of reluctance because she feared romantic entanglement, was subjected to strong persuasion. Her fellow picnickers simply could not accept that she did not want to join in.

On reaching the beach our horses were tied up to the tussocks in a sheltered place, and we dispersed in all directions. There were several young fellows who asked me to join them in a ramble on the beach, but I refused and seated myself beside Mrs Moore who was not well enough to walk about. But we had been there talking about ten minutes when Mr Moore senr came up and expressed his surprise at me sitting there, knowing at the same time how I enjoy a walk on the beach. He insisted on me taking a walk with him. Mrs Moore too persuaded me to go.²

'Hannah' was likewise cajoled into staying for the dance held after the picnic. "When I made known my intentions of going home they all begged me to stay, and when they found their persuasions were of no avail, they positively refused to let me go."³ By

¹ Ashhurst Domain Board Minute Books, Vol I, 21 December 1908.

² B.Ristori (ed), "'Hannah's" Diary, Part II, 1884-1888', MS-Papers-90-113, ATL, p. 156.

³ Ristori, p. 157.

declining to participate in the activity of the picnic or dance, 'Hannah' was rejecting both the individuals themselves and the community who wanted to include her, something they took great measures to resist. Non-participation threatened the 'communitas' of the picnic.

Picnics can be seen, therefore, as social rituals which established and maintained lasting relationships between people. The actions of travelling away to a picnic site together, sharing a meal to which all members contributed, playing games and then returning home with fondly shared memories encouraged group and community bonding. Certainly picnickers may have had a close relationship or association with each other prior to the picnic but the shared experience of picnicking bound them together in a way that other leisure activities, such as their attendance at a fete, would not necessarily have done. This sense of unity or 'communitas' to use Turner's terminology, is part of the 'liminal' phase of ritual.¹ Individuals who took part in the ritual became unified as a group as a consequence of their shared experience. Although picnics were often only annual, or at least infrequent occurrences, they did bind individuals together. Picnics aided community groups to forge a sense of group identity. Individuals were able to develop their relationships with each other in an environment that was quite separate from where they usually met.

People who led transient lives, the very poor or those who were somehow marginalised were unlikely to take part in picnics. In order to be part of the larger community picnics individuals first had to members of the community group running the picnic. James Cox, who laboured in the Wairarapa from the 1880s, was precluded by poverty from the all the social events held in his home town of Carterton. Long periods spent working away from the town meant he did not join any community groups such as the town's friendly societies, fire brigade or band. His lack of friends stopped him from attending communal excursions, patriotic ceremonies or commercial entertainments which would

¹ Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: a Critique of Turner's Theory of Liminality', *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, 1992), p. 30.

have included picnics.¹ Cox's poverty was exceptional, however. Generally wage earners or members of the working class did belong to many of the groups who held picnics; workplaces frequently held them, as did unions and churches. Even the less well-off could go on a family picnic, travelling by public transport or even by foot to a nearby park or beach. Assuming that the majority of Pakeha were settled during the closing decades of the nineteenth century they would have belonged to various social groupings whether they were employment or church related or other community groups. At the very least, any children or relatives of children would most probably have the opportunity to attend the school picnic. In many communities it was the school or church that provided the main focus of activities within the region so the annual picnic was the "main social event of the year" as in the case of the school picnics at Pukeroa and Papanui.² Thus, as has been demonstrated, picnics functioned as rituals of social cohesion most effectively where a great deal of cohesion already existed. Sometimes, in fact, the sense of group identity among picnickers could be so strong as to be seen as a threat to society at large.

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie linked the decline of the carnival in Europe to its use in the definition of group identity so strong as to threaten to lead to conflict between groups or against the prevailing structures of authority. Town governments sought to deal with this danger by separating festivities, giving each group its own carnival.³ Pakeha New Zealanders eliminated the danger of social conflict that could possibly have occurred at a large gathering of people by usually restricting picnics to their own class and ethnicity. As we have seen, it was generally people from similar backgrounds with shared interests who attended community group picnics. Where people of different classes or ethnic groups did meet at a picnic, as was sometimes the case,

¹ Miles Fairburn, *Nearly Out of Heart and Hope: the Puzzle of a Colonial Labourer's Diary* (Auckland, 1995), p. 207.

² Norman Leary, *77 Years Among the Kowhais: Beyond Hunterville 1896-1973* (Wellington, 1977), p. 76.

³ Ladurie, p. 313.

there was necessarily an implicit agreement to forget their differences and enjoy the event together.

Where picnics could possibly pose a threat to the ordered society was when the group cohesion of the picnickers was directed outwards from the group in a hostile way, or in a way interpreted by others as hostile, to the rest of society. The danger was that groups might become too strong and attempt to continue to use the solidarity they had gained from the picnic in ordinary situations outside the picnicking day, as the peasants did at the carnival at Romans in France in 1579-80. The usual inversion rituals were there extended in an attempt at a permanent inversion of the social order when peasant leaders endeavoured to gain control of the city.¹ The inversion created an energy of its own, it had the ability to fuse the group into a community, and in Romans that energy was used to incite violence in an attempt to achieve permanent political change. It was particularly feared of trade unions that they might use picnics to continue their political objectives, or as a platform on which to launch further activities. Although not a working-class union, at a Farmer's Union picnic at Pohangina in February 1908, union leaders spoke to members under a banner proclaiming "UNION IS STRENGTH".² The day was used to plan further action that the union would take on various issues. There was some recognition of the threat working-class picnicking groups posed to middle-class values. The Ashhurst Domain Board, turned down an application for the Palmerston North Railway Staff to hold a picnic on the Domain on Sunday 9 April, 1910. As part of its bylaws the Board did not allow "games or sports" on Sunday. Bylaws also prohibited the sale of "intoxicating liquor" which may have been another unstated reason why the Railway Staff were turned down.³

The third and final phase of the social ritual, as analysed by van Gennepe and Turner, was the 'reaggregation'. It was the restoration of ordinary governing rules.⁴ People donned their hats and jackets, children put their shoes back on, the picnic was packed away and everyone started on the return journey. The

¹ Ladurie, p. 96.

² *Manawatu Evening Standard*, Vol XLI-8514, 17 February 1908, p. 4.

³ Ashhurst Domain Board Minute Books, Vol I, 1905-1911.

⁴ Ladurie, p. 307.

freedoms that people experienced at the picnic were only temporary. Picnickers, in common with others participating in ritualised behaviour such as the pilgrimage or the carnival, crossed over into a 'liminal' space, a place of transition where normal social regulations and authorities were temporarily overturned. During this interim phase factors causing social conflict ordinarily were expressed in certain ritualised ways, such as at the picnic games. Consequently, when participants returned to their normal social states, the social hierarchy was strengthened and reinforced all the more by having had the opportunity to briefly assuage social tensions. Change had occurred as a result of the event, however. Individuals had experienced an inward transformation. Picnickers were more relaxed, if not more physically exhausted, as a result of their excursion. Everyone, whether rich or poor, young or old, female or male, had the opportunity to be released briefly from the anxieties associated with their station in life.

In fact, the challenges posed to the order of things on picnic days were always ritual challenges. In reality, even at the picnic itself, mechanisms for social control were still strong. Many hierarchies were transported to the picnics. Children on school and Sunday school picnics were still supervised. Women's domestic skills were still on display at the picnic, evident in the food they brought and how clean and tidy their children were.¹ That the normal social structure was still intact at the picnic is apparent in people's dress. In the vast majority of picnic photographs from the 1880s until the 1920s people are always fully and formally dressed. Very few men removed their jackets, almost none at all removed their ties. Women only removed their hats but certainly not their shoes, as men sometimes did, and then hardly ever in mixed company. Even on an all-male fire brigade picnic, most of the participants were fully dressed (plate 13). Two out of nineteen removed their shoes and well under half had no jackets on. Perhaps the situation changed once more of the Swan brewer's product had been imbibed. Appearances at picnics remained fixed despite the heat and surroundings. The

¹ Claire Toynbee, *Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930* (Wellington, 1995), p. 139.

boundaries of undress were crossed with a great deal of reluctance. On an outing to the beach in 1887 'Hannah' and her sister were soaked to the skin by a freak wave and experienced a great deal of anxiety at having to remove their dresses.

The tide was coming in very gently and just rustling on the bottom of our rock. But we had not been there very long before one monster wave swept over the top without a moment's notice, and wetted us both through.... There was not a soul near so we took them [dresses] off and spread them out in the sun. The minute we did this three figures appeared coming up the beach towards us. They were yet about two miles off, and we sincerely hoped they would keep that distance, but no! We could see they were gradually getting nearer and nearer, till there was no mistake they intended passing us. This was a terrible state of affairs - a gentleman and two ladies - and we were half naked! For you know it is too hot here to wear much besides one's dress. However we huddled together under our sunshades, so they could not see our faces.¹

The formal nature of clothing on the picnic signalled that it was not the anarchic institution which was the impression given by the fun and games. Instead most social rules and conventions remained fixed throughout the event as was apparent in some people's relations. Describing the interaction on her staff picnic, a woman working in a male-dominated workplace during the 1910s and 1920s said that the wives of the senior management - "ladies in big hats" - sometimes did not mix in with the other staff.² The women were clearly uncomfortable with the situation they found themselves in at the staff picnic, they wanted to keep themselves distant from the sense of community created by the event.

On some picnics the values that held sway in people's everyday lives were not allowed temporary respite. It is unlikely

¹ Ristori, pp. 122-123.

² Eleanor Hackworth, 24 November 1985, Interviewed by Hugo Manson, Fletcher Challenge Collection, Oral History Centre, ATL, LC no 475.

that Pakeha attending one YMCA picnic in 1891, would have been able to free themselves, even temporarily, from the social structures of a religious community.

A monster Picnic in connection with the Association was held on Boxing Day, and was a most enjoyable treat. Nearly 130 members and friends drove out in the morning to Petane Grange, where they spent a very happy day in boating and games of various kinds, whilst the excellent spread both at the luncheon and tea brought great credit on the good taste and generosity of the ladies.

After luncheon an hour was spent with God, and as the party were seated under the trees by the river bank, the glorious sounds of prayer and praise intermingled with passages read from God's word, and several bright happy testimonies, must have shown that in every truth a Christian's highest happiness is found in his master's service, and that happiness surpasseth all that the world can afford.¹

The language of this description, the use of such adjectives as 'enjoyable' and 'happy', masks the true level of enjoyment experienced at the picnic, which perhaps may not have been very high due to the pressures of expectations that pleasure was to be found in God rather than the worldly pleasures of the picnic.

Another factor that ensured the picnic would never go out of control was the certainty that most picnickers would be home before dark or at least very soon after. Nightfall brought an extra dimension to the liminal phase of the picnic. In itself, the dark promised a further dissolution of order; it was sinister and threatening but also liberating, by diminished surveillance. Consequently, if they did not go home, picnickers often went inside for a dance or if they stayed outside they huddled round the bonfire to watch fire works. The lighted hall or the fire provided them with a circle of safety. Picnickers could be assured that

¹ *First Annual Report of the Hawke's Bay YMCA* (Napier, 1891), p. 7.

whatever they may do during the day they would always return safely to their own beds by nightfall.

New Zealand picnickers may not have been aware that they were participating in a ritual but their behaviour had many ritualistic features. In common with the pilgrimage and the carnival, the picnic can be divided up into three phases. In the first phase, the participants were separated from their normal lives. This phase was marked by the procession and the masquerade. Picnickers paraded to their picnic sites dressed up in costume or just dressed up. Dressing both affirmed them to themselves as a group, and displayed them as a group. The second, 'liminal' phase was characterised by the rites of role reversal. Women and men sometimes temporarily inverted their respective gender roles at the picnic. Some of them swapped clothing for the benefit of the camera. The picnic games gave adults an opportunity to play. Children also acted up at the picnic; they pretended to be adults or barbarians. All picnickers were accorded a great deal of freedom. They were momentarily released from the cares and anxieties that their status within society generated. Occasionally, different ethnic groups and classes mixed on the picnic, which sometimes caused friction. Conflict was usually avoided, however, by restricting attendance at the community picnic to people with shared interests and backgrounds. Within these groups, picnics engendered a sense of solidarity and unity where it existed already. People were able to strengthen their existing relationships with each other through their contact at the picnic. Picnickers were united in harmonious disorder as one inclusive community. The final phase was the resumption of normal governing rules. However many freedoms the picnickers experienced, they were always temporary ones. The mechanisms for social control still persisted throughout the picnic. If the New Zealand picnic can be said to have a goal or purpose, it would be to strengthen existing forms of community. Like the carnival, the picnic provided a release from tensions that had built up within society. The equilibrium of the community was restored as a result. The picnic had a rejuvenating effect on the community, reinforcing already existing social bonds and creating new ones.



Plate 14

Photographer: Sydney Charles Smith
S.C.Smith Collection
ATL
Neg no: G23042 1/2

A family picnic; names, location and date are unknown. These picnickers have looted and tamed the wilderness. They have gathered flowers and arranged them in neat bunches on their carefully laid out tablecloth. They have also arranged themselves carefully and formally in a symmetrical group for the photograph. They were asserting their culture in the face of nature.



Plate 15

ATL

Neg no: 2346 1/2

A family picnic in the bush in the 1900s; names, location and date are unknown. In an inversion of normal domestic duties, men enact the actions of the first settlers and boil the billy for the picnic. The large fallen trunk of a tree attests to the fact the bush has been destroyed. The bush has changed from a threatening and malevolent entity to a leisure space where picnics could be safely enjoyed. As a concession to their labouring, the two men in charge of the billy have removed their coats, but the rest of the party remain fully dressed -- maintaining their 'civilisation' in the face of nature's riotous disorder.



Plate 16

Telsa Collection
ATL
Neg no: 16584 1/1

A Union Boat Club picnic, date and location unknown. Another all-male picnic. This is a typical group photograph of the picnic. The picnickers are lined up on the side of a hill, posing formally for the photograph that will establish for all time their presence there.

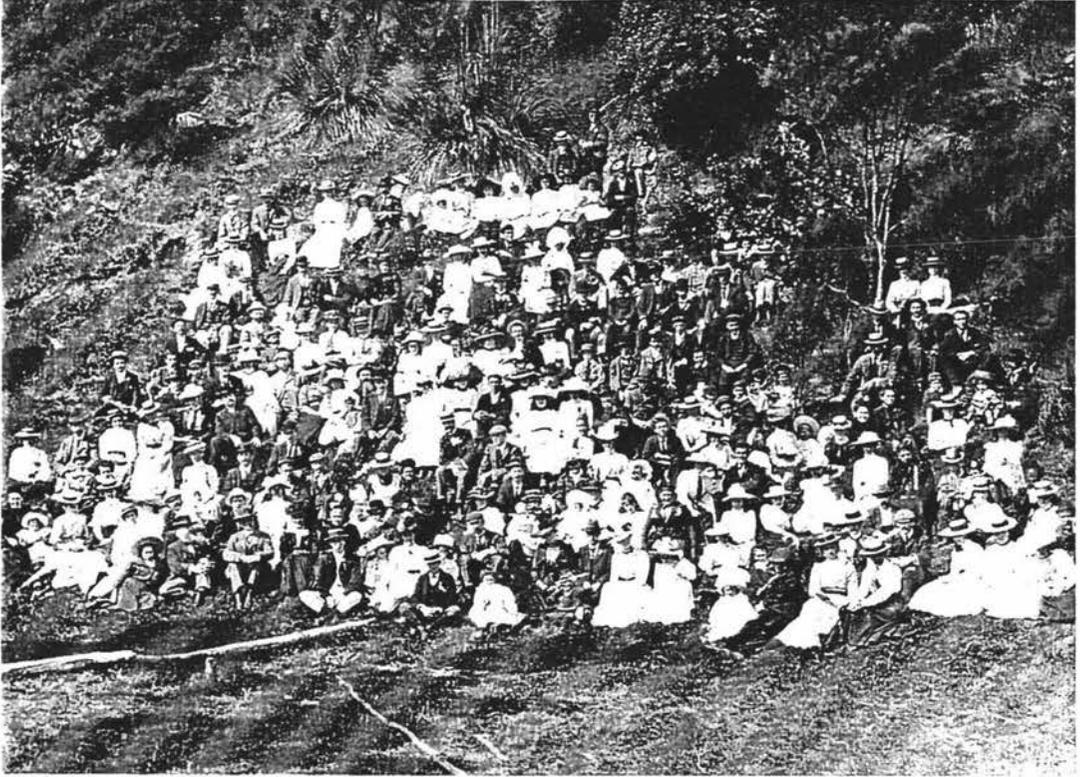


Plate 17

ATL

Neg no: 61830 1/2

A large picnic in 1904. Group and location are unknown. Another formal commemorative photograph. The picnickers are placed in the marginal space where the scrub (nature) intersects with the cleared ground (culture).



Plate 18

Telsa Collection
ATL
Neg no: 16265 1/1

A family picnic by a river; group, date and location are unknown. From the style of the dress, this photograph may have been taken in the late 1910s or the early 1920s. The picnickers have a much more relaxed demeanour than picnickers of previous generations. Most of the men have removed their jackets, and the women their hats. These picnickers have the paraphernalia associated with the typical picnic: the rugs to sit on: the billy: the baskets and the hamper to carry the food.

Chapter Three

Picnics as Acts of Colonisation

They hired a number of drags and invited all the children they knew (and some they did not know) and drove us out the seven miles to the nearest piece of native bush. There after much eating and drinking, we rushed round pulling up ferns by the roots, tearing down greenery, stripping the bark from trees, and, having behaved like Huns for some hours, we ate again, loaded ourselves into the drags and draped in clematis and other spoils we waved tree-fern fronds and shouted all the way home.¹

Thus Helen Wilson recalled a children's picnic organised by the Tate family of Timaru in the 1890's. The first thing that is evident in this account is that the children were driven out of town to the nearest patch of bush. They were visiting an extraordinary and unfamiliar environment and their response to that environment was to attack and loot the bush, to gather 'spoils' and to destroy their natural surroundings. The picnickers also ate, twice. They were taming the wilderness area by carrying the domestic actions of the kitchen and dining room outdoors. The children "behaved like Huns", that is, they acted 'barbarically'. They were temporarily turning their back on civilisation and forgetting their good breeding and manners. It was almost as if their were going 'back to nature'. The children also shouted; it was if their noise was keeping the evils lurking in the bush at bay. On their return home they proudly displayed their loot for all to see and made sure everyone saw them by shouting all the way home. They believed their actions were something for them to be boastful of, something that they should be seen to be doing.

Some picnics, such as the one recalled by Wilson were acts of colonisation. 'Colonisation' is used to describe the movement of European power into the global arena from the fifteenth century. In New Zealand colonisation was "the creation of a 'white' settler

¹ Helen Wilson, *My First Eighty Years* (Hamilton, 1959), p. 44.

society through the forcible insertion of a European population and polity into a non-European territory.”¹ There are several ways in which picnics can be understood as part of the colonising process.

Firstly, picnickers penetrated and looted the bush. The children at Wilson’s Timaru picnic were ferociously destructive, tearing up plants, stripping the bark off trees. They were not alone in this activity, it was quite common for people to mount picnicking expeditions into the bush to collect ferns, clematis or supplejacks. In August 1885 Nelson resident Emily C. Harris recorded a ferning expedition up Brook Street Valley. “We got to a lovely spot where thousands of maiden hair ferns grew on the banks over-hanging the river, three times we made a bridge of stones to cross and recross the water” then they collected plants. The ferns were to be used in her garden for, even though they were “dreadfully fatigued” by their labours, they took the time to plant the ferns in tins when they got home.² The following year in August Harris and some friends went on a picnic to collect clematis. Herbert and Daisy Spackman also included collecting ferns and supplejacks in the bush as part of their picnicking activities. Herbert used the supplejacks to make baskets.³ Many photographs of picnics show people displaying their ‘spoils’ (plates 12 and 14). The picnickers were demonstrating their culture’s conquest over the environment, they were collecting tokens of their mastery over the natural world, souvenirs of their possession of it that proved that they could travel to the bush and return safely.

The second way in which picnickers aided colonisation was by domesticating the natural environment by bringing into it the domestic activity of eating. Pakeha were temporarily extending ‘civilisation’ out from their dining rooms into the natural world. Unfolding the tablecloth and placing it on the grass was an act that had a significance beyond the action itself. Pakeha were

¹ P.J.Gibbons, ‘A Note on Writing, Identity, and Colonisation in Aotearoa’, *Sites*, 13 (1986), pp. 32-33.

² Emily C.Harris, ‘Diaries of Emily C. Harris’, Folder 1, MS-Papers-1284, Alexander Turnbull Library, p. 5.

³ Herbert Spackman, 9 November 1894, ‘Extracts from (Shorthand) Diary in Wellington, 1891-1900’, Folder 5, MS-Papers-1788, ATL.

overlaying their culture onto nature, extending the domestic zone outdoors. Consider plate 14, these picnickers have brought order to the wilderness. Their table cloth is laid out, securely held in place by rocks. Their food is neatly arranged around the cloth. Four bouquets of wildflowers also make up part of the arrangements, one in the centre of the cloth and three in the corners. The picnickers themselves are arranged very formally for their photograph in symmetrical rows. The entire picnic is a very well organised, ordered affair, very much as any normal meal would be at home. The picnickers achieved order in spite of their wild surroundings.

Linked to eating outdoors was the action of lighting a fire to boil the billy. A fire was a necessary part of the bush picnic, a cup of tea was almost obligatory. "Carefully we made a little fire and in no time the 'billy'...was boiling. The picnic basket was unpacked and we fell to hungrily. Never did sandwiches taste better, the plum cake was of the plumiest and the tea was just the right smoky tang that is expected of picnic tea, and for once it wasn't cambric."¹ Many photographs show people grouped around the boiling billy (plates 15 and 16). Although *ahi kaa* (retaining ownership of the land by keeping the fires burning) is a Maori concept there is some similarity with the actions of Pakeha picnickers. Lighting the fire was a major act of occupation, picnickers were asserting their right to use the land. Even if they lived in cities or towns and were only visiting the bush for the day, they were declaring their dominance over the natural environment and perhaps over alternative indigenous owners, by proving that they could prepare a meal and survive outdoors.

Building a fire, eating outdoors and boiling the billy were also acts of colonisation because they were re-enactments of the settlers' founding actions. In a sense, the picnickers' meal in the bush, with boiled billy and crude implements recreated the imagined former lives of European settlers who had to survive in the bush. Wilson recalled how making scones in the open fire by placing the dough on a stick above the embers so that it expanded and cooked -- a skill that had previously been used when she first

¹ Marion Ruddock, 'Incidents in the Life of Katherine Mansfield', MS-Papers-1339, ATL, pp. 48-49.

settled a bush section in the Wairarapa -- later was found to be both "useful and amusing" at picnics and camping expeditions.¹ The picnic allowed Pakeha, particularly Pakeha who lived in urban centres, to go 'back to the land'. They got to get their hands dirty, to collect firewood, start a fire, to act as if they were 'roughing' it outside. They actively participated in the myth of the pioneer that was part of the Pakeha cultural identity.

A third way that picnics sustained colonisation had to do with Pakeha's choice of picnicking sites. Pakeha were not always sensitive to Maori considerations of tapu. The Ashhurst Domain, for example, one of the most popular picnicking sites in the Manawatu from the turn of the century, was actually established on top of or adjacent to a Rangitane burial site and pa site beside the river. Considering how inappropriate it is to eat on a wahi tapu site, Pakeha actions must have caused Rangitane grave offence. Similarly, Pakeha picnickers may have aggrieved local Maori when they attended a picnic at Ruapekapeka Pa in Northland. The scene of armed conflict between Ngapuhi, led by Hone Heke and Kawhiti, and British troops in 1845-46, approximately thirty Maori and forty-five British men had died there.² A newspaper account of a 1900 school picnic at Ruapekapeka reported that the happy, smiling children could still enjoy themselves in "true British fashion".³ The picnickers were revealing themselves to be truly Eurocentric by their willingness to picnic at the pa site. Pakeha picnics could transform any site -- whether bush, beach, farmland, wahi tapu site or pa site, regardless of its history or present-day significance -- into a leisure space. Sites of cultural importance to Maori were transformed by Pakeha into a place to share fun and food. Pakeha were able to do that because firstly, like the picnickers at the Ashhurst Domain, they were ignorant about the significance of the site. Secondly, where they were aware of the importance of a site, as the picnickers at Ruapekapeka Pa must have been because of the local mythology surrounding the pa, they probably saw it as an historic

¹ Wilson, p. 111.

² James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland, 1986), p. 62.

³ Kay Boese, *Tides of History: Bay of Islands County* (Whangarei, 1977), p. 238.

place and therefore a perfectly legitimate space in which to picnic.¹ They were, in effect celebrating George Grey's 'victory' and Pakeha's complete dominance over Maori by choosing to ignore any objections that Maori might have about Pakeha picnicking at that particular location. They were re-enacting their possession of the site.

Looting, eating and lighting fires, the individual components that made up the picnic, were all part of Pakeha's attempt to tame the wildness of the land, to colonise it. A further way this process was accomplished was through taking photographs. As the wealth of existing photographic sources of picnics demonstrates, photographs were an integral part of the picnic, particularly from the early 1890's onwards. Taking a photograph at a picnic gave it a significance; the picnic became an 'event'. The typical picnicking shot includes all members of the party lined up on a hillside (plates 16 and 17). Other popular shots were around the table cloth on the ground with the food, drink, blankets and picnicking paraphernalia spread out (plates 14 and 18). The photographs have a significance beyond recording a leisure activity for posterity, however. Taking a photograph was another way Pakeha could tame the land. The land was literally 'captured' on film. It was framed; boundaries were created around it like a fenceline. The land was made into a scene, a *landscape*, an object which could be judged according to aesthetic values. It was a way of controlling and containing their environment.

Significantly, many of the photographs themselves capture boundaries, in particular fences between pasture and bush. Plates 9 and 12 are good examples of this. In the first one, the picnickers are returning from a picnic at the end of a day. The event has been held in a big, open paddock in Terrace End, Palmerston North. The partially-cleared bush is separated from the picnickers by a fence which is a clear demarcation of the separate areas. The bush is remote; confined to a marginal position. In plate 12 the bush and the picnickers are also divided by a fence. However, the spoils that the boys have collected -- fern fronds and flowers -- show that they have crossed the fence and entered the bush,

¹ George Grey claimed a significant victory for the British at Ruapekapeka Pa despite evidence to the contrary. Belich, p. 60.

briefly. They too, were domesticating the bush by collecting 'spoils'.

These boundaries were very significant for settlers. They were more than physical necessities, they had a symbolic function of making a place speak, giving it a place a history. The lines of the fence communicated the settlers' presence but they also allowed settlers to speak about themselves. Boundaries enabled settlers to tell stories about travelling -- crossing those boundaries. The "chief symbolic function of the boundaries is, among other things, to incorporate the sensation of travelling into the static or near static existence. Fences translate physical travel into literary travel, journeys into journals. Drama clusters about fences. Narratives begin and end there. They are places of exchange where the sensation of journeying is vicariously revived."¹ Settlers first needed to define their boundaries before they could narrate their history which involved crossing those borders.

On the picnic, Pakeha crossed many spatial boundaries. They walked out their front gates, leaving behind the domestic sphere. They travelled out into the country. They entered the bush. Part of the appeal of the picnic "rested on the recognition that to transgress spatial boundaries licensed the breakdown of social, and even personal, barriers."² There was freer, more uninhibited behaviour as a consequence of crossing these boundaries, as was demonstrated in Chapter 2. Picnickers recognised this. 'Hannah' was apprehensive about one Wanganui picnic she attended at the beach. She did not like to go alone, saying "I know what these parties mean!" It seems that the picnic provided the young men with the opportunity to take liberties that she did not feel entirely comfortable in granting.³

The need to tame the 'wilderness' stemmed from the profound alienation the settlers initially experienced in relation to the land. Edward Tregear -- a settler who arrived in New Zealand in 1863, and recorded his response to the land in a poem, 'Te Whetu Plains' -- demonstrated this disaffection. He looked

¹ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an Essay in Spatial History* (London, 1987), p. 155.

² Carter, p. 156.

³ B. Ristori (ed), "'Hannah's" Diary, Part II, 1884-1888', MS-Papers-90-113, ATL, p. 156.

around the countryside and saw a "silent", "songless" land, devoid of the kinds of sounds he had been used to - nightingales, waterfalls or whispering grasses.¹ Tregear's view of the land was a very negative one. Tregear saw the English environment as the most 'natural' kind. It was the standard to which the New Zealand environment was to be measured. He was profoundly alienated by what he saw in the New Zealand environment because of its perceived difference from the English one he had been used to. His lament was that the natural environment was so foreign and so unfamiliar. He saw the natural environment as strangely quiet and empty. "The air is dead, and stirs no living breath/ To break these awful Silences".² The New Zealand environment was the opposite to Britain, not only physically but morally as well. Settlers like Tregear, were unable to fit the natural environment of New Zealand into their ideas of what land should be like and they found this strangely disquieting.

Pakeha's actions on the picnic (looting, lighting fires) may be explained in part by their attitudes to the bush. Initially, settlers were afraid of the bush. It was a dangerous place. Europeans frequently suffered injuries or deaths as a consequence of their contact with the natural environment. It was very easy to get lost in the bush as E.H.Wilkins discovered when he had difficulty making his way while exploring bush in Wellington. "This N.Z. bush is no joke at all" he wrote to his mother. It was so dense in one place "it took me fully ten minutes to travel as many feet."³ Fear of the bush may have also been tied up with a Pakeha fear of attack from Maori. Armed conflict between certain groups of Maori and British and colonial forces continued in the North Island until the 1870s. During that time, many settlers feared they were vulnerable to attack from Maori who would advance out of the bush.

The bush was also dangerous for another, more fundamental, reason, because of what it represented. Characteristically in European culture the forest was wild and disordered, untamed and savage and the dwelling place of

¹ K.R.Howe (ed), *The Verse of Edward Tregear* (Palmerston North, 1989), pp. 87-88.

² Howe, p. 88.

³ E.H.Wilkins, 'Letters to Mother, 1913-1923', MS-Papers-4660, ATL, p. 7.

supernatural forces, all dangerous if unpropitiated and some evil; in relationship to human society, it occupied a marginal position. When people entered the bush, they risked being exposed to its unsettling aspects. Their fear was that the wilderness might be too powerful and people might be driven to forget their civilised ways and give in to lower, animal impulses.¹ The bush was 'nature', which was opposed to 'culture' and 'civilisation'. One could not enter the bush without entering a different realm, a domain where ordinary governing rules of human society did not apply. Nature ruled in the bush, humans found that their desires were of little consequence when faced with the realities of existing in the bush. After eventually locating a stream with considerable difficulty Wilkins concluded that the "essence of the effect of the bush is that it confuses, hampers, renders indefinite, contradicts the laws of physics that every action gives rise to a corresponding reaction; it offers an inhibitive action and in a most baffling manner dodges one's reaction."² The bush threatened settlers by offering the antithesis of the ordered society; it 'confused' and 'hampered'.

Pakeha who were in direct contact with the dangerous and disconcerting bush were concerned with rendering it safe. They worked to destroy the bush and to replace it with a more ordered and controllable space. The settlers sought to 'normalise' the profoundly alien 'new world' through the destruction of what they encountered and the substitution of European forms and phenomena.³ Settlers annihilated the bush, planted pasture and introduced exotic plant and animal species -- radically altering the natural environment. Pakeha also worked to make the remaining remnants of bush harmless, through their picnicking. Hence the children at the Timaru picnic 'looting' the bush. Like other picnickers, they were taming the wilderness. They were both establishing and demonstrating their culture's conquest over the environment. They were collecting tokens of their mastery over the natural world, souvenirs that proved that they could travel to the bush and return safely.

¹ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male - A History* (Auckland, 1987), p. 47.

² Wilkins, p. 7.

³ Gibbons, p. 33.

Paradoxically, there is evidence that, at the same time as settlers were destroying the indigenous environment, they also admired it and drew sustenance from it.¹ While travelling to a picnic at a Waikanae beach, Agnes Bryant was struck by her natural surroundings, the “tall forest trees” and the “flax, raupo and tall toi-toi plumes” of the swamp. A “vision of a lake situated within the line of foredunes” stayed with her for half a century prompting her to revisit the area.² But in order to love nature it had to be conceptualised as a visible object. A distance had to be created between the observers and what they saw. Settlers needed a “secure vantage point” in which to view their natural world.³

Part of the “secure vantage point” was to be found by conceiving of the terrain as a landscape, as a scene that could be described and judged according to aesthetic values. The idea of a landscape is an artificial construct imposed onto land by humans. A landscape is a “cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings.”⁴ Europeans had many different ways of considering their natural environment, ideas which were evident in schools of poetry, art, architecture and even town planning. Landscape genres in painting included the ‘Ideal’, the ‘sublime’ and the ‘picturesque’, each with its own set of rules, its own way of approaching the subject and own way of affecting its intended audience. The ‘Ideal’ landscape was an imagined landscape, composed formally, which sought to portray a “perfected nature”.⁵ The ‘sublime’ genre evoked feelings of terror, solitude and darkness in response to its grandiose subject matter.⁶ As Francis Pound’s book *Frames on the Land* shows, these genres were transported wholesale to New Zealand and adapted to fit local conditions. The picturesque vision of New Zealand, for example, delighted in bush and Maori villages.⁷

¹ Carter, p. 154.

² Agnes Bryant, ‘Reminiscences and Reflections about Reikorangi’, MS-Papers-3899, ATL, p. 30.

³ Carter, p. 154.

⁴ Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 1.

⁵ Francis Pound, *Frames on the Land: Early Landscape Painting in New Zealand* (Auckland, 1983), p. 21.

⁶ Pound, p. 19.

⁷ Pound, p. 25.

These art genres related to wider intellectual movements that influenced how people perceived their natural environment. By fitting the landscape into familiar images settlers were able to feel more comfortable with their surroundings. The New Zealand environment became problematic for Tregear and other settlers when it was not able to be easily fitted into their preconceived categories. Their experience of living within an unfamiliar landscape was an essentially negative one as they were continually forced to recognise the gap between their landscape models and what they actually saw around them in the land they were colonising. Hence their initial need to transform the natural environment.

The settlers' attitudes to the land that changed just as the land itself had been changed. There was a significant alteration in how Pakeha perceived their natural world which occurred as more and more Pakeha were born in New Zealand. The New Zealand-born Pakeha lacked the direct experience of the 'old world' on which the first settlers had based their European frames of reference. They had to produce their own social and cultural frame of reference, based partly on old European ones and partly on the remnants of the alien world which the original settlers had tried to destroy.¹ Pakeha were no longer seeing the environment as an unfamiliar, threatening place. Instead, they perceived it as an agreeable place to live and play. Settlers had been able to change the way they thought about the land. They were able to conceive a natural landscape that could be admired and appreciated, described and judged according to aesthetic values.

Picnickers contributed to this change in perception. They were able to find much that they could admire when they were out picnicking. A successful picnic provided people with the opportunity to take in a view, to perceive the beauty in the form, fauna and flora of the land. At a picnic at 'Hannah's' employer's sister's farm on Boxing Day 1884, the "bush is close by where a variety of beautiful ferns grow, but being so much rain lately it was too wet to venture in. But we enjoyed a run up the hill from where we could see a long distance. The country looked simply

¹ Gibbons, p. 33.

lovely all around.”¹ It was very important for picnickers to be able to see the view, and this probably influenced the type of locations that were chosen. In an account of a another picnic up the Wanganui River in 1886, ‘Hannah’ indicated just how much of a trial it was for her to climb a hill in her long skirts in order to take in the surrounding scene:

The hills were very high here. We climbed them and had a grand view from the top of Corinth and Jerusalem. But you may imagine what a task it would be to reach the top through bush and ferns in the heat of the day. More troublesome than any other vegetation is the creeper called supplejack. It is about the thickness of your finger and grows all over the place, twining around each tree and forming quite a network of cords. The ferns grow all over this, and one may walk on it sometimes and sometimes we find ourselves let down a little lower where they are not so thick together. All this will give you an idea of the perseverance we had to ascend the hills and how sorely we needed rest on reaching the bottom. I felt that my thirst would never be appeased, so much did I perspire in the exertion.²

Picnics played an indirect part in the formation of Pakeha cultural identity. Because picnics provided Pakeha with a way of becoming familiar with their environment, a way of discovering for themselves or experiencing for themselves the uniqueness of the natural environment, picnics also provided Pakeha with the opportunity to feel that all this was theirs. Because they could see, touch and hear their surroundings, they could therefore have some control over it and believe that in some way they owned it. Picnics furnished Pakeha with a way of learning about their environment while engaging in short, non-threatening trips to the country which generated social cohesion. They were participating in a dual process of imposing acquired knowledge

¹ Ristori, p. 83.

² Ristori, p. 85.

onto the landscape and of amassing their own perceptions of the land through direct experience. These knowledges, in turn, were used to construct Pakeha cultural identity.

The experience of the picnic expanded and reinforced Pakeha's existing understanding of the natural environment. They were personalising the knowledge that they had gained from books and from other people. They were adding to their experience of what it meant to inhabit New Zealand. Herbert Spackman recalled how this happened on a December 1894 picnic:

Went for a picnic with the Chappells to Day's Bay and had a most enjoyable day. The brake called for us at 8 o'clock; Mr Gell and his mother (80 years of age) accompanied us. It was a pleasant drive through the town and out to Potani and the Hutt. We found a shady spot by the creek and had lunch. Then we read and bathed, and after tea went for a climb in the bush and heard the pretty songster the "Tooee". Reached home before 9.¹

Whatever his prior knowledge of the bird -- whether gained from a book (unlikely because he spelt Tui incorrectly) or from his friends -- Spackman was able to hear the tui for himself while on a picnic. Similarly, on another picnic at the turn of the century a child expanded on her book knowledge of a kiwi when she believed she saw a bird in the flesh.

Suddenly I sat up, "Katie, what is that?" I said, pointing to a dark moving object. "It can't be a rooster because it hasn't got a tail, not a chicken as it's got no wings."

Katie, nearly excited as I was, however knew the strange animal. "It's a kiwi, you say it like kee-wee," she cried, "I heard father saying they were dying out. He showed me a picture of one in the New Zealand bird book the other day. It lives on earth worms and can run like the wind."

¹ Spackman, 29 December 1894.

Then as the kiwi saw us it gave proof of its running powers and scuttled away as fast as its long legs could carry it.¹

It was not only children who were influenced by what they read. Armed with useful guides such as *Animals of New Zealand* (1904) and *Plants of New Zealand* (1906) adults were able to identify the indigenous flora and fauna they encountered while out picnicking.² E.H. Wilkins, a Wellington doctor, encountered a great number of different birds in the 1920's when he took his family for an outing to a quiet, unnamed valley:

Birds sang - the yellowhammer, chaffinch, greenfinch, goldfinch, and skylark; and occasional thrush and the whir of starlings. The hedgesparrow sang with gusts from the furze bushes and of course the house sparrow was in evidence. Wheelbarrow birds - a pair coquerring in a group of native trees and tsitting playfully, and white-eyes we also saw and heard. The black-backed seagull and some terns completed out [sic] list of birds for the day.³

It was probably urban Pakeha who would have gained the most from these picnics. They would have not ordinarily had an opportunity to look around the natural environment that country dwellers would have as part of their normal existence.

Generally, any appreciation of the natural environment that Pakeha might glean from texts or experiencing the land for themselves, was largely superficial. In common with the appropriation of selected aspects of Maori culture, Pakeha assembled information on indigenous fauna and flora and incorporated them into their material culture in an attempt to provide uniqueness from other settler cultures. Gibbons calls this

¹ Ruddock, p. 51.

² W.F.Hutton and James Drummond, *Animals of New Zealand* (Christchurch, 1904).

R.M.Laing and E.W.Blackwell, *Plants of New Zealand* (Christchurch, 1906).

³ Wilkins, p. 6.

the "looting of indigenous cultural resources" where the complexity of Maori signifying systems were ignored and were used in any way that Pakeha (poets, novelists, scientists) saw fit.¹

Picnics occurred in the aftermath of colonisation. In the initial phase the settlers perceived the bush and the other parts of the indigenous environment to be a threat to their safety, both physical and moral. They sought to transform the environment and replace it with forms they were familiar with. However, once the indigenous environment was largely destroyed and so did not present as much of a threat, Pakeha's attitudes toward the bush changed. They could conceptualise the bush as an object, an aesthetically pleasing object, that they could incorporate into their cultural identity. The bush's power to harm had diminished significantly.

At the picnic in the park or domain, the bush's capacity to harm had subsided altogether. In the park, the bush was reduced to a tended plot -- if it existed at all -- it no longer had the ability to confuse or hamper. Moves to set aside land for parks started very soon after the beginning of European settlement. Parks were considered a necessary and important part of any town plan. The first Public Reserves Act was passed in 1854 setting aside land for "public utility".² In 1860 legislative provision was made to reserve land for public amusement and recreation, land was to be set aside for squares, gardens and ornamental buildings. Money earned from reserved land was to be spent on its administration and improvement, this was a consistent feature of later domain legislation. It became an offence to light fires, break fences, damage flora, cut or dig the sod, shoot animals or remove plants from the reserved lands.³ Picnickers were no longer able to loot these designated areas. Subsequent legislation extended these offences in order to preserve the domains. The 1881 Public Domain Act included much stricter provisions against trespass. The government administrator of the domain had control over all people, horses, carriages and vehicles within the boundaries. Admission was regulated by the administrator, who also had the

¹ Gibbons, p. 34.

² *New Zealand Statutes, 1854-1860, session I, no. VII, p. 12.*

³ *New Zealand Statutes, 1854-1860, session III, no. XXXII, p. 486.*

authority to preserve plants and animals within the domain, to exclude dogs and prevent nuisance.¹ In this way administrators and later, domain boards, were given the power to create parks within the local communities, to construct an artificial leisure space of open fields, gardens, walks (and picnic areas), to completely transform the environment into models of English recreation grounds. Picnickers arriving at these locations did not have to cross so many boundaries, for they remained in town.

Picnicking in 'European' environs was a safe experience, it was a continuation of the genteel tradition of the European picnic - le déjeuner sur l'herbe (lunch on the grass). One went to admire the ordered grounds, the well laid-out flowerbeds, the singing birds, and to eat good food. Landowners of the great estates in the South Island indulged in these kinds of gatherings. A call on one's neighbours would frequently extend to a longer visit and picnics were part of the other entertainments which included games, dances, charades, theatricals, sports and gambling.² A shady spot was chosen, champagne was cooled in the stream and a party would set out to experience the simple and rustic pleasure of a picnic in the park. The ladies, clad in light cotton dresses and little sailor hats were not equipped for a vigorous exploration of the surrounding countryside but, rather, for a pleasant jaunt to a nearby location.³ These picnickers were almost complacent. It was as if they had no interaction with nature, the wilderness was so completely tamed in these English-style parks. Ordinarily picnickers had a chance to connect with natural world by sitting in the long grass or tramping in the bush, but part of this connection was lost at the picnic at the Domain with seats and tea making facilities on hand. 'Hot water provided' was a standard part of the large community picnic, such as the one held by the Pitt Street Wesleyan Church at Lake Takapuna on the Prince of Wales Birthday in December 1895.⁴ At such events community

¹ *New Zealand Statutes*, 1881, no. 26, p. 199.

² Wilson, p. 12.

³ Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *A Southern Gentry: New Zealanders Who Inherited the Earth* (Wellington, 1980), p. 95.

⁴ 'Jolly Display on Holiday to Mark Prince's Birthday', *New Zealand Herald*, 11 December 1895, p. 7.

solidarity would have been the main outcome rather than communion with nature. Colonisation was complete.

Picnics can be fitted into a spectrum of colonisation. At one extreme, picnics were colonising acts, they were a tentative occupation of the land and an attempt to render it harmless and subdued. Through looting the bush, eating outside, lighting a fire, picnicking on any kind of site and taking photographs, Pakeha asserted their sovereignty over the natural environment by creating boundaries around it. The first settlers had been profoundly alienated by the indigenous environment of New Zealand and as a consequence had sought to transform it into a safe and comfortable space. Picnics were part of this process. In the intermediate position on the spectrum, Pakeha attitudes toward the land changed. Pakeha were able to look around them and appreciate their natural environment. They sought to find unique, indigenous, identifying features for their developing cultural identity. Picnicking gave Pakeha the opportunity to have a personal experience of the natural world. Picnics in the English-style parks and domains occupied the other end of the spectrum. Within these artificial environs, nature was completely tamed. It was an entirely human 'domain' and an interaction with the natural world was almost completely missing from the experience of the picnic.

Conclusion

This thesis presented three possible ways of considering picnics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: picnics as leisure activities: picnics as community-building rituals: and picnics as acts of colonisation.

Considering picnics as a leisure activity is valuable because it gives us an idea of the experience of the event. We become aware of what it actually was like to picnic, what people had to do to prepare for the event, how they got to the leisure site, what the grounds looked like, what they did when they got there, what they ate and what the weather was like. But however interesting this account may be, it is more descriptive than explanatory. It gives us few clues as to why people picnicked, what their picnicking behaviour might mean and what role the events played within the society. To answer these questions we have to look further afield.

Examining picnics as community-building rituals goes some way towards answering these questions. It provides us with clues about the social role picnics may have played within the communities that held them. Firstly, picnics had the valuable effect of easing social tensions. By providing an opportunity for everyone to temporarily relax and have fun, the events had important psychological and emotional benefits for individuals. They provided people with an outlet to express their creativity through play and games, activities that would be missing from most people's ordinary lives. More than that, picnics had social benefits. The temporary inversions that occurred allowed for built-up social pressures and conflicts to be released in certain ritualised ways. People were much more reconciled to their place in society because they had experienced a temporary dissolution of order. They had been able to be released, momentarily, from the anxieties occasioned by their status within society.

Secondly, picnics strengthened a sense of community. The experience of the picnic 'fused' the group into a unified body. New relationships were formed, old ones were enhanced. Everyone was included in the picnic; to go to the event was to actively participate. Picnics did not generate community where

none did not previously exist, however. They were not all-encompassing events involving all segments of New Zealand society. Attendance was usually restricted to people with similar backgrounds and interests. There was some pre-existing factor that already bound the picnickers together, such as location, occupation, religion or ethnicity. But picnicking intensified these bonds. It had, therefore, a unifying role within society, albeit, a limited role.

Pakeha's behaviour on picnics can also be explained by examining picnics as acts of colonisation. This approach gives an indication of what the actions of 'looting' the bush, lighting fires, eating outside and taking photographs might mean. They can be viewed as part of a wider process, where Europeans attempted to assert their control over indigenous peoples and their lands. Because picnics impinge on the issue of the use of land, they have implications for the Maori-Pakeha relations. In the past, Pakeha picnicked anywhere at all. They did not consider whether a site was tapu and whether it was appropriate for them to picnic there.

Picnics are indicators of Pakeha's changing relationship with the land. Pakeha were initially fearful of the bush and were alienated by the natural environment. They sought to change the land by destroying it and replacing it with more 'natural', European forms. Picnics were part of this process. The picnic had the effect of transforming the land from a threatening, wilderness area to a 'safe' space, whose beauty and uniqueness could be appreciated. Pakeha used picnics as a way of becoming familiar with the natural environment; their experiences of the terrain, flora and fauna were incorporated into their identity as a unique cultural group.

Although picnics have been largely missing from New Zealand historiography, they were important and popular leisure activities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most Pakeha would have experienced a picnic many times in their lifetime. Picnics were a significant part of Pakeha's recreational activities. They fostered and maintained community ties. They helped define a unique Pakeha identity. The importance of picnics to Pakeha society and culture should not be underestimated.

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