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Wool Bale Stencils: A Design History of New Zealand Branding and Visual Identity 1850–2019

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Annette O'Sullivan

2019

Abstract

Wool bale stencils have had a ubiquitous presence in New Zealand culture for over 150 years. Originating from sheep brands, marks of station identity were stencilled on bales of wool for export to overseas markets. In time, stencilled marks represented the quality of wool and reputation of the station, and became the visual identity for the station. Following discontinuation in the wool industry, at the beginning of the 1990s stencil plates and derivative stencil letters were used for new forms of visual identity in New Zealand design.

This material culture study combines historical contextualisation with close reading of objects, and observes their social life or how they have been used by people over time. It draws on object and visual evidence found on field trips to historic New Zealand sheep stations, and examples of how stencils have been used in contemporary culture. The thesis is structured through the life stages of a designed object: design and making; using, consuming, and distributing; and discarding and recycling. This maps the transformations of the wool bale stencil from an everyday utilitarian object to new forms of expression and representation in New Zealand design. Within the overarching theme of branding and identity of people, products, and places, this study of design history reflects on the meaning and significance of wool bale stencils in New Zealand.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors Dr Vicki Karaminas and Dr Claire Robinson for their support and guidance during this research. Dr Bronwyn Labrum was influential during the initial stages and helped to establish the foundations of the project. I would like to acknowledge the financial support for the research from the School of Design, College of Creative Arts. To colleagues and friends I am grateful for their interest and support, particularly Lynne Ciochetto, John Clemens, Fay McAlpine, Jacquie Naismith, Patricia Thomas, Kingsley Baird, Karen Curley, Gareth Gowan, Luiz dos Santos, Paul Orsman and Craig Cherrie.

Carroll Simcox, and Geoff and Lorraine Taylor were enthusiastic companions on high country trips and from the beginning were dedicated supporters of the project. They were generous with their time, and knowledge of South Island stations and took me to places I probably would never have found. I am especially indebted to station owners who gave me their time, showed me their shearing sheds and allowed me to photograph their objects. It has been a privilege to meet them, visit their properties and document their historical objects. They are: Stu and Phyllida Gibson, Carola and Michael Hudson (Gwavas Station), Angus Gordon (Clifton Station), Ed Beetham (Brancepeth Station), Andrew Russell (Tuna Nui Station), Andrew Richmond (Richmond Brook Station), Bill Thomas (Longbeach Station), Michael Studholme (Te Waimate Station), Alistair Studholme (Coldstream Station), John Acland (Mt Peel Station), Robert Peacock (Orari Gorge Station), David Sutton (Waitangi Station), Will Murray (Glenmore Station), Hugh Cameron (Otematata Station), and Richard Subtil (Omarama Station).

There have been a number of people who have recognised the value of the research and have contributed in various ways, in particular Mark Farnham, Ruth Low, Lindsey Hargreaves, Sarah Lowell-Smith, John Elliot, Ian and Louise Trass, Claire Bibby, Gerrie Soanes, Chris Gardiner, John Dangerfield, Robert Peden, Bill Carter, Gavin McLean, Gareth Winter (Wairarapa Archives), Vicky Holmes (Port of London Archives), Cathy Dunn (MTG Hawke's Bay), and Gordon Walters (Pamu). I wish to acknowledge the editorial work of Dr Melinda Johnston, Dr Ben Booker and Lois Burn, research assistance from Megs Russell, Nicki Stevens, and photography by John O'Sullivan.

My special thanks is to my family for their inspiration, advice and encouragement. In particular, I want to acknowledge the legacy of those of us who have gone before. To the type family of the International Society of Typographic Designers, thank you, especially Becky Chilcott, Euan Black, Belinda Magee and Sally Hope, and my typographic parents David Dabner and Eugiene Dodd.

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Glossary

Artefact
An object made by a human being, usually one with cultural and historical interest.

Back Country
Land extending beyond and including the foothills where remote stations are located.

Bale
A parcel of wool packaged in a wool pack.

Bellies
Wool taken from the under belly of the sheep. It is a lower grade of wool, often contaminated with twigs and stains.

Brands
Refers to either brand marks placed on sheep to identify the owner, or to the place name or initials branded on bales of wool.

Brand Mark
A visual image, element or symbol used to identify a brand.

Clarendon
A form of slab serif letter. Square in proportion, even character width and contrasting thick and thin strokes. First appeared in the early nineteenth century.

Class
The category of a fleece.

Classing
The preparation of the wool clip for market, grading the wool into even lines according to type, micron and yield. Bellies, necks, pieces and locks are separated from fleece wool, as are broken fleeces, burry or seedy wool. Discoloured, dingy, cotted, and double fleeces are placed by themselves. Fine wool is kept separate from coarse and bellies, necks, pieces, and locks are baled separately.

Clip
The wool shorn on a station each season.

Clothing Wool
Shorter, weaker and dense fibred wool with good felting properties. Not long or strong enough for combing processes.

Combing Wool
Wool with a fibre long and strong enough to stand the tension of a combing machine. Two inches or more in length, sound in staple and not likely to break.

Cotted
Wool that is matted. Sand, twigs, shingle, grit and thorns are worked into a mat in the fleece.

Counter
The internal space of a letter.

Crimp
The natural wave formation in wool. The closer the crimp the finer the wool.

Crossbred
The progeny of two different breeds of sheep.

Culture
Ideas, customs and social behaviour of a group of people.

Dags
Wool from the area of the sheep around the hind legs and under the tail contaminated with sheep dung.

Dingy
Discoloured wool through effects of climate, log stain or parasites. Dull in appearance and below the average brightness of wool.

Double Fleece
A fleece of two years or more growth.

Egyptian
A slab serif letter with unbracketed serifs. Square in proportion with even character width and line. Appeared in the early nineteenth century,

Ewe
A female sheep.

Fadge
A light weight bale, half or three quarter size usually from small holdings weighing under 100 kgs.

Fleece
The main part of the sheep's wool picked up in one piece and taken to the wool table where it is skirted and classed.

Fellmonger
A dealer in hides and skins particularly sheepskins.

Get Up of Wool
Preparation of wool.

Gothic
An alternative early name for a sans serif typeface.

Half Breed
A sheep developed from a Merino and one of the long-woolled breeds—Leicester, Lincoln or Romney. Dual purpose meat/wool sheep.

Hemp
Natural plant fibre grown in India. Hemp is similar to jute but has a softer tensile. Both fibres were used to make New Zealand wool packs.

Hogget
Wool shorn from a sheep that has never been shorn, usually a one year old of either sex.

Kiwiana
Certain items produced in New Zealand commonly seen as representing iconic Kiwi elements. Symbols of identity that are said to contribute to a sense of national identity.

Lamb
A young sheep up until the age of 12 months.

Locks
Second cuts of wool or small portions stuck together from the lower parts of the legs and edges of the fleece swept up from the floor and under the wool table.

Man Cave
A space where a man can retreat such as a garage, spare bedroom, media room, den, or basement.

Material Culture
Physical objects in a society that define culture.

Merino
A fine-wool breed of sheep originating from the mountains of Spain and well suited to mountainous conditions.

Myth
A widely held belief or idea.

Necks
Wool from around the neck of a sheep.

Number 8 Wire
A common gauge of wire (4.0 mm) used for fencing on sheep farms that was often used for other purposes. Later the term came to represent New Zealand ingenuity and resourcefulness.

Object
A material thing with a physical existence that can be seen and touched.

Pieces
Inferior shorter pieces of wool removed from the edges of the fleece during skirting. These are broken pieces of wool of varying quality usually swept up from the floor.

Presser
A person who presses wool into bales using a wool press.

Quarter Bred
The offspring of a merino and half bred sheep.

Raddle
A powdery chalk in a greasy crayon.

Ram
A male sheep.

Rouseabout or Rousie
Unskilled worker or shed hand.

Run
The land held by a particular lease or pastoral licence.

Runholder
Station owner.

Sandy
Fleeces that have sand through them. Sandy, earthy and discoloured fleeces are baled together.

Sans Serif
A letter without serifs or other terminal strokes.

Scab
Highly infectious disease of the sheep's skin caused by mites. Produces large scaly crusted lesions causing severe irritation and debilitation. Eventually the fleece detaches from the skin.

Scouring
The process of removal of the natural lanolin content of the wool.

Shearer
Person who shears sheep.

Shearing
Removal of wool from a sheep. A properly shorn fleece leaves the fleece from the back of a sheep whole and intact. Belly wool is separated, neck, stained and dag wool is removed. Small bits and pieces cut off separately by the shearer are the locks, bellies and pieces of wool.

Sheep Brand
Identification mark applied to the body of a sheep with a branding iron dipped in paint.

Skirting
Removal of all daggy and faulty wool from the main fleece.

Skirtings
The portions of inferior quality and value wool removed from the fleece while on the wool table.

Slab Serif
Heavy rectangular serif letterforms. The terminals can be bracketed to the main stem of the letter (Clarendon) or unbracketed (Egyptian).

Stained
Wool stained with urine or excreta baled together.

Station
A large farm or property carrying more than 2000 sheep. The word originated from Australia.

Stencil
A thin sheet of metal, card or plastic with cut out text or design through which a printable substance is transferred on to another surface. Letters created by this method are made up of a series of disconnected sections.

Stencil Plate
The thin sheet of metal, card or plastic holding the cut out stencil text or design.

Symbol
A thing that represents or stands for something else.

Tally
Number of sheep shorn by a shearer in one day.

Tops
Wool that has undergone the process of combing and scouring during manufacturing.

Vernacular
Traditions of regional and untutored practice. Related to the ordinary.

Wether
A castrated male sheep, usually for the production of wool.

Whare
House where station hands or shearers live.

Wool Bale
A sack for containing wool made from jute, hemp or flax and later changed to synthetic material. Also called a wool pack.

Wool Bins
Open compartments in the woolshed where the classed wool is held before it is baled and pressed.

Wool Brand
The identity of a station (station name and mark) branded on a full bale of wool.

Wool Shed or Shearing Shed
A large building where all shearing activities take place. The inside is divided into pens where unshorn sheep are held, the board where shearers work, and the wool room where wool is classed, pressed and stored.

Wool Table
A slatted table where the fleeces are spread out by the classer for sorting into the appropriate bin.

Abbreviations

BLS Bellies
CMB Combing
CLT Clothing
CRT Crutchings
FLC Fleece
HGT Hogget
LKS Locks
LMB Lamb
NKS Necks
PCS Pieces
STN Stained
X BRED Crossbred

Fig. 0.1

Figure 0.1. Number stencil,
Snowdon Station shearing shed,
Canterbury. Photographed by
Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

Introduction

New Zealand was a perfect habitat for sheep, and no country in either hemisphere was more superior.[1] That was the opinion of public works surveyor Charles Hursthouse in *New Zealand: The Britain of the South* (1861). Writing as an untiring advocate of New Zealand immigration, he appealed to those with “pluck, bottom, energy, [and] enterprise”, and claimed “it is the strong and the bold who go forth to subdue the wilderness and conquer new lands”.[2] Cornish immigrant John Grigg demonstrated all the virtues described by Hursthouse. His biography points out that “his forthright nature and ability to foresee and adapt to change were qualities well suited to the role of a pioneer”.[3] In 1864 Grigg purchased Longbeach Station, a property consisting of 32,000 acres (12,950 hectares) of “impenetrable bog” on the east coast of the South Island of New Zealand. Grigg drained and developed the land, built up his livestock and established what became regarded as a model New Zealand sheep station. The *Cyclopaedia of New Zealand* (1909) claimed it to be “the finest farm in the world”.[4] So exemplary was Grigg’s pioneering farming success, that the Queen and Prince Philip stayed at Longbeach Station on their arrival to New Zealand during the Royal Tour in 1953–54.[5]

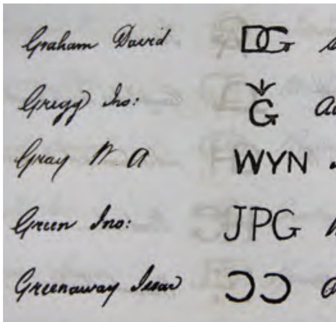
Graham David DG
Grigg Jno: G
Gray W A WYN
Green Jno: JPG

Fig. 0.2

When setting up the station, Grigg imported Southdown sheep from the royal flock at the Sandringham Estate in England,[6] and as a result was given permission by the estate to use the royal symbol of the Prince of Wales’ feathers.[7] Grigg combined the symbol with a letter G from his surname to create a unique registered mark of station identity designed for branding sheep. This was listed in the Canterbury Sheep Brand Register in 1874 (fig. 0.2).[8] The brand mark was applied to sheep after shearing by dipping a branding iron with the mark into paint, pitch, or another marking substance and pressing on the body of the animal, identifying ownership of strayed or stolen sheep and helping to monitor the spread of disease threatening the wool industry at the time (fig. 0.3). The Longbeach brand mark was redesigned as a

Fig. 0.3

Figure 0.2. Longbeach Station sheep brand, in Brand Book of Canterbury: Compiled from the Official Records to the 31 March 1874 (Christchurch: s.n., 1874), 50.

Figure 0.3. Sheep branding iron, Longbeach Station blacksmiths’ forge, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

stencil for marking bales of wool for export (fig. 0.4) and was made in a range of branding irons for marking other produce to leave the station, such as sacks of wheat and oats. Today, the station is owned by a descendent of John Grigg who continues to use a mark closely resembling the original stencilled brand on the station website, to market an events venue in the original brick cookshop,[9] and to promote Longbeach Foods, a company selling premium beef from the station (fig. 0.5).[10] The provenance of the station is preserved through the continuing use of a letter mark from the name of the original owner and a symbol of the heritage of his sheep and their connection to the British royal family. I visited Longbeach Station in 2015 and documented branding irons in the original blacksmiths' forge along with wool bale stencils still hanging on nails in the shearing shed.[11]

Fig. 0.4

Fig. 0.5

This thesis has its origins in my personal collection of historical printing types for use in hand printing. These are predominantly letters made from wood and lead but include other typographic objects such as letter punches, rubber stamps, and branding irons. The online purchase of single letter and number stencil plates in 2009 prompted me to investigate their origin to determine how and why they had been used in the past. A background in typographic design had introduced me to traditional methods of letterpress printing and inspired me to experiment with hand printing in contemporary creative practice. Exploring the intersections between modern media and traditional methods of printing extended to the study of local lettering histories and to investigating their current application. For me, the allure of wool bale stencils lay in the hand-made letters, unconventional stencil styles, tool marks left on plates, and the residual layers of tar, paint, ink, and wool that gave clues to their previous life (fig. 0.6). The visual and material histories that appeared to be embedded in the plates prompted further investigation.

Fig. 0.6

Figure 0.4. Station stencil, Longbeach Station shearing shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 0.5. Station brand mark Longbeach Station website. Accessed 6 April 2019, http://www.longbeachestate.co.nz/index.htm.

Figure 0.6. Station stencil, Snowdon Station shearing shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

My earliest inquiry into the research potential of the subject was discouraging. A station-owner acquaintance advised me that there would be no notable history to be discovered. He described stencilling as an outdated method of marking wool bales for export—a redundant shearing-shed practice that had been discontinued towards the end of the last century. The stencils belonging to his station, he informed me, had been discarded when the original shed was replaced. My proposed study was

subsequently met with varying responses from farmers who struggled to understand how wool bale stencils could be a valid subject for research. In material culture terms, the stencils appeared to be mundane, everyday objects of little cultural value or significance.[12] An initial research trip to the South Island in 2010 seemed to contradict this, however, as historic stencil plates could still be found on stations, and stencilling was seen on station properties, in the countryside, and in rural towns. There was also evidence of new uses of stencil plates and recent designs with stencil letters that had a connection to their original use.

In later field trips to selected sheep stations I found that many stencil plates remained in shearing sheds: hanging on nails, stored on shelves, or stacked in cupboards. At times they were displayed as part of the history of the station, along with shearing histories of names and dates graffitied with stencils on shed walls. There were also new forms of station identity that referenced brand marks on station stencils applied to wool bales in the past. Historic use of stencilling on stations was seen on signs, post boxes, rubbish bins, and farm equipment. In rural towns, original stencil plates, stencilled letters, and other sheep-farming memorabilia, such as branding irons, photographs, and wool presses, were used to decorate themed interiors. There were new stencil signs for farms, businesses, shops, cafés and pubs, and stencil type was found on packaging and promotional materials for wool and sheep-related products.

Fig. 0.7

Figure 0.7. Stencil plates as interior decoration. New Zealand House and Garden Magazine 238, June 2014, 90–98.

I began to look for links between the historic use of stencilling on wool bales and the use of stencil letters in design, and was interested in whether the contemporary use of stencils was a conscious reference to traditional uses on wool bales or a subliminal acknowledgement of stencils as part of the typographic visual language of New Zealand. Despite no longer being used in the wool industry, I observed the popularity of original stencil plates bought through online auctions, which continues to the present day. Comments from sellers served as prompts for the stencils' possible uses in interior decoration, printing, or collecting. The reuse of stencil plates as art objects was affirmed through interior design magazines, such as *New Zealand House and Garden Magazine*, which showcased stencil plates on walls in feature houses (fig. 0.7). This appeared to confirm the value of originality, materiality, and authenticity, and introduced issues of nostalgia, collecting, and personal identity through objects.

In addition to an increasing awareness of the extent and diversity of stencil use, I developed a growing sense that stencilling in New Zealand could have deeper significance than my original study of a local letter style. Alongside questions about where stencils had originated and how they had become so widely used in the wool industry, were questions about why stencils continue to be popular, despite not being

used in the industry for over thirty years. Was there deeper meaning for the use of stencil letters apart from offering a convenient way of applying text to an object or surface?

Seeking to discover where wool bale stencils originated, how and why were they used, when they were introduced and by whom, I found that very little had been written about them in New Zealand. Anthropologist Daniel Miller states there is a point at which an object becomes “blindingly obvious”.[13] In other words, it is so common it becomes overlooked. To a New Zealander familiar with the legacy of sheep farming, wool bale stencils were likely to be one of those objects. Although they were well-recognised symbols of rural heritage, there was very little known about them.

A literature search revealed there had been much written about the history of New Zealand sheep farming and sheep station histories: (Carter and MacGibbon, 2003); (Riseborough, 2010); (Wolfe, 2006); (McIntyre, 2008); (Vance, 1980); (Crawford, 1949); (Acland, 1975); (Macgregor, 1970), however, this material contained few references to wool bale stencils. There were minor mentions in personal accounts of life on high country sheep stations as told by station owners, shepherds, musterers, and shearers: (Newton, 1947, 1949, 1964, 1966, 1972, 1973, 1975); (McLeod,1951); (Burton, 1938); and (Anderson, 1963, 1965, 1966). The earliest detailed description of shearing, classing, pressing, and marking bales of wool was found in letters by Lady Elizabeth Barker, wife of pioneer North Canterbury station owner Fredrick Broome, written to her sister in Britain during the 1860s and later published in a series of books, including *Station Life in New Zealand* (2000). As well as describing shearing and wool pressing, she documented the type of marks applied to wool bales at that time and described how they were applied before the use of stencils.

A much later history of building and plumbing materials imported into the country and used in buildings on sheep stations was offered by Geoffrey Thornton’s *The New Zealand Heritage of Farm Buildings* (1986). In this history Thornton outlined possible materials available for making wool bale stencil plates and provided a rare description of the process of stencilling. In recent publications, such as *High Country Woman: My Life on Rees Valley* Station (2012), *High Country Stations of the Mackenzie* (2015), and *Puketiti Station: The Story of an East Cape Sheep Station and the 180 Year-Old Williams Family Legacy* (2013), photographs of stencilling and stencil plates featured as historical memorabilia, a material reminder of the longevity of the station and remnants of past farming practices.

I then wondered if more had been written about the wool bale stencil in Australian historical accounts. Australian wool history was based on an older and larger industry than in New Zealand. Australian records show the earliest exports of wool date from around 1800, but it was not until 1821 that the first Australian wool was sold by auction in London. Aspects of packing, transporting, and exporting wool were trialled in Australia before sheep farming in New Zealand was established. Other colonies exporting wool to Britain—including South Africa, Canada, and Argentina—had similar requirements for the preparation of their wool for export and sale in Britain. However, Australia and New Zealand were connected through proximity and isolation, shared shipping services, transfer of livestock, and common farming practices. The Australian-designed wool pack and wool press were introduced to New Zealand to regulate the size, shape, and weight of bales for shipping and changed the way wool was prepared for export, for example. Immigrants and seasonal workers commonly travelled between the two countries, strengthening ties and fostering cross pollination of ideas. Despite this longer history, I found little specific information on wool bale stencilling in Australia except for Christopher Fyfe's *The Bale Fillers: Western Australian Wool 1826–1916* (1983). Fyfe's text included a brief history of sheep branding and wool bale stencilling that confirmed and added to evidence found in New Zealand and reflected changes in British requirements for marking bales.

Was there anything written about wool bale stencils in New Zealand's design history literature? Again, direct references to the subject were difficult to find. The field of design history is relatively new in New Zealand and the contribution of typographic researchers and scholars to this field is only a recent phenomenon. Patricia Thomas's study of letterpress printed emigration advertising posters from the colonial era in her thesis *"'Large Lettr'd as with Thundering Shout': An Analysis of Typographic Posters Advertising Emigration to New Zealand 1839–1875"* (2014) is one of the few academic examinations of historic typographic forms.

A publishing and printing history in *Book and Print in New Zealand: A Guide to Print Culture in Aotearoa* (1997) documented the history of production and distribution of books and other forms of printed literature. Although it did not include stencilling, it compiled a history of communication and distribution of information in the colony. It wrote of the crucial role played by provincial newspapers and trade journals in disseminating information to farming communities, conveying feedback and instructions from importers, fostering local discussion, and advertising goods and services. Hamish Thompson's research on design histories of posters and book covers has been documented in two recent publications: *Paste Up: A Century of New Zealand Poster Art* (2003), which documents one hundred years of poster design, and *Cover Up: The Art of the Book Cover in New Zealand* (2007),

a visual history of book cover design during the twentieth century. Both were visual catalogues of typography and lettering histories in New Zealand. Although they presented a wide range of hand lettering, stencil letters appeared only twice—in posters for army recruitment in 1944 and 1965—and were not used on covers of books on sheep farming.

In *Printing Types: New Zealand Type Design Since 1870* (2009), Jonty Valentine reflects “the history of type design in this country is hardly known, even to its creators”.[14] He documented work by twenty-four type designers, none of which were stencil types. He states, “we need new local heroes, but by placing them in the context of a larger story with alternative mythologies, their work may potentially gain much more interesting layers of meaning”.[15] Among his selection was McCahon, a typeface based on the handwriting of artist Colin McCahon seen in many of his paintings. “McCahon had been interested in the shape of words and letters in art since his early childhood, when he recalls being fascinated by a sign-writer painting HAIRDRESSER AND TOBACCONIST’ on a shop-front window”.[16] The lettering style in works by artist Dick Frizzell (2009) was similarly inspired by vernacular hand lettering seen on road-side fruit and vegetable stalls. Both artists credited their work to lettering seen in everyday life in New Zealand and their lettering styles have subsequently been used to represent popular culture in branding locally made products.

I found a lot more had been written about stencils in international literature, but not specifically about wool bale stencils. Most recently, the stencil was celebrated in a publication titled *Stencil Type* (2015), an illustrated resource book of stencil use written and compiled by design writers Steven Heller and Louise Fili. They documented a diverse range of stencils and stencilling dating from the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Although it did not include stencilling in agriculture, shipping, or trade, the book did acknowledge the long history of stencilling in the British shipping industry.[17] Previously the stencil had been included within the discussion of other typefaces. Simon Loxley, for example, listed the stencil in his selection of fifty remarkable fonts in a book titled *Type is Beautiful* (2016), and John Walters named Stencil-Gothic, designed in 1885, as one of *The Fifty Typefaces that Changed the World* (2013). Stencils also had a minor mention in literature on lettering on buildings, including in Alan Bartram’s *Typeforms: A History* (1986), and environmental typography, as in Phil Baines and Catherine Dixon’s *Signs: Letter in the Environment* (2003). Recently, stencils have been popularised through graffiti and stencil street art, where they have become known as the fastest, easiest, and cheapest method of applying an image or text on a wall, footpath, or almost any other object or surface.[18] In this context they have formed part of a wider discourse on graffiti as a legitimate artform.

British scholar Eric Kindel's research on the stencil is the most significant contribution to the field internationally to date. He has explored the stencil in various forms and at different times and locations in history. This spans seventeenth-and eighteenth-century European stencil use in liturgical works (2003), the use of stencils by architects and surveyors (2010), adjustable stencil sets (2006), stencil machines (2001), and stencil typefaces (2013). As well as specific stencil investigations within historical contexts, Kindel provides an overview of the history and use of the stencil (2003). He gives detailed analysis of form and function, outlines their history and explains basic principles of stencilling. His research draws from a large collection of stencil plates and ephemera held at Reading University, and his work includes collaborative projects to replicate early stencil plates to demonstrate how they were made and used in the past (2013). Kindel's body of work has increased the awareness and understanding of the stencil in the international design community and has promoted the stencil through public exhibition (2012). Although his work set a precedent for this project and Kindel has acknowledged stencilling in agriculture, shipping, and trade, these are not areas he has explored in detail.

Lastly, I turned to the literature on New Zealand identity to see whether it covered stencils and stencilling as material objects or visual forms. New Zealand identity is a subject that tends to be discussed by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and writers, more than by design historians. However, I found reference to a century of registered commercial trade-marks in writer Richard Wolfe's visual catalogue *Well Made New Zealand: A Century of Trademarks* (1987). As with the design of early sheep brands, the trademarks represented a mix of symbols derived from British and local references. Among the 1,560 marks there were few that resembled the design of brand marks on sheep or station stencils, but many used symbols derived from local landscapes, native plants, animals, and bird species.

Consistent with this, I found that most of the literature on New Zealand's visual identity was concerned with the use of flora, fauna, and elements of landscape. Historian Ron Palenski has reflected on the unifying role of symbols, whereby "groups of people become nations by identifying with common symbols, and individuals become aware of their membership in the nation as they become conscious that they share their attachment to certain symbols with others".[19] He observed that in New Zealand, symbols of a nation such as anthems, flags, and stamps were supplemented by natural symbols of flora, fauna, rivers, mountains, thermal areas, and lakes, which he writes were promoted to tourists and local residents as emblems of New Zealand.[20]

In writing about the development of colonial identity from an Australian point of view in *Illusions of Identity: The Art of Nation* (1993), Australian design theorist Anne-Marie Willis explained that "in a colonial context visual and word images of landscape have had powerful psychological appeal in which the depiction of distinctive characteristics has been conflated with the discovery of an identity for the nation".[21] She maintains constant repetition of images derived from nature (bird, animal, flower, or tree) can in time become signs of a nation.[22] Repeated examples of New Zealand symbols seen in early trademarks depicting the kiwi,[23] silver fern,[24] and koru[25] dominated the national debate in 2016 as the preferred symbols to represent the country in the proposed redesign of a national flag. Their prominent use in representing the country through sports teams (silver fern), the national airline (koru), and New Zealand made goods (kiwi) continue to endorse them as dominant symbols of identity for the nation. In *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity* (1996) sociologist Claudia Bell writes, "the invention of the local is also an invention of the national. The sophisticated image-making industry at a national level steals local successful events and symbols, assembles these into a montage, then claims them as national".[26]

Alongside symbols derived from the natural landscape, flora, and fauna, however, I found a growing sense of nostalgia for New Zealand rural identity. As early as 1907, the contribution of sheep farming to the national economy was recognised by the symbol of a sheep in the national coat of arms.[27] Bell explains that adoption of environmentally based constructs of national identity was the result of an early connection with the land by pioneers. This replaced and redefined traditional concepts of place left behind in Britain.[28] She describes how some symbols continue to foster a sense of rural nostalgia through New Zealand advertising, such as "the rugged outdoor type (male!) in swanndri [jacket],[29] gumboots, and a stockman's hat, out with his dog, mustering. The backdrop of the high country suggests that this is his land."[30] According to Bell, rural iconography recreates a sense of identity with reference to the rural past. She observes how "signage in the store continues the mock-rural ambience. Numbers and letters are printed in text matching wool bale brands, on rough hardboard."[31] Despite this observation, Bell did not delve further into the typographic form or object as a marker of national identity.

Writing about identity on high-country sheep stations in *Calling the Station Home: Place and Identity in New Zealand's High Country* (2001), anthropologist Michèle Dominy states the Southern Alps are a powerful symbol of national identity, particularly in the South Island.[32] This was echoed by historian Roberta McIntyre, who writes about the histories and mythologies of the high country and high-country sheep stations in *Whose High Country? A History of the South Island High Country of New Zealand* (2008). Historian Jock Phillips explored New Zealand identity from

a male perspective in *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male, a History* (1996), in which he states that the characteristics of courage, strength, and adaptive skills demonstrated in the achievements of pioneers were aspirational symbols of national identity for generations of New Zealand men.[33] He believes versatility, innovation, and improvisation defined early pioneers, were desirable traits of the New Zealand character, and were reflected in the objects they made.

'Kiwiana' has become a term used for selected objects widely recognised as symbols of New Zealand identity and representing what are perceived to be the iconic characteristics of New Zealanders. Bell explains, "Kiwiana provides a steady catalogue of symbols of nation; locally manufactured items, therefore confidently authentic, and accommodating a conception of a distinctive national cultural identity".[34] Objects of Kiwiana were formally identified and promoted through the work of Stephen Barnett and Richard Wolfe in *New Zealand! New Zealand! In Praise of Kiwiana* (1989) and *Kiwiana! The Sequel* (2007). The range of objects is said to capture the essence of what is perceived to represent the can-do-attitude, resourcefulness, and ingenuity that typify the national character of New Zealanders. The ongoing value of these objects as symbols of national identity continue to be reinforced through marketing and product development for tourists and local buyers of contemporary New Zealand design, and as objects of nostalgia. Whether nostalgia for an imagined past, a romantic aspiration for the values and achievements of pioneers, or recognition of admirable character traits, these concepts are reflected through familiar locally made New Zealand objects.

The literature search revealed a sufficiently distinct gap in the contribution of typographic objects and forms, and specifically wool bale stencils, to the brand identity of New Zealand sheep stations and New Zealand's visual identity more broadly, for me to want to investigate it more deeply. Not only was this a gap in New Zealand's sheep-farming and design histories, but my personal interest as a collector of stencils had alerted me to a historical preservation imperative. Stencilling on wool bales was discontinued in the 1990s following a change to synthetic bale material to mitigate the contamination of wool with loose fibres from traditional hemp bales. With wool bale stencils no longer being made, there is a very real danger that stencil plates, along with their related histories, may soon be lost.[35] This thesis traces my journey to fill the gap in literature on the history and use of wool bale stencils, and seeks to preserve their memory.

What is a Wool Bale Stencil?

Broadly speaking, a stencil plate is a sheet of metal, card, or plastic with letters cut out of it. It is a portable template used for the duplication of text onto a wide range of surfaces, structures, and materials through direct transfer onto the surface below

(fig. 0.8). To create a mark, the right-reading stencil plate is held firmly against the printing surface and a printable substance such as paint, ink, or pigment is passed through the negative letter shape to form a positive printed impression. Unlike the solid letter shapes of letterpress printing, stencil letters are defined by their unique letter structure, which is made up of a series of disconnected sections. The internal shapes of stencil letters—known as 'counters'—in the letters A, B, D, O, P, Q and R, are secured to the outer body of the plate by connecting ties or bridges. These connections attach isolated letter parts to the plate but result in a series of interruptions across the stroke or line of the letter when printed. In other words,

Fig. 0.8

Figure 0.8. Station stencil and stencilled marks on hemp bale, Otematata Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

the positive three-dimensional ties that lie across letters on a plate appear as two-dimensional negative spaces when printed and create the distinctive stencil letter style. The stencil is compared to a trellis, lattice, or fret, all of which are a structure that is tied together by itself.[36] The structural ties that secure isolated letter parts are designed to be large enough to give cut-out letters and parts of letters strength, stability, and durability, but not so large as to compromise readability when the letter is printed. The aesthetic of the printed stencil letter is a combination of the textural qualities of the material or surface it is printed on, the viscosity of the substance used to apply the mark, and the skills of the practitioner.

As a specific stencil form, wool bale stencil plates were typically made from thin but strong sheets of metal (tin, zinc, copper, aluminium) containing cut-out stencil letters, marks, or numbers held within a larger solid metal plate. The letters on wool bale stencil plates were either hand drawn, copied and hand cut, or designed as an alphabet and reproduced by machine. In the shearing shed, stencilling marks on a completed wool bale was the final stage in processing wool in preparation for export and sale. Marks were usually applied to the bale by wool pressers in a one-or two-

person process as soon as the bale was pressed full of wool and the top or cap was sewn on (fig. 0.9). Plates were required to withstand the rigours of shearing-shed activity, undergo multiple applications onto coarse hemp or jute bale material, and last a number of shearing seasons. Plates were rigid for durability and to provide a flat surface for printing, with a degree of flexibility to mould to the shape of the bale, but were thin enough to achieve close contact with the material during printing. This aimed to prevent bleeding of ink or paint beneath the plate and blotching and disfiguring stencilled marks. The end result was ideally a clearly defined mark that would firstly adhere to the material but not penetrate and damage the wool beneath, secondly, last for the duration of the journey from New Zealand to Britain by ship, and finally remain readable until the bale reached the final manufacturing destination after sale.

Fig. 0.9

Figure 0.9. Stencilling detail on a bale of wool at White Rock Station, Wairarapa. Photographed by Mr Anderson, date unknown. Archives New Zealand: Archway Item ID R24808597, Series Number 6539.

What makes the stencil such an interesting form to study is its complexity and diversity. Heller and Fili describe stencilling as a form of typesetting that is both movable and immovable.[37] It sits, as the title of a 2012 exhibition co-curated by Kindel and Smeijers suggests, *Between Writing and Type*. Kindel writes, "while stencil letters are clearly neither writing nor type, their origins, configurations and uses are usually located somewhere in between, and may reach a considerable distance in either direction".[38] Aspects of wool bale stencils and stencil lettering lie between and within a number of definitions such as typography, type design, and lettering. Traditionally, typography referred to the design and production of text, the composition (setting of single letters or metal sorts in page layouts), and the duplication of multiple pages of text through letterpress printing. More recently and in response to changes in technology, this has been revised to cover the arrangement of any written material using letterforms in any media and could include the layout

on a stencil plate. Type design is closely related and sometimes considered to be part of typography but specifically refers to the design of individual letters as members of an alphabet as opposed to the design of typographic layouts using words and letters. The designer of a typeface aims to produce a consistent familial aesthetic across the design of all letters and numbers of an alphabet.

Baines and Dixon differentiate between type and lettering as follows: "put very simply, type is an industrial product capable of duplication and automation, while lettering is a one-off, created for a specific purpose and capable of responding to the demands of scale, material and surroundings in quite a different way".[39] Letters created by hand have an organic character that reflects the individual style of the creator, whereas letters of a designed typeface are considered, ordered, and consistent in style. The design of stencil letters could therefore be described as type design or lettering depending on the origin of the design of letters and the method of manufacture, which could be hand, machine, or digitally produced.

Kindel describes the form of the stencil letter as follows: "when a two-dimensional letter without a specific context is cut from some material, the letter becomes space defined by the edge of the material; or rather it pleasantly alternates between space with a material boundary, and material whose edge creates the letter".[40] Adding to the complexity, when a stencil letter is applied to a surface it transforms from a three-dimensional object to a two-dimensional printed impression. Recently, the form of the stencil has been extended by the popularity of designed digital stencil typefaces. However, despite the apparent complexities in defining stencils and stencilling, the simple and practical processes involved in making stencil plates and applying stencil letters have made them accessible to the general public as an easy way of applying text to objects, materials, and surfaces, as evidenced in their use by graffiti artists. In comparison to traditional forms of printing where trade professionals were in control of all aspects of the design and production of text, stencilling has remained in the public domain as, in the words of British wool importers, it "ought to commend itself to any practical man".[41]

The Material Culture Study of Objects

To study a complex form that transitions between definitions, dimensions and time calls for a more detailed appreciation of objects. The field of material culture studies offers a way of understanding such objects.

Material culture is a study of objects, or artefacts, that people design, make, use, throw away, or reuse. As a field of research, it explores how objects are created by humans and observes the effects of these 'things' on people. The terms object and

artefact refer to any physical entity made by people. However, an artefact tends to refer to material culture from earlier times, whereas an object connotes something more recent.[42] Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai refers to 'things' as the physical objects that form the material culture of everyday life, the ordinary objects people use that tend to go unnoticed.[43] Everyday things are described as humble, unobtrusive, and escaping attention; yet they have the ability to form connections with people, create meaning, acquire new meanings, and form identity.[44] Many aspects of daily life are said to lie hidden within the design of ordinary everyday objects that are often overlooked and considered to be unimportant.[45] Wool bales stencils are such things—they could be termed artefacts or objects as they are both historic and contemporary. However, because of their complexities and current significance, in this thesis they are referred to as *objects*.

Jules David Prown defines material culture as "both the subject matter of the study, [the] material, and to its purpose, the understanding of culture". He posits, "the basic premise is that every effect observable in or induced by the object has a cause. Therefore, the way to understand the cause (some aspect of culture) is the careful and imaginative study of the effect (the object)".[46] The word 'material' encompasses a wide range of objects made by people and can be divided into categories: art, diversions, adornment, modifications of the landscape, applied arts, and devices.[47] Wool bale stencils were designed as *devices*—implements or tools that were made to perform a particular utilitarian function. In the past, scholarship in this area has been largely taxonomic; rather than through cultural analysis of objects and interpretation of their meaning.[48]

Traditionally, material culture has been studied through an anthropological lens, with an emphasis on the relationship between people and objects. In recent decades, increasing attention has been given to the physical object although there has been less research on their design and style.[49] Judy Attfield's *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (2000) begins to address the gap. She emphasises the importance of the design of an object and promotes the study of everyday designed objects in order to gain greater understanding of the material world and the lives of ordinary people. She writes from both a design history and anthropological point of view to address issues of design, production, human engagement, culture, and identity.

Attfield believes that embedded within the material form of an object is a cultural memory, which she describes as "the physical embodiment of culture".[50] Attfield's premise is that close reading of the physical and material form of an object, combined with contextual exploration of how it fits in time and place, provides insight into the people who made it and the culture in which it belonged. In so doing, objects are able to illustrate, represent, and symbolise aspects of the culture they

inhabit and are therefore capable of reflecting and defining who we are.[51] Cultural knowledge can be gained through analysis of how objects were designed and made within broader investigations of why, where, and when they were made and used.

Attfield refers to the interactions between objects and people as the object-subject relationship.[52] The design process begins when an object is conceived and made and results in an aesthetic and functional solution.[53] However, the material culture study of a designed object extends beyond aesthetics and functionality to the interpretation of meaning through observation of the object as a participant within physical, social, and cultural settings. Attfield points out, "material culture while focusing on the material object also has broader interpretative connotations beyond the object itself, homing-in much more acutely on less stable territory—on things and places where the interrelationship between people and the physical world at large is played out".[54]

In *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (2012), Ludmilla Jordanova further emphasised the importance of exploring the contexts in which objects exist. She maintains that;

> "the characteristics that are analysed are to be found initially in artefacts themselves, followed by features of their contexts; for example, the lives of those who made, commissioned and owned them, their location and forms of display. As such, the visual skills of close 'reading' are integral to the historical skills of understanding the range of settings in which artefacts live, move and have their being."[55]

From a background in folklife, Henry Glassie writes, "all objects exist in a context. There is no such thing as an object out of context. But contexts differ greatly in their ability to help us understand the artefact at question."[56] He points out that "a second kind of context is conceptual. In it, the object exists within the sets of associations that constitutes the minds of its creators and users. This context could be called cultural, for it holds the meanings shared, if incompletely, by the people who made the thing and those who put it to use."[57] Social scientist Rom Harré highlights the importance of context in attributing meaning. He writes, "an object is transformed from a piece of stuff definable independently of any story-line into a social object by its embedment in a narrative. Material things have magic powers only in the contexts of the narratives in which they are embedded."[58]

In addition to context, the study of objects is also a study of identity. Through people, the identity of an object is created, and the identity of the designer and maker is inscribed in the physical and material form of an object. Moreover, by

owning and collecting material things individuals and groups of people gain a sense of their own identity.[59] People invest in objects for practical reasons—for their aesthetic qualities, their emotional associations, and for their monetary value—and in doing so they become part of the biography of their owners themselves.[60] Archaeologist and anthropologist Christopher Tilley observes, "personal, social and cultural identity is embodied in our persons and objectified in our things. Through the things we can understand ourselves and others, not because they are externalizations of ourselves or others, reflecting something prior and more basic in our consciousness or social relations but because these things are the very medium through which we make and know ourselves."[61] Objects function at a personal and collective level through fads and fashions. They also have deeper cultural significance in evoking nostalgia for the past through the display and use of historical objects. Moreover, selected objects that are widely recognised by society as containing iconic characteristics of a culture can become symbols of national identity. To illustrate this, wool bale stencils were designed to identify the ownership and origin of wool in a bale and within time marks became a brand identity for the station. More recently, stencil plates have become symbols for rural nostalgia and as collectables they contribute to the identity of their owners. Furthermore, when representing character traits of early pioneers they become symbolic of New Zealand identity.

When it comes to the study of objects, context and identity is never static. During their life, objects have the capacity to undergo physical and conceptual change through interactions with people and places in different time periods. While undergoing transformational changes in physical, material, and visual appearance, an object can accumulate culturally constructed meanings and acquire a cultural value, defined by Appadurai as "a bounded and localized system of meanings".[62] Therefore, by observing evolutionary changes in object form and use, it is possible to speculate on the inherent and cultural meanings. At varying points during its existence, an object can accumulate culturally constructed meanings that give it cultural weight and significance. Anthropologist Annette Weiner explains that by acquiring cultural meaning an object is protected from exclusion and extinction. This could be gained through "a name associated with it, by the aesthetic value of it, by the people who have owned it before, what its history is and its accumulation".[63] Transformations in the use and status of an object can result in shifts in monetary and cultural value, resulting in either an increase or decrease in metaphorical weight and significance. However, values are never set in a fixed or permanent state but are constantly challenged by changes in physical, technological, economic, and social contexts.[64] Alterations in the meaning of objects are recognised by Appadurai as "regimes of value",[65] and by Miller as "recontextualizations".[66] This ongoing process helps to define, redefine, construct, and reconstruct cultural meanings in society and is a way of understanding aspects of the culture in which we belong.

Object Life Stages

A range of methodologies have been offered for the study of objects over time and a common approach is by comparing the life of an object to the life of a person. Anthropologist Igor Kopytoff promotes the concept of a biography, which is derived from anthropology and has an emphasis on the consumption of things rather than their production.[67] A biography is defined by design historian John Walker as the account of a life (person or object).[68] Any object, even one that is mundane and insignificant, can have a biography, which can increase in value and significance as it progresses through life.[69] When comparing the biography of an object with the biography of a person, Kopytoff suggests the same questions can be asked of both:

> "what, sociologically are the biographical possibilities inherent in its 'status' and in the period and culture, and how are those possibilities realised? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognised 'ages' or periods in the thing's 'life', and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the things use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?".[70]

The life of an object can be made up of various biographies, which could be physical, technical, economic, or social, and may or may not be culturally informed.[71] The biographical possibilities in the life of wool bale stencils, for example, could be physical (object), technical (hand-made, machine made), economic (trade, shipping), social (art, design), or cultural (symbolic). Another anthropological approach is proposed by Appadurai in *The Social Life of Things* (1986). He describes the relationship between people and objects as a "social life".[72] He believes things on their own have no meaning; rather, this is gained through socialisation with people. He states, "we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions that enliven things."[73] In other words, by engaging with people, objects become active, responsive, and autonomous and are not simply passive and reflective.[74]

Another metaphor for the study of objects is through the concept of life stages. Both objects and people are said to share parallel life stages—they undergo a period of development and acquire unique skills and abilities to enable them to carry out

various tasks during their working life. They adjust to changes in circumstances and alterations in how and why they are used. As an object and person progress towards the end of their working lives they may experience death or extinction but could be subject to change in status and increase in economic value. The life-stages concept offers a structural framework for examining an object through time and space.

Attfield promotes a design-oriented approach to the study of objects through the life stages of a designed object, which she identifies as design, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding, and recycling.[75] Through this structure, a design history can be built to include early development of form and function, investigation of materials and production processes, and observation of objects throughout their working and end life stages. She brings together ideas already discussed and combines an object-focused historical design study with observation of meaning through the study of forms, uses, and trajectories. This includes Appadurai's concept of a social life and Kopytoff's ideas on the development of biographies over time. Glassie believes a life study has the potential to be more inclusive and complete. He states, "meaning is the sum of relations between objects and people. Accounts of meaning can begin anywhere in the object's history, though I think they are best begun in creation. From its place of beginning, the quest for completeness will assemble associations around the acts of creation, communication, and consumption, and then slide past every limit as the imagination plays tricks in the memory and the object becomes all it can be".[76]

Wool Bale Stencils as Object and Visual Forms

What, then, does this mean for this study of wool bale stencils? As this thesis will demonstrate, the collective life of wool bale stencils is long and has spanned a significant period in the development of New Zealand as a nation, beginning with colonial settlement and progressing to independence from Britain. Over that time, wool bale stencils have undergone significant physical and conceptual changes, beginning with their utilitarian use in marking wool bales for sale at international markets to branding other identities and forming culturally constructed meanings through a common understanding of their traditional use. Attfield's life-stages framework appears to be the most appropriate approach for this study. A design historical study structured through a life-stage framework enables us to follow the development and use of wool bale stencils within international, colonial, local, and personal contexts. It provides a way of analysing and comparing objects in stages of design and making. It also provides an opportunity to observe changes in form, function, and meaning over time; how they were used by people during their working life, and throughout the end stages of discarding and recycling.

Wool bale stencils are not simply objects, however, as there are overlaps in the material and visual aspects of stencil plates. For instance, texts and brand marks are formed from material objects, therefore the contents of the plate can be classified as

either material or visual. In addition, stencilled marks created by plates are visual representations and have communicative activities with their own complex set of explicit and implicit meanings. This is a condition described by Attfield as hovering "somewhere between the physical presence and the visual image, between the reality of the inherent properties of materials and the myth of fantasy, and between empirical materiality and theoretical representation."[77] Prown supports this idea by arguing that "objects are signs that convey meaning, a mode of communication, a form of language. The object may, like words, communicate a specific meaning outside of itself".[78]

This thesis takes the position that although wool bale stencils straddle the material and the visual, all representations are derived from the object as the originator, creator, and activator of the visual during their working and social life. Accordingly, this thesis approaches the study of identity primarily through a material culture perspective with meaning revealed through stencil design, materiality, production processes, narrative contexts, transactions, and how they are displayed and used.[79]

Scope of the Research

The literature search revealed a gap in the contribution of typographic objects and forms in general, and wool bale stencils in particular, to New Zealand's sheep-farming and design histories. This thesis asks what wool bale stencils can contribute to the history of brand identity on New Zealand sheep stations and to New Zealand's visual identity more broadly. It begins in 1850, a period when most sheep stations were established and when brand marks originated. It ends in the present day, enabling an up-to-date review of the current use and meaning of stencil plates and stencil letters in New Zealand society. The research question will be answered through a material culture approach, structured through the life stages of a designed object by analysing wool bale stencils within historical and contemporary contexts, and by observing changes in their form, use, and meaning. The importance of such an approach becomes even more urgent when considering the history of an object potentially nearing the end of its life; a life that has so far been largely disregarded, but one that deserves to be acknowledged and preserved.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one describes the methods of data collection and analysis used in the research. The second chapter establishes the historical and contextual background and in doing so compiles the early stages in the development of the wool bale stencil. Chapter three engages the first life stages of design and making wool bale stencils and draws on evidence from stencil plates found on sheep stations for object analysis. The fourth chapter is the stages of using, consuming and distributing. It explores the meaning, use and significance of brand marks on

station stencils during their working life in marking wool bales for export. Chapter five comprises the final life stages of discarding and recycling wool bale stencils. The time period is after stencilling on wool bales was discontinued and therefore investigates the ongoing use of plates and representation through stencil letters. The concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the thesis and evaluates the contribution of the study.

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[1] Charles Hursthouse, *New Zealand: The Britain of the South* (London: Stanford, 1861), 216.
[2] Hursthouse, *New Zealand: The Britain of the South*, 404.
[3] Te Ara, s.v. "Grigg, John. Biography", accessed 14 December 2017, https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2g20/grigg-john.
[4] Cyclopedia Publishing Company, *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand* [Canterbury Provincial District]. (Christchurch: Cyclopaedia Company, 1903), 855.
[5] Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "The 1953–4 Royal tour of NZ–Canterbury to Bluff", accessed 12 October 2017, https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/video/1953-4-royal-tour-nz-canterbury-bluff.
[6] England is used in reference to a specific place. Britain is used elsewhere in the thesis when referring to Great Britain or the United Kingdom.
[7] P. G. Stevens, *John Grigg of Longbeach* (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1952), 73; The Prince of Wales' Feathers is the heraldic badge of the Prince of Wales and consists of three ostrich feathers.
[8] Anonymous, *Brand Book of Canterbury: Compiled from the Official Records to the 31 March 1874* (Christchurch: handwritten, 1874), 50.
[9] Cookshop was a farm building with cooking, eating, and sleeping facilities for workers on rural estates.
[10] "The Longbeach Cookshop", accessed 15 December 2017, http://www.longbeachestate.co.nz/index_files/history.htm.
[11] Shearing shed and wool shed can be used interchangeably to denote a large shed where all shearing activities take place. Sheep are shorn, wool is sorted, packed, pressed, marked, and stored till it is ready to be transported.
[12] Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 5.
[13] Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 51.
[14] Jonty Valentine, *Printing Types: New Zealand Type Design Since 1870* (Auckland: Objectspace, 2009), 5.
[15] Ibid., 10.
[16] Paul Ward, "Colin McCahon. The Lumnary", *NZEDGE.COM,* (1 August 2009), accessed 19 April 2019, https://www.nzedge.com/legends/colin-mccahon.
[17] Steven Heller and Louise Fili, *Stencil Type* (London: Thames & Hudson), 2015.
[18] Russell Howze, *Stencil Nation: Graffiti, Community, and Art* (San Francisco: Manic D Press, 2008), 142.
[19] Ron Palenski, *The Making of New Zealanders* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2012), 90.
[20] Ibid., 125.
[21] Anne-Marie Willis, *Illusions of Identity: The Art of Nation* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1993), 62.
[22] Ibid., 16.
[23] Kiwi is a flightless native New Zealand bird.
[24] Silver fern is a native New Zealand tree fern.
[25] Koru is a stylised fern leaf.
[26] Claudia Bell, *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), 124.
[27] Wolfe, *A Short History of Sheep,*145.
[28] Bell, *Inventing New Zealand*, 5.
[29] Swanndri is a rugged outdoor woollen garment.
[30] Bell, *Inventing New Zealand*, 164.
[31] Ibid., 173.
[32] Michèle D. Dominy, *Calling the Station Home: Place and Identity in New Zealand's High Country* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 44.
[33] Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male, a History* (Auckland:

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[37] Heller and Fili, 7.
[38] Eric Kindel, "Type Tuesday: Between Writing and Type", *Eye Magazine* (15 May 2012), accessed 13 January 2019, http://www.eyemagazine.com/blog/post/type-tuesday-between-writing-type.
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[47] Ibid., 3–4.
[48] Ibid., 14.
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[50] Attfield, *Wild Things*, 16.
[51] Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (London: Sage Publication, 2007), 28.
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[54] Ibid., 40.
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[57] Ibid., 60.
[58] Rom Harré, "Material Objects in Social Worlds", *Theory, Culture & Society* 19, nos. 5–6 (December 2002): 125.
[59] Attfield, *Wild Things*, xiii.
[60] John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 192.
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[63] Fred R. Myers, ed., *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2001), 289.
[64] Ibid., 70.
[65] Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*, 14–15.
[66] Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 175.
[67] Kopytoff, Igor, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective,* ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.
[68] Walker, *Design History*, 45.
[69] Miller, *Material Culture*, 126.
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Fig. 1.1

Figure 1.1. Stencil plates and branding irons, Clifton Station shearing shed, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by John O’Sullivan, 2015.

Chapter 1. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methods used to collect, select, analyse, and interpret primary and secondary material. It sets out the criteria for identifying and documenting objects, representations, and other information and introduces a structural method for organising content into chapters as parts of a narrative along with tools used for their analysis.

Primary Data Sources

Most of the wool bale stencils studied in this thesis were sourced during six field trips to New Zealand sheep stations undertaken between February 2014 and November 2017. In total I visited fourteen sheep stations over that time.

The criteria for station selection was that they were still under original family ownership. These long histories spanned generations of the same family and at times date from the middle of the nineteenth century, from the early development of land for sheep farming, the establishment of sheep stations, and the beginning of wool exports to London. I anticipated this criteria would offer the best opportunity for locating stencil plates and branding irons, if they existed, as they were more likely to be retained along with other objects, material evidence, and supporting documentation. Many New Zealand sheep stations have undergone changes in ownership, boundaries, buildings, and names with inevitable loss of connection to their roots, their history, and to historical objects. A long and uninterrupted history of a well-established station offered continuity of knowledge, name, and brand, and the possibility that historical objects were retained. Moreover, early iconic sheep stations had been well represented in historical and contemporary New Zealand literature with the publication of many sheep station histories.

Identifying historic stations in original ownership was nonetheless difficult and a list of possibilities was compiled through sheep-station histories and by word of mouth. Although there were sheep farms with long histories of family ownership, the search eventually focused on large and historic sheep stations in the North and South Island. As major exporters of wool to Britain, I judged them more likely to be well represented in historic and archival documentation of photographs, shipping lists, wool sales reports, and catalogues. Three books published by Colin Wheeler (1971, 1973, 1989) on historic stations of the North and South Island were a guide to possible stations and gave a history of their ownership. As an artist, Wheeler acknowledged his selection was influenced by aesthetic considerations. Nevertheless, his books represented some of the earliest, biggest, and most significant sheep stations in the history of New Zealand. Wheeler recorded his visits in paintings, and pen-and-ink drawings accompanied by short histories of each

station. Other information on ownership of stations and their potential to fit the criteria for the study came from station owners with local knowledge, workers, stock and station agents, archivists, and historians. Robert Peden, a former musterer, South Island high country station manager, and historian, had first-hand knowledge of South Island stations still in original family ownership and offered a list of possibilities. As the research progressed, some properties that fitted the criteria were sold, others had not kept their stencils, and some owners were not interested in taking part in the study.

Ten sheep stations that fit the criteria were located in the South Island and four in the North Island—all had remained in the same family for a number of generations, dating from as early as 1848. Some were related to the first colonial owners and developers of the land, while others had bought their property from the original owner. Although the selection did not represent the entire country, the properties are all located within the most important areas of sheep-farming development during the nineteenth century.[1] In the South Island this included Otago, the east coast, Canterbury, and Marlborough, and in the North Island the Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay regions. In many cases the size of the original property and stock numbers has been considerably reduced since the decline of the wool and sheep industry. Despite this, their reputation and historical significance has remained intact, along with grand houses, landscaped gardens, farm buildings, and original shearing sheds.

The following brief introduction to the case studies of fourteen sheep stations visited on field trips begins with the lower South Island and continues to stations visited in the North Island, with more detailed discussion in later chapters. A map of New Zealand shows their geographic location (fig. 1.2).

Otematata Station is a high-country station in the Waitaki Valley, North Otago, and is reputed to be one of the largest operating high-country stations today. The station was bought by the Cameron brothers in 1908 and they inherited the brand mark from the previous owner. A large selection of branding irons and examples of stencil plates were stored in the shearing shed. The nearby property of *Omarama Station* is situated in the foothills of the Southern Alps of the Mackenzie Country. When it was first settled in 1858 it was made up of 181,400 acres (73,410 hectares). In 1919 it was subdivided and 29,000 acres (11,736 hectares) were bought by Cecil and Wilfred Wardell, from whom the current owner is descended. Their historic branding irons demonstrate early approaches to making objects on the station. Similarly, *Waitangi Station* is located in the high country of North Otago and has been owned by the Sutton family since 1887. The stone and wooden shearing shed built in 1851 is still operational and displays an assortment of stencil plates and branding irons. Another high altitude station is *Glenmore Station*, situated in the Mackenzie Country it stretches from the western side of Lake Tekapo and up to the boundary of Mt

Figure 1.2. Map of New Zealand showing locations of sheep stations visited in the thesis. Accessed 25 April 2019, https://simplemaps.com/resources/svg-nz.

Cook National Park. It has been in the Murray family for over one hundred years. The Glenmore contribution to the study comprises stencilling material, stencil plates, and branding irons. Other high-country sheep stations are *Mt Peel Station* and *Orari Gorge Station* which are located in the South Canterbury Rangitata River Valley and together originally comprised 100,000 acres (40,470 hectares). The original property was purchased in 1856 and was jointly owned by John Acland and Charles Tripp until they subdivided the land in 1861. Acland took Mt Peel and Tripp took ownership of Orari Gorge Station. Their brand was designed to represent the names of the two owners but was later changed when the property was subdivided.

On lower regions in the South Island, *Coldstream Station* lies on the Canterbury plains on the east coast. The 80,000-acre (32,375 hectare) property was bought by two brothers, John and Michael Studholme in 1867. They decided to dissolve their joint ownership of Coldstream Station and Te Waimate Station in 1878—John stayed at Coldstream and Michael Studholme took up Te Waimate, which is also part of this study. Both stations have a large number of stencil plates and branding irons and continued to share the same brand mark. Further south, *Te Waimate Station* is forty-five kilometres south west of Timaru and was bought by the Studholme brothers in 1854. The shearing shed, which is still operational, was built in 1855 and at one stage 100,000 sheep were shorn there annually. To accommodate the increase in stock, the land was increased to 100,000 acres (40,470 hectares). The coastal property of *Longbeach Station* was purchased by John Grigg in 1863. The 32,000-acre (12,950 hectare) station was developed from swamp land that stretched along the east coast of the South Island from the Ashburton to the Hinds River. The original shearing shed and blacksmiths' forge are sites where stencil plates and branding irons were found.

The historic *Richmond Brook Station* is in the Marlborough region at the top of the South Island. The 36,000-acre (14,569 hectare) station was purchased by Major Matthew Richmond in 1848 and has been in the family ever since. Stencil plates are still displayed in the shearing shed along with stencilled marks applied to the shed structure. Hot metal branding irons for marking stud rams were among their historical items.

In the North Island, *Brancepeth Station* in the Wairarapa region was bought by the Beetham brothers: William, George, Charles, and Richmond. In 1856, the original block was 9,884 acres (4,000 hectares) but was later expanded to cover 53,021 acres (21,457 hectares). The family has retained much of the station history at the homestead, including branding irons and the original station stencil. Travelling north into the Hawke's Bay region, at Tikokino is *Gwavas Station*. When it was purchased by Major George Gwavas Carolyn in 1858 it consisted of 30,000 acres

(12,141 hectares) of land and was named Gwavas after his Cornish family name. This was the first station visited and contributed a large set of station stencils to the study. Another station in the region is *Clifton Station* which is situated on the southern coast of Hawke's Bay and was originally part of the larger Kidnappers Station. In 1861, 13,500 acres (5,463 hectares) were purchased from the government by James Gillespie Gordon, who arrived in New Zealand from India. In the shearing shed, the original station stencil and historic shearing equipment are part of a permanent display. Twenty miles north-west of the Hawke's Bay town of Hastings is *Tuna Nui Station*. This was originally a 30,315-acre (12,268 hectare) swamp-and fern-covered property bought by Captain Andrew Hamilton Russell in 1861. Hanging in the 1878 shearing shed are a selection of stencil plates.

Field trips to the above sheep stations in search of wool bale stencil plates, branding irons, stencilling equipment, and stencilling were an opportunity to look for physical objects in their original sites and was given low risk ethics approval in 2014 (app. 3). Despite not being used for years, stencil plates (thirty years) and sheep brands (sixty years), many plates and irons, have remained on the stations in the shearing shed or are stored in out-lying sheds, either hanging on nails, in cupboards, or in piles on shelves. I photographed all stencil plates and branding irons in their original site against an authentic background in the shearing shed, on the shed floor, or in one case on the wooden tray on the back of a truck. Station stencil plates were documented in a more controlled manner on a plain canvas background for clearer definition. I paid particular attention to station stencils and documented them in greater detail due to their significance as the primary stencil on the bale and their role in carrying the identity of the station. Field notes written in journals documented discussions with station owners, described the visual appearance of plates and apparent materials used, while I also noted how they were made, the approximate age, and unusual characteristics. Sketches were made of all station stencils and branding irons and measurements taken of the dimensions of plates and irons, the height of letters, and the height and width of brand marks. Physical examination, description, measurement, and discussion was supported by documentation of objects in photographs. In total I found and catalogued 272 stencils—36 were station stencils, 112 wool description stencils, 75 number stencils—along with any other stencils, such as wool classers stencils and stencils stating country of origin. The digital photographs and journals are stored by me in a secure private location.

I worked systematically, from a broad overview to specific details. To begin, I catalogued the plate, writing observations of the form and materials used, noting any peculiarities about the plate design and stencil letters. I recorded comments from owners about how old they thought the stencils were and how they might have been

made, although this was often not known. If there was more than one stencil, an attempt was made to position them in the order of their perceived age, although this was usually only an estimate. I photographed the front and back of each station stencil, working from the general form and structure to close-up details. I documented the plate shape, materials used, brand marks, names, and the typographic layout, letter styles, and stencil design. I noted distinctive design features, variations in handles, how the edges and corners were treated, and looked for other interventions and any imprints left on the plate by professional stencil makers. Residual stencilling material built up on the plate was also noted. Detailed photographs of individual letters helped me seek clues to how they had been cut, what tools might have been used, and whether they had been made by hand or machine. I photographed specific areas on the plate where there had been repairs, reconnections, or replacement of broken sections. This was usually in vulnerable areas, such as connecting points between ties and counters, and the spaces between letters.

Despite establishing common criteria for the selection of stations, the search for stencil plates, branding irons, and other evidence and information produced varied results across stations. Some stations had multiple station stencils. Gwavas Station, for example, had eight station stencils probably spanning the entire history of the station, and Coldstream Station had six. Together, these stations could demonstrate a progression of plate, lettering, and stencil design in a range of materials. Tuna Nui Station had four station stencils; Brancepeth, Te Waimate and Richmond Brook Stations had three; Glenmore, Clifton, and Longbeach Stations had two; and Mt Peel, Orari Gorge, Otematata, Omarama, and Waitangi Stations had one station stencil each. A station stencil at Brancepeth Station had been repaired over a long period of time and could be identified in a photograph taken around 1900. Most of the stations had a range of other wool bale stencils, branding irons, and associated materials and evidence. However, the inconsistencies of numbers and types of stencil plates meant that large groups of objects across all stations could not be compared like for like.

In view of this, the method relied on the accumulation of evidence and investigating similar types of things. At times, details were obscured by damage to the plate, discolouration, and build-up of stencilling material. The study looked for evidence of the effectiveness of wool bale stencils as tools of design and communication, as a response to British requirements, and a result of other influences. Consistency in design and production practices was identified, along with signs of how and where they differed. Information on when stencils were made and used had to be speculative. Apart from occasional dated photographs and information from owners, there was no other documentation of who made them or how, when and where they

were made. Furthermore, often the current generation of station owners were unfamiliar with the history of the stencils or stencilling. The thesis argument was therefore developed through controlled speculation based on selected groups of objects supported by additional material from other sources. Questions asked for all stencils were: What was the approach to the design of plates, letters and stencil styles and why? Who were the designers and makers of stencils, what was their background knowledge, where did their inspiration come from, and what tools did they use? What do the findings demonstrate about typographic practices and craft skills and what do they reveal about the culture, time, place, and people? Although objects remained central to the project, a diverse range of other evidence and information contributed to building this history. Museums, archives, online auction sites, other contributors, preliminary station visits, and my own collection of stencils have added to object and material evidence found on stations.

Old shearing sheds are physical archives of station, shearing, and stencilling history (fig. 1.3). Original stencil plates and branding irons were often displayed or stored along with remnants of past shearing and stencilling practices. Hemp bales, shearing

Fig. 1.3

tally books, sewing twine, wool presses, stencil brushes, paste, and ink were found. Although my early interest was in the lettering on wool bale stencils, I photographed branding irons for their typographic use of initial letters of the names of station owners. The research of objects in historic locations situated them within an authentic working environment alongside other historical evidence and current farming activities. This built a picture of how and where stencilling was used and where stencils and branding irons were made. Site visits were also an opportunity to look for evidence of the object–subject relationship on the station; in other words, to observe how stencils had been used on and around the property in other ways than

Figure 1.3. Stencil plates hanging on nails, Longbeach Station shearing shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.
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Fig. 1.4

Figure 1.4. Graffiti on shed doors, Clifton Station shearing shed, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by John O’Sullivan, 2015.

on bales. In addition, the walls and structures of sheds exhibited stencilled histories of impressions of stencil plates and irons, and the names and dates of shearers who had worked there (fig. 1.4).

The Experience of Site Visits

Objects created in the past provide first-hand encounters and sensory experiences of historical events.[2] By visiting stations it was possible to identify with physical hardships faced by pioneers through personal experience of the extreme landscapes of remote high-country stations. Visits to historic shearing sheds recreated the sense of an early working environment and a past suspended in time. Objects and impressions found on field trips were central to the construction of historical, design, and object narratives and built an understanding of the relationships between people, places, and other objects. Station visits offered first-hand experience of historic houses, properties, and station buildings, such as shearing sheds, blacksmiths’ work places, and mustering huts. In addition, they facilitated face-to-face encounters with owners and workers, the potential to find other objects and supporting evidence, and the opportunity to make unexpected discoveries.

I took site photographs of shearing sheds and areas where there was stencilling inside and outside the shed and where brand marks had been applied to walls and objects. Gathering evidence of stencilling and shearing included; photographing stencil brushes, pads, plates, paste, ink, guides, books, bales, twine, bale clips, and

any other related objects and materials. Photographs of any stencilling on the property other than on wool bales or in the shearing shed were part of the documentation; in particular, if they had been created with wool bale stencils. Aspects of the house and property that were in any way connected to the identity of the station were of interest, particularly if they were associated with marks on brands and stencils. This evidence could be related to either the origin and meaning of the mark, how and where it had been used or applied, and whether it had evolved into any other forms. As visits progressed, it became clear that information gathered through objects and other evidence from stations was central to building the history of the wool bale stencil. Material found on station visits was more immediate, informative and authentic than other modes of research, could supplement and replace missing information and confirm other research findings.

The sheep stations' varying sites required a flexible approach to methods used in collecting evidence. Each station was a different scenario, and sites, experiences, and evidence varied considerably. Semi-structured interviews with station owners were informal and were based on a pre-determined set of questions with consent to use information and photographs in the research (apps 1, 2). In reality, contact with farmers was often brief, conversational, and interrupted by farming activities. However, personal contact presented a unique opportunity to discover specific station-and stencil-related information and document stories that could not be found in archives or station histories. This included the story of the brand mark, how the station was named, discussions of station identity, and how that identity had been implemented on the station. It was an opportunity to hear historical and personal stories and was a chance to seek technical, material, and practical information on how stencils were made and applied to bales. I inquired whether the brand mark of station identity on branding irons and station stencils could be found in any other forms elsewhere on the station and looked for any stencilling used on the station apart from on bales. I documented these conversations in my field journals alongside information on plates and irons. Although my primary aim was to search for stencil plates, branding irons, and stencilling, I remained open to discovering material that could contribute in any way to the project and photographed a broad range of evidence.

Fig. 1.5

Fig. 1.6

These field trips were more than just site visits to stations in search of objects and conversations: they were an opportunity to explore the surrounding countryside and rural towns for other uses of wool bale stencils, stencilling, and appropriated or representational use of stencil letters in the wider community (fig. 1.5). On station visits, the search for stencilling included both their primary use on bales and any other stencilling found on the station, including signage, labels, letterboxes, and signs on gates (fig. 1.6). Off the station, the search for stencil plates, stencilling,

Figure 1.5. The Country Café, Geraldine, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

Figure 1.6. Stencilled post box, Mt Algidus Station, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

and stencil letters continued, but was restricted to objects and images that could demonstrate a connection to their original use, in that they needed to have a visual and conceptual link to wool bale stencils. Country towns were often venues for archiving and displaying stencil plates from local stations along with historic sheep farming equipment. Stencils were evident in museums, pubs, cafés, and shops when visited while travelling through North and South Island sheep-farming regions.
I found stencil letters were strongly represented in New Zealand design, on signage and in promotional materials for products and places, often with a conceptual link to sheep, wool, or primary produce.

While passing through the surrounding countryside and while visiting rural towns, I searched for repurposed stencil plates and examples of how stencil letters had been used. I photographed all instances where stencil use could relate in some way to wool bale stencils. A wider search for the use of stencils in New Zealand design continued throughout this study. As part of the research of contemporary use of original wool bale stencil plates I monitored the online auction site Trade Me for a year between February 2017 and February 2018 to document all sales of stencil plates during that time. I observed fifty-seven auctions, some listing multiple plates, with a total of 335 plates altogether. I recorded how they had been described in their advertising as evidence of their perceived and potential ongoing use.
This information contributed to the final stages of discarding and recycling after stencilling on wool bales had been discontinued. I observed current human engagement with original objects, looked for forms of representation and gained insight into their designed and culturally constructed meanings. In addition to the stations visited on field trips, other historic sheep stations such as Mesopotamia and Castlepoint Stations either didn’t want to take part in the study or didn’t fit the criteria of family ownership but could contribute to the broader discussion of recycled wool bale stencils.

As well as site visits, I read sheep-station histories of the stations visited and the histories of numerous other stations. These reinforced and added to information found on field trips and through my personal collection, although references to stencils or stencilling were rare. Other relevant information was contained in these histories such as the development of the land, the history of the family, aspects of station life, and activities related to sheep farming, mustering, classing, shearing, and exporting wool. They revealed the origins of early pioneers and gave details of station owners whose initial letters featured in marks of identity on branding irons and station stencils.

Some stations had more than one publication that focused on different periods of time, certain aspects of station development, or the lives of particular owners, and

were typically written to commemorate a milestone in the history of the station.
In addition to written histories, most of the stations visited had an online presence outlining the history of the station, the house and the family, as well as promoting venues, accommodation, and a range of outdoor activities. There were other sources of recent information in newspaper and magazine articles, documentaries on radio and television, and in blog sites for special events. A mixed-methods approach was thus used to assemble evidence through objects, semi-structured interviews, archival information and visual imagery, historical literature, and contemporary material.

Archival and Historical Research

Adding to physical objects and evidence found on stations was research on historical contexts through archival documents and secondary histories. Contributions to this history were found in archival repositories in New Zealand, Australia, and Britain and historical images in the thesis were sourced from the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Hocken Library, the Wairarapa Archive, New Zealand Archives, Auckland Libraries and the Hurunui District Libraries. On a visit to Toitu Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin I discovered shipping manifests that listed brand marks as a way of representing stations shipping wool overseas. Up to this point, although I was interested in documenting branding irons for typographic interest, I had been unaware of their close connection to station stencils and to the brand identity of the station. As a result of further investigation I discovered newspaper articles on sheep branding in New Zealand in the online newspaper archive Papers Past, hosted by the National Library of New Zealand. Articles dating from the middle of the nineteenth century outlined the history of registration of sheep brands and gave reasons why the practice became a legal requirement for all sheep owners. The dialogue between sheep owners, wool exporters, wool importers, and brokers was documented in articles until the 1960s, when sheep branding was discontinued. Following these discoveries, I photographed all branding irons on stations visited, including brands for sheep, horses, cattle, and rams. Through archives I was able to locate original sheep brand registers and found brand marks belonging to stations in the study. These dated from as early as 1861 and at times were inscribed by hand with the signature of the original owner.

Further information on brand marks was gathered through station histories where sheep brands were recognised as the brand mark of the station. The international history of branding sheep was found in British histories of wool and specific histories on animal branding, which corresponded with practices adopted in New Zealand. I compared original Australian brand registers in the J. S. Battye Library, Western Australia, to brand registers during the same period in New Zealand and established that marks of identity on New Zealand sheep brands were often linked to the history of the station and owner, the station stencil, and the development of other

forms of station identity. The methods used to locate information on these subjects involved primary and secondary research in New Zealand, Australia, and Britain as there were overlapping histories of sheep farming and the export and import of wool and wool bale stencilling. Although there was very little information written specifically about wool bale stencils and sheep brands, associated information could be found within a wide range of other sources.

The earliest and most important discoveries on wool bale stencils were made when searching in online newspaper archives. Newspapers were an important form of communication in the new colony—reporting sales results and relaying news, information, and instructions, and gave opportunities for readers to share farming advice and offer opinions. There were many contributors to newspaper dialogues on stencil use in the wool industry. This involved stock and station agents, importers, and wool brokers in Britain, harbour boards in New Zealand, the Wool Board, and the Department of Agriculture, as well as contributions from farmers and agricultural advisors. Newspapers provided feedback on the state of bales and bale marks on arrival in London with instructions on how they could be improved. The history of why stencils were used on wool bales, who instigated their use, and what form they should take can be pieced together through the study of early newspapers, journals, and reports. These conveyed specific instructions to station owners on where stencils should be placed on the bale, what form the information should take, in what order stencil marks should be placed, what type sizes and styles stencil text should be used, as well as how stencils should be applied in order to last the sea voyage and remain readable on arrival in London. Clues to who made stencils were largely found in early newspapers through advertisements selling stencil sets or offering services making stencil plates to order. Like the history of sheep brands, many aspects of the history of the New Zealand wool bale stencil could be traced though archival newspaper articles published during the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century.

International Context

As already discussed, the history of the wool bale stencil in New Zealand is a shared history with Australia and Britain and is also embedded in the history of British trade in wool during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I travelled to London to visit the original sites of St Katharine and London Docks where I could see first-hand remnants of the waterways and warehouses that once received and stored New Zealand wool. I visited the original sites of the Coleman Street Wool Exchange and the more recent Fruit and Wool Exchange in Spitalfields, where wool had been sold by auction after it had been inspected and selected in show rooms at dock facilities. The experience of site visits to docks and auction sites highlighted their proximity, and the experience added another dimension to understanding the import,

storage, viewing, and sales processes. Through London-based research I discovered where the history of stencilling on bales originated, along with how wool was imported, processed, and sold once it reached its overseas destination in London.

A major contribution to the project was the Port of London Authority Archive at the Sainsbury's Research Centre in the Museum of London Docklands. Built in 1802, the converted sugar warehouses of the West India Quay housed historical material originally belonging to the Port of London Authority, including records of private docks dating back to 1799. Material found in the archive documents the formation, development, and function of what was once regarded as the world's largest port. These revealed how and why changes were made and outlined the significance, volume, and management of imported wool from Australasia. This illustrated the difficulties in processing increasing quantities of wool and how and why problems were addressed. Journals produced by the Port of London Authority from 1921 outline the early history of trade in wool, the building of docks, waterways, and wool warehouses and document the processes of importing, storing, and selling wool through auction sales. The journals contain personal historical accounts of the inspection of wool in show rooms on sales day and the experience of attending an auction at the London Wool Exchange. From these archives I could compile a detailed history of how New Zealand wool was imported, processed, and sold from a British point of view.

I also travelled to Australia, to search the archives at the National Wool Museum, Geelong. These archives, housed in the former Dennys Lascelles Ltd wool store built in 1872, added another perspective to this project through material gathered from shipping records, wool sales, and stock and station agent reports that included wool exported from New Zealand.

Data Analysis

The methods of analysis and comparison used in the research were constructed from a composite mix of ideas from Judy Attfield (2000), John Walker (1989), Jules David Prown (1982), and Ludmilla Jordanova (2012), which were tailored to the complexities of this particular project. These methods inform a chapter structure that organises the thesis in chronological order from past to present, and a sub-structure that describes, evaluates, and interprets objects and forms.

Analysis was conducted in stages that mirrored Attfield's approach to the life stages of a designed object. It began with the development of the object's form in response to its function during the design and making or production stage. This was followed by reflection on the mid-life stage, or the object's working life; when it was used for its intended purpose, consumed in other ways, and distributed for other uses. Finally, I looked at the end stage of discarding and recycling; when an object no

longer functions in its original capacity and now performs other uses in its ongoing life. Applied to the study of wool bale stencils, this approach enabled evidence to be organised into three distinct periods of time and life stages.

In each of the stages I employed a method of analysis devised by Jordanova, who explains that "the characteristics that are analysed are to be found initially in artefacts themselves, followed by features of their contexts; for example, the lives of those who made, commissioned and owned them, their location and forms of display. As such, the visual skills of close 'reading' are integral to the historical skills of understanding the range of settings in which artefacts live, move and have their being."[3] Based on this I made close visual readings of objects that included description, analysis, contextualisation, and comparison.[4] This involved comparing styles of objects and arranging them in groups to understand the relationships between objects, people, periods of time, social contexts, and changes objects underwent through time.[5]

The format of each analysis chapter is structured under the headings of Description, Deduction, and Speculation, identified by Prown for the material culture study of objects.[6] Description, according to Prown, is an inventory of the object and forms the internal evidence of the study. Like Jordanova's, Prown's process of analysis involves close reading of the physical and material form of the object and is combined with external evidence of the availability of materials and technologies, demands of consumers, modes of distribution and promotion, and methods of exchange. The Description stage presents what has been found through close reading of physical and material aspects of plates, measuring plates and letter sizes, describing materials used, looking for evidence of methods of production, and discussing the contents on plates (marks, names, descriptions, numbers). The next stage is Deduction, which reflects on the results of Description and contemplates what the evidence points to. This links the object to the perception of its existence and experience and is the result of a relationship between the object and its history, and the observer and their history. It seeks to discover what the object can tell and deduces what it cannot, and at the same time tests the validity of external knowledge. The final stage of Speculation is formed in the mind of the perceiver and is a summary of what has been learned and what it means. The material for Description changes in each chapter depending on the stage in the life of the object and the type of evidence presented. For instance, Chapter 3 (design and making) is primarily a study of objects, whereas Chapter 4 (using, consuming, and distributing) is a study of objects and their social life (how they are used) and Chapter 5 (discarding and recycling) is the study of the social life of objects and their representation.

Before moving on to the analysis described above, some history is needed. Walker describes a designed object as a nexus of a whole series of relationships that begin prior to their design.[7] Any analysis therefore needs to include a study of the general conditions where design takes place in order to understand how circumstances were overcome and exploited.[8] The following chapter establishes the historical background and the early stages in stencil design development. It outlines how, why, and where wool bale stencils fit in time and place and as part of other histories, aiding understanding of why stencils were introduced, where they came from, and what their purpose was. The historical background outlines the events leading up to the introduction of wool bale stencils and establishes the problems that these objects were designed to solve.

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[1] Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male, a History* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), 12.
[2] Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method", *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring, 1982): 3.
[3] Ludmilla J. Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.
[4] Jordanova, *Look of the Past*, 225.
[5] John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 58–59.
[6] Prown, "Mind in Matter", 7–10.
[7] Walker, *Design History*, 60.
[8] Ibid., 88.

Fig. 2.1

Figure 2.1. Rupert Morrison with a bale of wool on his back, Blairlogie Station, Wairarapa. Photographer unknown, circa 1910. Wairarapa Arts Centre: 90-017/467.

Chapter 2. Historical and Contextual Background

This chapter contextualises the development of the wool bale stencil in the history of New Zealand sheep farming and the wool export trade. It explores international and national developments and the relationships between New Zealand, Australia, and Britain.

The first known sheep introduced into New Zealand were put ashore in 1773 by British explorer Captain James Cook, the first European to circumnavigate and map the islands of New Zealand and Australia.[1] They had been transported from South Africa during his second voyage but died soon after their arrival; it was thought after ingesting poisonous native plants. In 1814 and 1816 Australian-based pioneer farmer and missionary Reverend Samuel Marsden gifted cattle and sheep to missionaries at the Waimate North Mission Station inland from the Bay of Islands to provide food for the station. However, it was not until 1834 that John Bell established the first commercial sheep farm on Mana Island, a whaling station near the Cook Strait (the channel separating the North and South Islands). Strategically placed, the station was able to supply meat for the crews of passing ships.[2] The sheep on Mana Island had been imported from Sydney and were the first of many to arrive by ship from Australia and Britain in the following years.[3] Historian Michael King states that by 1858 the number of sheep in New Zealand had reached 1.5 million, compared to 115,000 people, and by 1878 it had increased to 13.1 million sheep.[4] This corresponded with increasing quantities of wool sold overseas, beginning with small amounts exported on whaling ships and sold in Sydney, and parcels of wool sent to Britain.[5] The first bales of wool shipped from New Zealand to England were sent in August 1844.[6] This was followed by 24 bales sold in London in 1847, and from then on exports increased to 5,000 bales sold annually by 1860. In 1870, the number of bales of wool sent abroad reached 107,000.[7]

The wool trade in Australia was established much earlier than that in New Zealand, with reports of wool sent to Britain documented as early as 1800.[8] Around 1808 one of the first consignments of colonial wool was sent from Botany Bay to London by Marsden, where it was made into suits to demonstrate the quality of his Australian-grown wool.[9] The first auction sale of Australian wool took place at Garraway’s Coffee House in the city of London in 1821.[10] Due to strategic government policies aimed at developing the sheep industry in Australia and the foresight of early sheep breeders such as Marsden, the sheep population grew from 29 sheep in 1789 to 17 million by the middle of the nineteenth century; by the end of the century it had increased to 70 million.[11] As a younger colony, New Zealand was able to benefit from early Australian experiences of farming, sheep breeding, and export of wool. The influences of seasonal workers operating between the two countries and

Australian immigrants contributed capital, sheep, knowledge, and experience of sheep farming, methods of wool bale marking, and stencilling practices.[12] The designs of New Zealand shearing sheds was adapted from an Australian model of timber and corrugated iron, which reduced the bulk and delivery of materials, and was supplemented with locally sourced wood and stone.[13] Other contributions were the design of a hemp or jute wool pack,[14] the later redesign of a synthetic pack, and the invention of a wool press.

Most important to the development of the New Zealand sheep industry was the supply of sheep, in particular the Australian merino, a pure breed with a higher quality of wool and greater weight of fleece. Merino sheep had been introduced into Australia towards the end of the eighteenth century when early sheep breeders recognised the export potential of wool. Compared to other breeds, the merino produced the most uniform and the densest wool with five times the number of fibres,[15] and demonstrated “superior fineness, softness, strength, elasticity and felting properties”.[16] The availability of high-quality merino wool for export coincided with the demand for wool of the same type in Europe. Technological advances in mechanisation of spinning and combing machinery and the introduction of the power loom had improved the efficiency of textile production and increased the need for new suppliers of wool.[17] From the 1830s the long and strong Australian wool became increasingly sought after and by 1850 Australia was supplying half of all British wool for manufacturing.[18] The development of sheep farming in New Zealand followed, and by the 1850s the majority of productive farmland had been settled, except for the lower regions of the Southern Alps in the South Island. Known as the high country, the 40-mile-wide (64 km) strip of mountainous land lay to the east of the central mountain range and extended the length of the island from Cook Strait in the north to Te Anau in the south.[19] The discovery that merino sheep could thrive in the otherwise unproductive land and were suited to living at high altitudes prompted the establishment of large high-country sheep stations,[20] many at an altitude of over 2,000 feet (600 meters) above sea level.

The merino[21] had originated from Spain, where the purity of the breed had previously been protected by a government embargo on their export. This was partially lifted in the eighteenth century and the breed was dispersed to other countries around the world. Attempts made to establish merino sheep in Britain had limited success due to the unsuitable climate and susceptibility of the animal to developing foot rot in damp conditions. The low country in New Zealand presented similar conditions, and in those areas it was eventually replaced by more suitable cross-breeds of sheep.[22] The merino was a hardy animal that thrived in the harsh dry environments previously experienced during summer sheep migrations across the higher regions of Spain. These regions were similar to the mountainous terrain of the

Fig. 2.2

New Zealand high country,[23] where large stations were populated with merino sheep at a ratio of 1 sheep for every 5 acres (2.023 hectares) of land, and although vegetation was sparse, the sheep were able to survive on alpine plants and tussock (fig. 2.2).[24] Furthermore, although the "mountain goat of the sheep world" was a good climber, it was easy to muster so could venture into higher regions in search of food during the summer months, yet be mustered down by men and dogs to lower land for shearing and shelter during the winter.[25] Apart from utilising otherwise-unproductive land, the conditions had beneficial effects on the wool as the finest and best wool was produced on sheep that were thin and mobile.[26] High-country station owner David MacLeod recalls, "there is no other place in the world where the life is quite the same, where man, dog and sheep are united in a partnership to live on the very fringe of habitable land and defy the elements which threaten them at every turn. Snow and ice, fire, flood, avalanche and landslide—we meet them all".[27]

Early imports of merino sheep into New Zealand originated from flocks developed in Australia that had been sourced from India, the Cape of Good Hope, and later from Britain.[28] As the sheep population grew and exports increased, it became apparent to the international market that wool produced in Australasia was more consistent in quality than the mixed sheep breeds in Europe, which could not compete with either the purity or the price of wool produced in the colonies.[29] Recognising the opportunity, during the middle of the nineteenth century, "entrepreneurs, mostly from the British Isles, utilized cheap land in 'new' and 'empty' regions of the world—South America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand—to grow raw wool to meet the demand of the expanding textile industries of Britain and continental Europe".[30] After 1850 the growth in development of sheep farming in Canterbury and Otago was largely due to capital investment from Britain, which was also the recipient of most of the wool.[31] By 1870, the South Island regions of Canterbury and Otago accounted for three quarters of the total number of sheep, with Marlborough in the upper South Island and Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay regions in the North Island making up the rest.[32]

Figure 2.2. South Island high country, Glenmore Station, Mackenzie Country. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

The occupation of sheep farming was promoted to New Zealanders and potential emigrants in Britain. James Edward Fitzgerald, the first superintendent of Canterbury from 1852 to 1857, stated "the only way to make money here is by sheep farming. Money may literally be coined in that trade. And it is eminently the profession of a gentleman. The sheep farmer may have his comfortable house and gardens and a little farm producing all he requires, but his personal task is to ride about the country inspecting his vast flocks and giving directions for their management."[33] In 1861 Charles Hursthouse described New Zealand as an ideal location for sheep, with climate and soil conditions that were superior to any other country in the world.[34] He claimed, "the production of the 'Golden Fleece' might be so increased as to render New Zealand one of the mother-country's most fruitful offshoots, and youth considered, one of the richest and most flourishing colonies in the world".[35] Immigrant Donald McLean, who later became owner of Maraekakaho Station, wrote in 1851 that "sheep are the most certain investment that I can think of… how happy I would feel were I possessed of flocks and herds, and the means of settling on 10,000 acres (4,047 hectares) of these plains".[36]

Development of the London Market

At the same time as sheep farming was developing in Australasia, there were changes in the British shipping industry that greatly improved the capacity for long-distance transportation of goods from countries around the world, including colonies of the British Empire. Much of the produce was imported through the Port of London, which was well placed for access to British and European markets and was close to financial and sales services in the city of London.

Shipping and trade on the River Thames had begun during the sixteenth century, but the development of new trading routes to India and the Far East resulted in a shift away from the Mediterranean ports of Venice and Genoa to the Port of London.[37] London was ideally placed to take advantage of the change, and the river was both wide and deep enough to accommodate the increasing volume of trading ships entering the docks. The advantages of London as a world centre of trade and commerce lay in its central location for buyers from Britain, Europe, and the rest of the world, the financial and sales services available in the city, dock facilities for importing, storing, selling, and distributing produce, and easy access in and out of London by river, rail and road.[38]

While grain, sugar, tobacco, wool, meat, and softwood formed the bulk of imported goods coming into the Port, many other products were sourced from all over the world.[39] As trade expanded, improvements in ship design, construction, and power enabled ships to become bigger, faster, and more reliable. The introduction of iron framing into wooden sailing ship construction from 1839 meant that wooden beams

were replaced with iron, resulting in a 25 percent reduction in the weight of a ship.[40] A composite iron and wooden ship was more robust and equipped to endure long-distance travel, and without the limitations of the span of wood, ship size was unrestricted and their capacity to carry freight was increased.

Despite the improvements, wind-powered ships remained unreliable—in the right conditions a sailing ship could travel from London to Australia in just over sixty days, but in poor weather the trip could take up to one hundred days.[41] This meant that sales schedules were disrupted and payment for wool was delayed, and for this reason sailing ships, despite being more economical, were gradually replaced by steam-powered ships over the course of the half a century following their appearance on the Thames in 1815.[42] Their introduction to New Zealand in 1865 was primarily to service the monthly mail run to and from Britain, and in 1877 this was extended to general use.[43] Travel by steam ship from New Zealand to Britain reduced the journey time from four months to eight weeks.[44] Other developments, such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, reduced the cost and travel time further and opened access to other markets for New Zealand goods.[45] British ships played a vital role in the foundation and consolidation of the British Empire and continued to foster ongoing relations with the colonies through trade.[46]

Although London did not function as a manufacturing centre for wool, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century it became established as the international centre for trade in wool. Robert Peden writes, "in the colonial period, wool from New Zealand, the Australian colonies, South America, and southern Africa was marketed on the selling floors of London and Liverpool. English processors were the main buyers, but from the early 1860s processors from the USA and Europe, particularly France, Belgium and Germany, became significant purchasers through the English marketing system."[47] At the time, the London market was able to supply the widest variety of wool, attract the most wool buyers in the world, and was where wool producers could obtain the best prices.[48] By 1860 the export of wool from New Zealand produced 90 percent of the country's total export income, and until 1951 it contributed to two thirds of all export earnings.[49] During the second half of the nineteenth century, most New Zealand station owners shipped their wool directly to London where there were dedicated dock warehouses, sales facilities, and separate auctions for wool from Australasia.[50] However, consistent with changes in the Australian wool industry, during the twentieth century local sales of wool became more common and the reputation of London as the principle market for wool began to decline.[51] Alan Barnard points out, "the London sales organisation served the growers' interests well, at least until the end of the sixties, and the concentration on London accorded well with the prevailing sentiments—of 'Home', of empire and of imperial relations".[52]

In response to the growth in shipping and trade into London, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, facilities along the river were expanded and new docks were built. These provided secure warehousing with independent waterways to avoid the restrictions of the tidal river, enabling ships to operate at all times with cargo unloaded directly off ships into dock store rooms (fig. 2.3). The London Docks

Fig. 2.3

opened in 1805 and St Katharine Docks in 1828; both were close to Tower Bridge and auction sales venues in the city. The two docks were primarily designed to store and process colonial wool from Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and to a lesser extent from South America, Asia Minor, Europe, and Ireland. Although wool was the main commodity, there was storage space for other goods imported from all over the world. The most valuable commodities securely stored at St Katharine Docks were indigo, opium, marble, tortoise-shell, and scent.[53] Wool warehouses occupied a number of buildings in the dock complex and extended up to seven stories high (fig. 2.4). St Katharine Docks spanned 32 acres (12.945 hectares) with storage capacity for up to 600,000 bales, although with the use of

Figure 2.3. St Katherine's Dock. Walter Thornbury, "St. Katherine's Docks", in Old and New London: Volume 2 (London, 1878), pp.117–21. British History Online: http://www.british-history.ac.uk.

Figure 2.4. Wapping Great Wool Floor at London Docks. Illustrated London News, August 1850.

Fig. 2.4

additional warehouses it could accommodate much more.[54] The London Docks occupied a total area of 30 acres (12.140 hectares) and provided 19 acres (7.689 hectares) of floor space for storage of 40,000 bales of wool. During sales times, designated show rooms could display up to 18,000 bales.[55] In 1929 it was reported that over 55 million sheep fleeces were processed through the London market a year, most of which were through the London Docks.[56]

On arrival at the docks, bales of wool were unloaded off ships and stored in warehouses until the day of the sale, at which point they were transferred to designated show rooms and displayed for inspection and handling of wool by prospective buyers prior to auction. Wool show rooms were allocated the top floors of warehouse buildings facing north and were fitted with a glass roof to take advantage of natural overhead light for optimum viewing conditions during pre-sale inspection. The dock staff were custodians of the wool and acted on behalf of importers and purchasers. As well as routine dock responsibilities, specialist staff provided services such as reporting on the weight, quality, and condition of wool, retrieving samples to represent the wool in the bale, sorting the produce for quality and marks, and opening bales for inspection prior to sale.[57] Information provided by warehouse staff included the condition of bales and quality of bale marks on arrival at the dock and was used in monitoring and moderating processes and practices in the colonies.

On entry into the warehouse, each bale had a 1lb (453.6 gms) sample of wool extracted from the corner of the bale. This was wrapped and labelled with the name of the ship, the brand or mark of the owner, and the number of the bale, and was sent to the selling wool broker for inspection and valuation prior to sale.[58] Bales were then stored in warehouses until they were scheduled for sale, as London wool sales were only held six times a year with each series lasting for three weeks. On sales day, the bales of wool selected for sale were set out in warehouse show rooms (fig. 2.5). They were stacked three bales high and ordered in lots to be sold by

Fig. 2.5

Figure 2.5. Buyers sampling wool at London, London. Photographer unknown, 1900. Mary Evans Picture Library: Item 6853822.

brokers and prepared for inspection by prospective buyers prior to attending the auction sale later in the day. The ends of bales that had been sampled on arrival were faced inwards and the unopened ends were slit open to expose the contents for buyers to inspect and handle the bulk of the wool in the bale.[59] A sales card was attached to the bale to correspond with information set out in the sales catalogue, which was prepared by the broker in advance. A typical sales catalogue entry listed the name of the ship, a description of the wool, the lot number of the wool for sale, the mark or owner's station brand or name, and the bale number; it could therefore read, "Ex Wangaratta—scoured stained pieces Ewes—lot 135—Bonnie Downs—tare—11–9 Bales".[60]

On the morning of the sale, buyers arrived at the show rooms to view and inspect the wool for sale and record their intentions for the auction sale held later in the day. A retrospective article in the journal of the Port of London Authority described the scene as follows: "along one gangway you may see a dozen men with catalogues—Britishers from Bradford, Huddersfield or the West Country; Americans from Boston; Belgians; Frenchmen from Lille, Roubaix, or Tourcoing; Germans from Chemnitz, Hanover, or Blumenthal. All are covered by long white coats, such as cricket umpires wear. Up and down they go, plunging a hand into a bale, pulling forth a fistful and scanning and fingering the greasy strands before they scratch figures on the pages of their catalogue."[61] At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, buyers relocated to the Sale Room at the London Wool Exchange in Coleman Street (later the Fruit and Wool Exchange in Spitalfields) a short distance away, where the auction sale took place. The heads of the wool-broking firms—the Committee of London Wool Brokers acting on behalf of importers—conducted the sale sitting on chairs facing a semi-circular ring of tiered seats. Lots were described as being knocked down at the rate of six or seven a minute with as many as three thousand lots being sold over the course of a day.[62] Immediately after the sale, payment for the wool was made to the broker based in London, who in turn paid the station owner on the other side of the world, either through an agent or bank. Some owners who had consigned their wool directly to London were paid in advance through their bank or merchant for a major part of the estimated value of the wool and received the rest of the payment after sale.[63] At completion of the sale, bales were prepared for dispatch—sampled wool was placed back into the bale, the opening was repaired and the wool was either transported locally by road or railway or re-exported by ship within fourteen days of the sale.

The day following the sale, London newspapers reported sales results, beginning with an overview of the quality of the wool and a summary of the general results followed by specific details of sales. From the mid 1850s New Zealand newspapers began reporting on news from the British wool market, which was either supplied

by local wool brokers through merchants or received directly from London.[64] Major wool brokers routinely published results of wool sales for colonies represented in their catalogue, commenting on the wool offered for sale and reviewing the market in general. This maintained a profile for the broker, publicised the results to banks and wool merchants, and conveyed information to station owners and potential clients.[65] Stock and station agents based in New Zealand acted as an intermediary between London importers and their clients and provided feedback from London on the state of goods on arrival, the quality of the wool, and gave advice on improvements to the preparation of wool for sale.[66] In the early days, supplies, news, and information from Britain could take several months to reach New Zealand, so farmers were forced to rely on their own skills and resources; news was passed on by word of mouth through farmers, visitors, tinkers, and itinerant farm workers.[67] Newspapers increasingly became an important means of communication in the colony, with 181 newspapers launched in New Zealand between 1860 and 1877. Up-to-date information on overseas practices and technologies were sourced from Britain, Europe, North America, South Africa, and Australia and published in newspapers and trade journals.[68] In this way information was conveyed to isolated communities, providing a forum for feedback, the discussion and sharing of ideas on farming matters, and for advertising goods and services.[69] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the New Zealand Department of Agriculture was established, and from 1910 information was published through their own journal, *The New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*.

Exporting Wool from the Colonies

Wool was an ideal product for export from developing countries as "it had a high value-to-weight ratio; required little labour to produce; had limited on-farm capital and transport infrastructure requirements; and did not require innovative technology".[70] Bales of wool could be easily and tightly packed into the hold of a ship and could conveniently fill shipping space on the return journey to Britain after delivery of supplies to the colonies (fig. 2.6). Heavier goods, such as iron ore from Australia, provided stability and ballast with wool creating the bulk of the cargo.[71]

Fig. 2.6

Figure 2.6. Bales of wool packed inside a ship, location unknown. Photographed by Sydney Charles Smith, 1925. Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/2-045401-G.

As an export product wool was stable, durable, and didn't spoil—this was an important factor considering the lengthy and unreliable sea voyage to the northern hemisphere, which always came with the possibility that shipping times could be adversely affected by variable weather conditions and the journey time could be extended by weeks or months.[72] Despite this, wool was sought after as a commodity for transport by ship as the relatively light weight and bulk of wool offered fast passage and delivery of cargo.[73] Michael King maintains sheep were by the far the most popular animal for farming due to easy transportation and export of wool and the fact that the intake of grass by sheep was eight to ten times less than cows.[74] This was an advantage while pastoral land was being developed, indigenous bush was cleared, and swamp lands were being drained. Despite the obvious benefits of wool, historians Bill Carter and John MacGibbon maintain that "the first sheep men in New Zealand brought no great dreams of a wool industry that would make the country wealthy. Like the founders of Australian sheep flocks, their need was primarily meat. Wool was a fortunate by-product."[75]

The earliest exports of wool by ship from Australia were packed in casks, boxes, and primitive bags and risked contamination from exposure to water and other elements.[76] Marsden was reported to have shipped his wool to London in wooden barrels,[77] and fleeces were tramped into sacks by foot.[78] The use of sacks for transporting wool had a long history in Britain and records from as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries refer to the sale of sacks of wool.[79] In a custom dating back to the fourteenth century, a cushion known as 'the woolsack' became the designated seat for the Lord Speaker in the British Parliament; it is still in use today, filled with wool sourced from the colonies.[80]

An historical account of the English wool trade during the nineteenth century described English fleeces packed in large sheets, which were said to be very different to the colonial rectangular bale.[81] Early exports of Australian wool had been wrapped in sheets of canvas sail-cloth, which replicated similar methods used in Britain, but the fabric was found to be prone to drying, becoming brittle, and was easily torn. Following successive trials of alternative packs, a standardised hemp pack was introduced in the 1840s.[82] The colonial wool pack, made in India from tightly woven hemp or jute fibre, was heavier, thicker, and stronger. It was designed in a standard flat-ended rectangular shape for stacking and storage and offered better protection of wool during long-distance travel. Even so, in 1905 it was reported that "for a period never less than three months and probably averaging eight or nine, the wool is enclosed in the jute bag, and banged about without much ceremony by dozens and scores of people under all sorts of conditions of light, weather, and temperature. There is little wonder, therefore, that a perfectly sound and uninjured package is the exception rather than the rule".[83] In addition to wear and tear during

their transportation, bales could be stored in warehouse facilities for another eight to ten weeks before sale, and storage time could extend up to ten months if a reserve for the wool was not met.[84]

When exporting wool from the late 1840s, New Zealand farmers adopted the Australian-designed hemp or jute pack imported from Calcutta. In the 1860s it measured 5 foot 6 inches (1.706 mm) high and was capable of holding eighty to ninety fleeces.[85] This was later revised to a smaller pack of 900 mm square by 1.500 mm high that held up to sixty fleeces.[86] McLean recalled early bales weighed between 225 lbs (102 kgs) and 340 lbs (154 kgs) depending on the size of the bale.[87] However, in 1978 bale weights were reduced to 185 lbs (83 kgs) by Board of Trade regulations over safety concerns during handling.[88] An additional bale material was introduced in the early 1940s—flax was a locally sourced fibrous native plant that was dried and woven into wool packs as a subsidised wartime initiative. At the time farmers were required to take a proportion of flax packs with their jute pack order until the 1960s when the subsidy was withdrawn.[89] A wool pack consisted of two separate parts—a rectangular body and separate cap or top that was sewn on to the body of the bale with hemp twine when it was full.

The journey from New Zealand to Britain began with transfer of completed and marked bales from the station to the nearest exporting wharf. The earliest mode of transport was by wagon or dray pulled by bullocks or horses, a journey that could

Fig. 2.7

Figure 2.7. Wool leaving Brancepeth Station woolshed, Wairarapa. Photographer and date unknown. Wairarapa Archives: 97-84/7.

take days or weeks (fig. 2.7). Before roads were built, a bullock team consisting of eight to fourteen bullocks travelling at the rate of three kilometres an hour could take up to three weeks to make the return trip between the Mackenzie Country and Timaru. At Te Waimate Station, five bullock wagons carried thirty bales each

(150 bales) to Kurow, a return journey that took up to three weeks (one and half hours' drive by car today).[90] As infrastructure improved other transport was introduced, including the traction engine in 1904, which pulled trailers loaded with bales, and the motorised lorry, which appeared around 1915.[91] On coastal properties without access by road or rail, sixteen to twenty-five bales at a time were transferred by sea on lighter boats to waiting ships that delivered them to one of the export ports of Port Chalmers, Lyttleton, Wellington, or Napier.[92] Up until the 1950s, wool bales continued to be delivered by bullock dray to lighter boats and were transferred out to coastal steamers operating along the Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay coast.[93]

Preparation of Wool for Export

Initially wool packs were filled by tramping wool under foot, pressing it into the corners of the pack, and compacting it further with a wooden garden spade. Wool was also thrown into a hole in the ground lined with a rectangular pack and compressed by foot before being loading onto a pack horse.[94] A newspaper account written in 1899 described how a wool pack was hung up with ropes tied to each corner and the wool was thrown in, resulting in an irregular-shaped, bulky bale.[95] Writing from his experience of life in the colony, E. S. Elwell recalls "the wool was placed in bales which were placed in an oblong box made to the right size. To keep the bale open and properly stretched, screws fastened it to the sides of this oblong box. The packer placed the fleeces neatly in the bottom of the bale into which he himself first got, and then he trod them in, firmly ramming them down also with a spade to press them as closely as possible" (fig. 2.8).[96] Towards the end of the 1860s wool presses imported from Australia made the process of packing more

Fig. 2.8

Figure 2.8. Baling the season's clip at Old-Bury, Wairamarama, Hawke's Bay. Photographer H. Kelsey, 1904. Auckland Libraries Heritage Image Collection: AWNS-19041222-31-1.

efficient within a box measured to contain a standard wool pack. The box supported the pack while it was being filled; it thus controlled the shape and weight of the bale and reduced damage to fibres by spading.[97]

Manual practices of compressing wool were phased out with increasing use and sophistication of wool presses, which evolved from a screw press to a lever press, and later an electric-powered hydraulic press.[98] Lady Barker described bale pressing in the 1860s as follows: "the fleeces are tumbled in, and a heavy screw-press forces them down till the bale—which is kept open in a large square frame—is as full as it can hold. The top of canvas is then put on, tightly sewn, four iron pins are removed and the sides of the frame fall away, disclosing a most symmetrical bale".[99] A press could achieve a more tightly and consistently packed bale and regular rectangular shape that was easier to handle and stack, and provided a firm flat surface for applying marks. However, station owners were warned not to over press their wool to avoid consolidation and permanent discolouration of the fibre.

As soon as bales were pressed full of the same kind of wool, the top or cap was stitched on, with nine stitches applied to each of the four sides, while the bale remained in the press to maintain the shape. When sewing down the cap it was advised that a "lock stitch" was preferable as, if one stitch was broken or cut in

Fig. 2.9

transit the others would still hold (fig. 2.9).[100] When the bale was completed, the press was released and opened and the bale was removed, weighed, marked, and made ready for transport to the shipping port for export.[101] Prior to shipping, bales underwent further compression or dumping with a hydraulic press that compacted them into smaller regular sizes and shapes. Dumping reduced the volume of a bale of wool by half through vertical compression of two bales, which were secured by wires or bands—wool treated in this way was charged at a lower rate.[102] Before 1914, wool was single dumped, but with the outbreak of war shipping shortages prompted further bale compression to double dumping to conserve shipping space and eliminated the need for screw pressing on board ship. On arrival at their destination, bands were cut and bales regained their original form and volume.

Figure 2.9. Sewing up a bale in a wool press, circa 1931. Location and photographer unknown. Alexander Turnbull Library: PAColl-6303-04.

Marks on Wool Bales

It could be presumed that like many other practices implanted into the New Zealand sheep-farming industry, stencilling had originated from the wool trade in Britain. However, Steven Heller and Louise Fili confirm stencilling was an important part of the British mercantile trade with crates, boxes, and bags containing goods routinely marked with stencilled images and letters.[103] Historical photographs taken of goods imported into the Port of London revealed widespread use of stencilling on barrels, boxes, sacks, crates, and bales, as well as applied directly to logs.

Early limited use of stencilling on New Zealand wool bales was probably more influenced by practices in Australia, where wool had been exported overseas for over forty years longer than in New Zealand. Initially, hand-generated bale markings prevailed in both countries. Bale marks were applied at the shearing shed after pressing and completion of the bale and consisted of at least three different types of marks. These were: an identifying mark of the owner and origin of wool that consisted of a brand mark and/or station name; a description of the type, quality, and condition of wool in the bale, for example hogget or wether, fleece or pieces, combing or clothing, sandy or seedy; and a number allocated to the bale in the order it was completed. The mark of station identity was common to all bales from the same station, but other marks such as the description and number were unique to the individual bale.

An additional mark of a certified wool classer was introduced in the 1940s as a guarantee of the consistency and type of wool in the bale. Grading or categorising shorn wool into batches of the same type—known as classing—originated from the six-hundred-year-old British profession of wool-stapling and was an intermediate stage in preselecting wool for manufacturing.[104] Apart from peculiarities of the breed, age, and sex of sheep, wool varied in length, fineness, and quality on the animal. The best and most even wool was on the sides of the sheep, the shortest was on the legs and neck, the dirtiest wool was on the belly, the finest wool was around the shoulders, and the thickest wool was around the rear end.[105]

Lady Barker observed wool classing in 1865, noting “two boys were incessantly bringing armfuls of rolled-up fleeces: these were laid on the table before the wool-sorters, who opened them out, and pronounced in a moment to which bin they belonged; two or three men standing behind rolled them up again rapidly, and put them on a sort of shelf divided into compartments, which were each labelled, so that the quality and kind of wool could be told at a glance.”[106] As soon as enough wool of the same variety to complete a bale had accumulated it was transferred to the press containing an empty wool pack. As the textile industry became more advanced and different sheep breeds were introduced, there was a need for increasing

complexity and efficiency in sorting wool in the shearing shed.[107] This required more precise methods of classing to meet specific demands of the market and give an accurate account of the wool to the buyer. The introduction of a professional qualification for wool classers regulated the industry and a mark and registration number of a professional classer was proof of the standard of classing.[108]

Regulations for Marking Wool Bales

The preparation and presentation of New Zealand wool destined for Britain was continually being monitored and regulated by British importers and wool brokers, who frequently voiced an opinion on the standards of the "get up" of wool from the colonies. Peden states, "one of the most striking features of the New Zealand wool trade in the colonial era was the continual chorus of complaint about the poor standard of presentation of the country's wool". As early as April 1853, he described how wool brokers began publishing complaints in local newspapers regarding the sorting and packing of wool.[109] In 1861 Hursthouse observed, "as a wool-growing country, the whole of New Zealand ranks high, although generally the wool has been sent to market in a very rough state, and consequently sold at apparently low prices".[110] As the wool industry developed and trade increased, it became apparent that other practices such as the standards of bale marking required modification and regulation. A strong incentive for farmers to comply with advice and instructions from Britain was to protect the reputation of the brand and to achieve the best possible price for their wool. Indistinct, inadequate, and poorly applied bale marks were said to have a detrimental and lasting effect on the reputation of the brand and the station. The general message was that the quality of the preparation and marking of bales was an indication to the buyer of the quality of wool in the bale. In addition, farmers were warned that one bad fleece in a bale could undermine the rest of the brand and would be likely to result in a much lower price.[111] Failure of marks to identify the station and owner of wool, however, resulted in the greater loss of an entire bale. This was a concern for the owner when the annual sale of wool was the main source of income for the station.[112]

In the shipping industry bale marks were just as important for tracking and accounting for bales in transit, where it was noted that "each individual bale holds its own identity from the time it is stencilled with a mark and a number before being carried on the wagon to be conveyed to the tide-water on the other side of the world. That identity is most carefully preserved right up to the time when it is turned into 'tops' ready for transformation into cloth. The curious markings which a bale may amass include perhaps a coloured band worked into the fabric, signs in black or red paint, chalkings of all sorts and the name or initials of a steamship company."[113] Most bale marking took place in the shearing shed as soon as the bale cap was sewn on and the bale was released from the press. Bale marks were the responsibility of

the classer and to avoid errors each bale was marked with chalk or raddle before it left the press prior to permanent marking. Attempts to attach strong hand-written labels with wire had been tried at an early stage but were discounted due to problems with detachment during handling and transporting.[114] As a result marks were applied directly to the fabric of the bale and details of each bale were recorded in a shearing tally book. This included the date, bale number, a description of the wool, a description of the type of sheep, and the weight of the bale. These details accompanied the bales and were forwarded to the agent or wool broker as a full record of the wool for export. Shipping and consignment marks were applied at a later stage at ports prior to dumping and shipping (fig. 2.10).

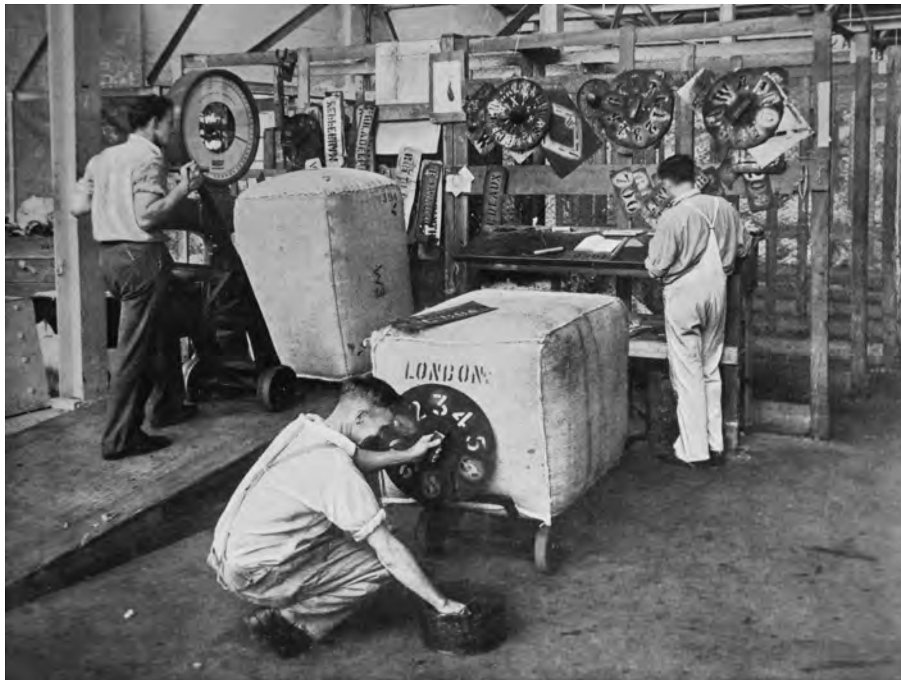

Fig. 2.10

Figure 2.10. Stencilling shipping marks on wool bales, Port Chalmers. Photographer and date unknown. National Publicity Studios. Author’s own collection.

Early bale marks were described by Lady Barker as “the brand of the sheep painted on it, its weight, and to what class the wool belongs”.[115] Other references to the practice of painting bale marks were found in early newspapers. In 1891 an article titled “Hints for the Shearing Shed” advised farmers against writing the name on the bale with a piece of wood or an old brush.[116] Other references were made to applying marks by hand with a piece of raddle (oil-based chalk),[117] and with sheep brand oil and paint.[118] Continuing complaints from Britain about the poor standard of bale marks were summed up in a message written in 1892, which stated that “brokers also speak strongly about the careless marking of wool bales and their remarks are applicable to too many New Zealand clips, especially from small stations. They say that those who have noticed the inextricable hieroglyphics which often cover both ends of imported bales of Australian [and New Zealand] wool as they arrive in the mills of Europe, or the apparent absence of all original brands, cannot but wonder how they ever got to their destination. As it is, the confusion and loss are great, and tend to increase.”[119]

The Sheep and Station Brand

It is likely that the bale marks referred to as hieroglyphics were letter marks or symbols originating from registered brand marks for sheep, or as Lady Barker wrote, "the brand of the sheep". In 1849 the spread of sheep disease among New Zealand flocks prompted the Central Government to pass the first Scab Act for the province of New Munster (South Island).[120] Scab, an infectious disease that threatened the wool industry during the nineteenth century, was easily transmitted between animals through bodily contact resulting in serious illness to sheep and damage to skin and wool. The spread of disease was compounded by lack of fencing in the colony as boundaries were often formed by physical features of the land. The disease was probably brought into New Zealand around 1845 through imported sheep from Australia, where it became established during the 1830s.[121] In 1854 the Scab and Catarrh Ordinance required every owner of sheep to register a unique brand mark with the Provincial Council. A Registrar of Brands was appointed by the Council to administer a register or record book containing all the brands in a region and farmers were required to provide a correct copy or impression of the station brand to be registered.[122] The requirements of branding were set out in *The Brands and Branding Act* (1880), which defined a brand as "a distinct and plain mark made with a branding iron into the skin [horses or cattle] or horn [cattle or rams]. In the case of sheep, a wool-brand [was] made with pitch, tar, paint, raddle or lampblack mixed with oil or tallow, or other suitable substance, in letters, figures, or otherwise, not less than two inches in length, on the sides, back, shoulders, hips, or rump, or a fire-brand on horn or cheek."[123] A brand mark was re-registered every two years and all sheep (rams, ewes, wethers, lambs) above the age of four months were required by law to be marked with the registered brand mark of their owner, which was to remain clearly readable throughout the following year (fig. 2.11). For every sheep not branded the owner was liable to be charged a penalty up to ten pounds.

Fig. 2.11

Figure 2.11. Sheep branding, Grasmere Station, Canterbury. Photographed by John Pascoe, 1944. Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/4-002024-F.

The registered brand mark of station identity was a mark of ownership of sheep applied with a flat-faced branding iron dipped in paint or a similar permanent marking substance that was pressed onto the skin of the animal as soon as it was shorn, and was reapplied each year after shearing. A brand mark could identity the owner of strayed sheep, which were returned following the annual muster. At one stage, Te Waimate Station reported 1,500 to 2,000 "strange sheep" a year and advertised in the local newspaper for farmers to collect their sheep from the station on a designated day.[124] On 11 April 1856 a large-scale mix-up of sheep was found on an adjoining property and 1,900 sheep were returned to Cheviot Hills Station.[125]

Throughout the history of animal identification there were three main methods of traceability: a description document, certificate, or register of the mark; a simple mark applied directly to the body of the animal on skin, horns, hooves, paws, or beak; or a removable mark attached to the animal on a collar or ring.[126] Branding sheep in New Zealand was by means of a simple registered mark applied to the body of the sheep in combination with cuts or notches made to ears, or a hot metal branding iron applied to horns of stud rams. Branding livestock with a mark of ownership can be traced back at least 3,800 years, with very little change in the techniques used to apply them.[127] While hot-metal branding on horses and cattle is well documented, marking sheep is less well known but also has a long history. In Babylonia and Sumeria large flocks of sheep carried the mark of their individual owner as early as 1800 BCE.[128] In the seventeenth century, migrations of Spanish merino were reported to trek four to five hundred miles annually in search of new pastures in the foothills of the Pyrenees, and were branded with the mark of their owner and guarded by shepherds.[129] Sheep branding had been practiced in Britain for centuries and shepherds' guides to Smit or fleece Marks—the equivalent of a sheep brand register—recorded regional sheep marks in Britain from the early nineteenth century in what researcher Bill McKay describes as a form of rural heraldry.[130] As sheep numbers increased, the British practice was adopted in New Zealand and Australia during the nineteenth century to address problems with boundaries, spread of disease, and theft.

Unlike sheep brands there was no register for marks of station identity on wool bales and initially there were no regulations or guidelines for how bales should be marked. The use of an existing recognised and registered sheep brand was a logical extension of an established mark of station identity and was commonly used on wool bales. This practice was similarly recorded in Western Australia by Christopher Fyfe, who described the increasing use of cattle brands to mark bales from the early 1870s.[131] In *The Manual of Brands and Marks* (1970) Manfred Wolfenstein describes three categories of brands as literal or using letters, those using numerals or numbers, and others using symbols such as figures, signs, and pictures.[132] In New Zealand, sheep

brands were predominantly letter marks consisting of the initial letters of the name of the original owner—either as single letters or combined in a monogram. Other marks were simple geometric shapes with no obvious significance, while some stations saw the opportunity for extending an existing identity, such as a family crest, or choosing a symbol of historical or personal significance. In 1906 an assistant to a Brand Registrar remarked, "why, the immense variety of brands there portrayed—some of them veritable hieroglyphics—would yield characters enough to write a new language in; and it wouldn't be one whit less difficult to master than the Chinese, which it would strongly resemble".[133]

As trade in wool increased, it became apparent that a brand mark of one or two letters of the name of the owner was not a strong enough form of identification for marking bales of wool. Newspapers cited instances where bales with the same letter marks had become mixed up in transit and arrived at the wrong destination.[134] An article by wool brokers in 1884, typical of others printed in local newspapers, stated "we would suggest that the bales should be branded with the name of the farm, thus giving it more distinction than one or more letters. Considerable confusion often arises from branding clips with one letter, as when several consignments arrive in one day bearing the same brand, great difficulty is experienced in keeping them distinct."[135] As well as risking duplication of marks, tracking a bale involved recording marks numerous times from the moment they left the shearing shed to the time they reached the new owner. Marks were listed on shipping manifests, warehouse inventories, and sales catalogues, records, and reports. Descriptions of station brands found in newspaper reports of wool sales highlighted the problem of identifying a station through a mark or symbol on its own. A sales report published in 1869 listed station brands as "circle bisected by perpendicular line … Z over MMM … [and] … FJ".[136] Alternatively, on some documents, marks were drawn by hand rather than described. The British solution to the widespread use of sheep brands to identify bales was to instruct exporters to add the name of the station or farm, with or without a mark. In 1897, a letter forwarded from the London office to local agents was published in New Zealand newspapers advising that New Zealand wool had not been available for sale on the due date as bale marks were "indistinct, apart from their variety". They reminded farmers of a suggestion made some years earlier that "the names of clients' stations or farms should be adopted in every case as their shipping marks, instead of simply 'A. B. C. D.', thus minimizing the chance of delay in delivery from defective marking".[137]

A station name created a stronger, more distinctive brand than a brand mark on its own; furthermore, it was easier to read, write, and record. In 1946, a guide to wool exporters written by wool-selling brokers advised, "do not use shapes, such as circles, squares, diamonds, hearts, etc., as these slow the work of receiving and

shipping. If the growers realized the number of times a brand has to be written on various documents they would willingly assist to simplify branding."[138] The change to the use of a station name with or instead of a brand mark for identity of ownership on wool bales was consistent with developments in Australia. Fyfe reports, "in the early years colony marks or brands on bales were restricted to the owner's initials, and also on occasions the initials of the London consignee, and this remained the general custom in the colony until the 1880s, when property names as wool brands first gained currency in Western Australia".[139] However, other problems with bale marking persisted, prompting London-based agents to enforce a universal method of marking bales of wool from the colonies with the use of stencil plates.

The Introduction of Wool Bale Stencilling

By 1912, an estimated 1.5 million bales were being imported into the Port of London annually and identity marks had to compete with thousands of others.[140] British importers' complaints about bale marks were published in newspapers during the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Issues identified included: difficulty of reading and documenting bale marks; risk of duplication; inconsistent processes used in applying them; inadequate substances used to mark bales therefore making them liable to rub off before they reached their destination; the location of marks on bales varied from station to station; and there was inconsistency of type style, size, or ordering of information (fig. 2.12).

As international trade in wool increased and facilities in the Port of London expanded, it became apparent that a more systematic and standardised approach to marking bales was required. By specifying the type of marks and by giving instructions on how they should be applied, what they should be applied with, and

Fig. 2.12

Figure 2.12. Wool Clip, Howick, Auckland. Photographer unknown, 1930. South Auckland Research Centre: Footprints 04 128.

where marks should be placed on the bale, British importers created clear guidelines for station owners on marking wool bales for export, which were reinforced by local and government agencies in New Zealand.

Instructions were summarised in an annual report published in 1898 by the New Zealand Department of Agriculture: "a set of stencil plates for branding and numbering the bales only costs a few shillings, but if anybody prefers to disfigure his bales by doing this with a tar brush it is his own business, and the losses will be felt chiefly by him, though the selling agent will also lose commission through bad prices obtained for the wool got up in such a way—not that the wool is damaged by the manner of marking the bales, but the slovenly style will probably characterize the manner in which the sheep and the wool are treated throughout".[141] Harbour Boards echoed the message and advised exporters to adopt large and distinctive brands for marking bales.[142] In 1900 it was restated that,

> "the branding cannot be done too carefully, and should be entrusted to a trustworthy hand, if the owner does not attend to this important matter himself. The bales need not be branded with a tar-brush, as sufficient Indian marking ink can be obtained for a shilling to mark the bales of a good-sized clip, and a few stencils are not very costly…. Everybody cannot obtain a lever-press, but is within the means of all to provide a home-made box-press in which the fleeces can be regularly arranged and packed tightly with a spade. Such a press can be made in an hour with a few shillings' worth of timber. This keeps the bale in a decent sort of shape and of fair weight".[143]

Other instructions from London brokers addressed the placement of bale marks found on arrival in London, noting that sometimes "the owner brands both ends of a bale, leaving no room for necessary shipping marks, such as countermarks, name of ship, name of destination. Sometimes, again, the station brands and numbers are put on the sides of the bales only, and disappear entirely in the process of dumping." The brokers continued with the suggestion "to put the station brand and numbers on one end of the bale, and one end only, leaving the other end blank for shipping marks. Nothing prevents station brands being repeated on the sides of the bales, but such marks are of no avail for identification in transit."[144] From the 1880s farmers were advised to use abbreviations for wool descriptions to reduce the amount of information on bale caps.[145] Local agencies in collaboration with British importers later defined and reinforced stencilling on bales. However, within those parameters was scope for individual decisions on the design layout, the shape of the plate, choice of letters, stencil design, use of materials, and how stencils were applied. Throughout the twentieth century bale marking continued to be monitored and

instructions were issued by official agencies such as the Department of Agriculture, the Wool Board, Harbour Boards, and stock and station agents. Information was circulated through newspapers, magazines, farming journals, circulars, pamphlets, posters, Agricultural and Pastoral shows, farmers' days, wool stores, personal contact with stock and station agents, and other farmers. These were summed up in an article published in *The New Zealand Journal of Agriculture* (1925) stating,

> "brands should be stencilled in black ink, in upright block letters not less than 3 inches (75 mm) in height. Brands must consist of not less than three letters. Double marks, conjoined letters, or fancy signs, which cannot readily be transcribed, should be avoided. The bales should also be numbered consecutively with figures at least 3 inches (75 mm) in height…. The proper stencilling cake or powder should be used for branding…. If a station or farm has a private mark put this on the bale first; the name of the station next in the middle; then the number underneath".[146]

A Wool Report written by stock and station agents Williams and Kettle in 1978 advised that the station brand or head brand should be located in a prominent position as near to the top of the bale as possible. A description of wool was to be placed closer to the left-hand side and the bale number was to be positioned immediately below.[147] A report in 1981 on branding woolpacks commissioned by the Wool Board identified the most suitable typefaces for letters and numerals as Gothic sans serif, extra bold, and advised that the thickness of all lines should be as equal as possible. It stated fine lines within letters and serifs at the ends of letters should be avoided, and character sizes of letters should measure three inches (seventy-five mm) tall. The best materials to use for making stencil plates were listed as thin metal, such as sheet steel, vinyl, plastic sheet, or malthoid (a building board impregnated with oil).[148]

Over time changes responded to issues that arose; for instance, initially marks were applied to both ends of the bale but were later revised to one end only to allow space for shipping marks. Another was the result of confusion over breeds of sheep that had the same name as places in Britain, such as Lincoln and Romney (Romney Marsh). In 1887 the British Merchandise Marks Act required a stencil carrying the name of the country to be added to those bales.[149] Apart from minor changes and issuing of more precise instructions, stencilling on bales remained largely the same for most of the twentieth century.

Stencilling proved to be an efficient and easy way of applying marks for labelling and tracking goods during shipping. The use of standardised templates or stencil plates for hand printing sought uniform and legible letter sizes and styles and provided a way of containing and duplicating information.[150] Stencil plates were easy to produce and distribute, were portable and versatile, and lettering could be applied on site to a wide range of surfaces, objects, and products with minimal skill or previous knowledge. Stencilled text was able to overcome difficulties with reading hand-written labels and helped to regulate how, what, and where marks were applied. During the second half of the nineteenth century and as international trade expanded, there was increasing use of stencilling in agriculture, bulk packaging, and shipping. Throughout the twentieth century stencilling continued to be used in shipping, heavy industry, construction, and the military,[151] while in other areas it declined due to the introduction of alternative methods of marking.[152] Consistent with these observations, stencilling on New Zealand wool bales for export continued throughout the twentieth century as part of a wider practice of stencilling within the British shipping industry.

The practices of branding sheep and stencilling on wool bales were eventually discontinued due to contamination of wool. Brand marks on sheep attracted controversy in the years leading up to the 1960s, when they were replaced by ear tags. Articles in local newspapers outlined the damaging effects on wool through contamination by products used for branding such as pitch, tar, paint, raddle (red ochre), or lamp-black mixed with oil and tallow.[153] Recipes in local newspapers documented other substances used for marking sheep such as: boiled oil with lamp black and turpentine;[154] raddle, tallow, and beeswax;[155] oil and raddle, and pitch or tar boiled in oil.[156] In 1928 it was pointed out that if the mark was not removed from the fleece (especially pitch or tar) during classing, fragments could disperse in heat and steaming manufacturing processes and cause widespread contamination of the entire batch of wool.[157] Removing branded wool during classing on the other hand was time consuming and reduced the value of the fleece by shortening the length of fibres.[158]

Similar issues arose with contamination of wool through loose hemp, jute, or flax bale fibres. Increasing buyer demands for quality and purity of wool and the availability of new materials forced a review of bale material and construction. This resulted in a change to a two-kilogram-lighter, cleaner synthetic pack introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[159] As well as a change of material, the two-piece design of a wool pack was simplified to the current Australian-type cap-less pack with an integrated flap that was secured by metal clips, further reducing the chance of contamination of wool by twine.[160] The design of

the new pack incorporated a label that required marks to be applied by hand with felt tip marker pen and resulted in the discontinuation of stencils to mark bales of wool bales (fig. 2.13).

Fig. 2.13

Figure 2.13. Synthetic wool bale with felt pen marking, Waitangi Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographer Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Stencilled categorisation of information on wool bales for export through an identity mark, product description and number increased efficency in ordering, tracking, locating, and processing the sale of wool. It introduced a distinctive typographic identity through the common use of stencils on all bales of wool from New Zealand, and for other colonies exporting wool to Britain. On stations, individual identity was represented through stencilled brand marks and station names and through the creative expressions of the designers and makers of marks and letters.

Having now located the wool bale stencil in the history of sheep farming and New Zealand's wool export industry, the next chapter will look in more depth at the life stages of design and making the wool bale stencil.

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Fig. 3.1

Figure 3.1. Stencilling brush
and ink, Gwavas Station
homestead, Hawke's Bay.
Photographed by
Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Chapter 3. Life Stages of Design and Making

In this chapter the design and making of wool bale stencils are the first stages in the life of an object and build on the historical background established in the previous chapter. Although guidelines for the use of stencils were issued from Britain, there were other factors that impacted on how stencils were designed and made. This chapter considers how objects reflected the time, place, and characteristics of the people who designed and made them, and how this changed over time.

The analysis of objects is structured through a process of description, deduction and speculation.[1] Description in this chapter is the study of object form, dimensions, materials, fabrication, content and contextual material. The methods used for object analysis are through careful observation, description, analysis, contextualisation, and comparison.[2] The object study is divided into stencil types—station stencils, wool description stencils, and number stencils—in the order they appeared on bales. This aims to identify stencil form and function, analyse groups of similar types of things, and compare differences in the approach to their design and production.

Station Stencils

I. Description

The station stencil was the largest of the wool bale stencils and held the most information, carrying the identity of the station through a name, a distinctive mark, or a combination of both. Also known as the station brand or head brand, the station stencil appeared first in the hierarchy of information on bales as it linked the wool to the station and owner for payment after sale.

a). Form

The sizes and shapes of plates were determined by the size, amount, and arrangement of information on the plate, which was centred within a solid surround for stability of letters, to provide a platform for stencilling, and to protect the bale while applying marks. The shapes of plates reflected the layout of marks and station names, resulting in variations on square, rectangular, or curved plates. Typographic layouts varied between stations and between stencils from the same station. For instance, a mark could be positioned above or below the name, and text could be set straight, curved, centred, or left aligned. At times the hierarchy and order between the station name and mark changed between stencils from the same station, with either the mark or name elected as the primary element through position and scale.

Figure 3.2. Hand made station stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.3. Hand made station stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.4. Machine made station stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

The station stencils selected from Gwavas Station ordered from oldest to newest demonstrated changes in the design of layouts and shapes of plates with text set straight and curved; the shape of plates responded accordingly (figs 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6). The oldest stencil from Gwavas Station was estimated to be over one hundred years old, and the plates with sans serif text and handles were thought to be around thirty to forty years old. Letter styles, the size and shape of the plate, and design of marks changed over time through remaking and redesign. Across all station plates the most common letterforms were slab serif (17), including three hairline slab serif, sans serif (11), and serif (8). On Gwavas Station the earliest stencil letters were serif and progressed to sans serif on later plates, with some plates that appeared to be copied. When observing professionally made plates there were repeated letter styles

Fig. 3.2

Fig. 3.3

Fig. 3.4

Fig. 3.5

Figure 3.5. Machine cut station stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.6. Machine cut station stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Fig. 3.6

seen across stations, suggesting use of the same catalogue, similar fashions among stencil makers, or common suppliers. Letter styles on Coldstream Station stencils demonstrated changes over time ranging from serif, slab serif, and sans serif with a mix of hand-cut and machine-made letters and evidence that some had been copied from an earlier stencil (figs 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10). Overall the positioning of stencil ties was considered and appeared to adhere to traditions in the design of stencil letters.

Fig. 3.7

Fig. 3.8

Fig. 3.9

Fig. 3.10

Figure 3.7. Tin station stencil, Coldstream Station, shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.8. Copper station stencil, Coldstream Station shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.9. Aluminium station stencil, Coldstream Station shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.10. Plastic station stencil, Coldstream Station shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

All names on station stencils were set in capital letters and some were set in condensed letter styles, particularly the later sans serif texts. The spaces between letters were generous to maintain strength in the vulnerable areas between cut-out letters and to maintain readability. Black residue from a range of different substances was consistent across all plates unless they had been cleaned.

b). Dimensions

Sizes of plates across stations ranged from 115 mm to 755 mm wide and from 115 mm to 550 mm high depending on the shape of the plate and whether it was a name and brand mark or just a name. To give an indication of plate sizes, an estimation of oldest to newest plates at Coldstream Station measured 625 mm wide by 425 mm high (tin), 485 mm wide by 270 mm high (copper), 600 mm wide by 290 mm high (aluminium), and 410 mm wide by 330 mm high (plastic). The sizes of brand marks

Fig. 3.11

Fig. 3.12

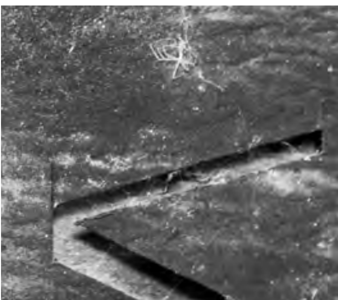
Fig. 3.13

across all plates were relatively consistent, measuring approximately 100 mm square. Letter heights were generally consistent for most station stencils measuring between 70 mm to 80 mm high. However, letter heights as small as 40 mm were found on older station stencils.

c). Materials

The most common materials for station plates were metal: tin, or zinc (15), copper based[3] (11), and aluminium (5). Other materials were rubber (1), fibreglass (1), malthoid (1), and plastic (2). The five station stencils at Coldstream Station demonstrated a range of materials were used over time in an estimated sequence from oldest to newest made in tin, copper, tin, aluminium, and plastic. Materials on stations with a quantity of stencils were inconsistent, and at times it was difficult to determine what they were due to heavy build-up of printing matter.

d). Fabrication

Signs of cutting tools could be seen through irregular jagged edges, patterned chisel marks on the edges of letters, or from knives on soft materials (figs 3.11, 3.12, 3.13). Although tool marks were obvious on some plates, on others they were disguised by debris. Nevertheless, an estimated one-third of station stencils were made by hand. Repeated use of the same letter styles and layouts suggested some were copied from earlier plates. The reasons why plates were replaced could be seen on previous stencils, where internal letter parts were missing and connecting ties and spaces between letters were broken. At Richmond Brook Station instructions written in felt pen on a copper stencil plate read: “Please take new one from zinc. Copper breaks too easily.” The most consistent plate styles across stations were cut professionally from aluminium with curved corners (fig. 3.14). Omarama Station’s stencil appeared to be made from flashing material with folded edges on the top and bottom of the rectangular plate.

A consistent feature was a hole near the edge of the plate for hanging on a nail in proximity to the press. Edges of plates, particularly when they were curved, were filed, and corners on rectangular and square plates were angled or rounded. There

Figure 3.11. Detail of cut marks on stencil plate, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.12. Detail of chisel marks on stencil plate, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.13. Detail of knife marks on stencil plate, Clifton Station shearing shed, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.14. Station stencil, Orari Gorge Station property. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Fig. 3.14

Fig. 3.15

were handles on three station stencils positioned on the front of the plate. At Gwavas Station two plates had a handle riveted on the front left side of the plate; one was positioned at an angle for holding against the bale while applying the stencil with the right hand. At Tuna Nui Station handles had been fashioned by folding the metal at both ends of the rectangular plate (fig. 3.15).

Attempts to prolong the life of a stencil took a number of forms: on a plate at Tuna Nui Station wires were used to reconnect broken parts; the Brancepeth Station stencil was extensively welded around most of the letters; and on the Longbeach Station stencil a missing central section of the letter H was replaced with a piece of tin riveted to the copper plate (figs 3.16, 3.17, 3.18).

Fig. 3.16

Fig. 3.17

Fig. 3.18

e). Content

Out of the fourteen stations visited, six used just the name of the station, six used the name of the station and a brand mark, one used the name of the owner rather than the station, and one combined a symbol and letter mark without a name. Of the six stations that used a name and mark, four combined the mark and name on the same plate, and on two stations the name and mark were on separate plates. On Gwavas Station, where eight station plates were found, four plates combined the mark and name, and four plates contained just the station name with the mark on a separate plate. The design of a shield at Gwavas Station varied between plates through various interpretations over time while maintaining the essence of the mark. The problem of a name change from Waimate to Te Waimate was overcome by using the same stencil and simply adding the last two letters of Waimate to the beginning of the word; the brand mark was on a separate plate. Coldstream and Te Waimate Stations had originally been jointly owned by two brothers, so the two stations shared the mark of a bell, although on stencils there were distinct differences in the shape of the bell.

Figure 3.15. Handle detail on station stencil, Tuna Nui Station shearing shed, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.16. Repair of plate with wires, Tuna Nui Station shearing shed, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.17. Repair to plate by welding, Brancepeth Station shed, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.18. Repair to plate with rivets, Longbeach Station, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Wool Description Stencils

I. Description

Wool description stencils referred to aspects of wool in order to accurately reflect the contents of the bale for sellers and buyers. The information could include: the type of sheep (ram, ewe, lamb, hogget, wether, black, dead); the breed of sheep (merino,

cross breed or part merino, a particular breed such as Southdown, Lincoln, Romney); the type of wool or where it was on the sheep (belly, neck, fleece, crutch); the end use of wool (clothing or combing); the condition of the wool, defects, or contamination (sandy, stained, seedy, dingy); or inferior pieces taken from the edges of the fleece (pieces) or swept from the floor of the shed (locks). Space on the bale cap measured 840 mm square and contained all stencil marks from the station, so descriptions were restricted to three letters. Reducing the text aimed to standardise content, allow space for other information, and aid readability. Examples of common abbreviations were BLS for bellies or belly wool, NKS for necks or wool from the neck of a sheep, LKS for locks, PCE for pieces, LMB for lambs, RMS for rams, HGT for hogget, CLT for clothing wool, COM for combing wool, X BRED for cross-breed wool and ½ Bred for half-breed wool.

a). Form

One of the distinguishing features of these stencils was the range of sizes and shapes of plates, and the variety of letters. Machine-made plates were distinctive for their clarity and consistency of letter styles, and their placement of stencil ties. Text was centred in a rectangular or square plate with curved or angled corners, but many description stencils were hand made. These plates were identifiable by their irregular and unfinished plate sizes and shapes, and at times were made from scraps of metal with inconsistent margins (fig. 3.19). Words with mixed-letter styles suggested some letters had been copied from other stencils, and where letters were missing the maker had filled them in with a letter style of their own making (fig. 3.20). On machine made stencils letters were slab serif or sans serif capital letters. Unlike other stencil groups, hand-made plates had: upper-and lowercase letters; mixed serif

Fig. 3.19

Fig. 3.20

Figure 3.19. Stencil plate made from piece of tin, Otematata Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.20. Lettering on wool description stencil, Otematata Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

and sans serif letters on the same plate; and condensed, extended, italic and decorative letters in a range of weights and hand-drawn letter shapes. Stencils of similar designs and letter styles pointed to the same designer and maker.

Text was typically set in a straight line but alternative layouts featured dropped, raised, and enlarged initial letters (fig. 3.21). Notable design features were inconsistencies in letter proportions (transposing the top and bottom of letters B and S) and adaptive methods of cutting curved and complex shapes (figs 3.22, 3.23). Most stencils had a hole in the plate for hanging in the shed in close proximity to the wool press (fig. 3.24). Description stencils contained one word or an abbreviation, but single-letter stencil plates and alphabets on circular plates could equally be used to make up descriptions in a more time-consuming and labour-intensive process. A time-saving alternative was a circular stencil plate containing common three-letter abbreviations on one stencil.

Fig. 3.21

Fig. 3.22

Fig. 3.23

Fig. 3.24

Figure 3.21. Design of layout on wool description stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.22. Detail of letter proportions on wool description stencil, Otematata Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.23. Detail of letters on wool description stencil, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.24. St Helens Wool Pressing, St Helens Station, North Canterbury. Photographer and date unknown. Hurunui District Libraries:http://ketehurunui.peoplesnetworknz.info/site/images/show/602-st-helens-station.

b). Dimensions

The sizes of plates reflected the content on the plate and as this varied so did sizes of plates. The largest were 500 mm wide by 200 mm high and smaller plates were approximately 100 mm square. Plate margins ranged from 30 mm to 50 mm and letter sizes were mainly between 65 mm and 80 mm high, although on older stencils text was smaller, measuring between 40 mm and 55 mm high. Single letter plates consistently measured 115 mm or 150 mm square, with letters measuring 75 mm high. Circular plates with letters of the alphabet divided between two plates measured approximately 450 mm in diameter. Larger circular alphabet stencils with two rows of letters or containing three-letter abbreviations were larger measuring around 530 mm in diameter.

c). Materials

All wool description stencils were metal—tin, zinc, and occasionally copper. A significant number of hand-made stencil plates were tin.

d). Fabrication

On the stations that had description stencils, approximately half were estimated to be made by hand. Hand-made stencils demonstrated individual approaches to cutting letters and ties. On a number of plates the placement of stencil ties was approached in the easiest and most practical way to secure the letters. This resulted in ties that spanned the entire word in a straight line to avoid difficult angles and complicated cuts (figs 3.25, 3.26). Alternatively, if letters were self-supporting, ties were left off

Fig. 3.25

Fig. 3.26

Fig. 3.27

Figure 3.25. Design of stencil ties on wool description stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographer Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.26. Design of stencil ties on wool description stencil, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.27. Design of letters stencil on wool description stencil, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographer Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

(fig. 3.27). Close inspection of letters revealed marks where tools had been used for cutting letter shapes with interrupted lines and repeated patterns on the edges of letters. Complex joins on letters such as B, K, M, N, R, and W were managed in inventive ways by adding extra ties or simplifying the design of the letter. Letters were widely spaced to maintain the integrity and strength of the plate but in some cases spacing became tighter towards the end of the word when the stencil cutter ran out of space.

e). Content

Wool descriptions were supposed to follow abbreviations set out by the industry, but in reality, there were many variations. There were interpretations of words, alternative spellings, variations in abbreviations, letters were mixed with words,

words were spelled out in full, or parts of words were used. For instance, hogget was hot, hog, hogt, hogg, hoggets, or hoggetts, and cross breed was cross bred, x, x bred, half bred, or half b. Other details on hand-made description stencils included punctuation such as full stops and dashes, along with under rules and decorative elements.

Number Stencils

I. Description

Fig. 3.28

A number was allocated to each bale in the order it was completed and was the means by which each bale was tracked and accounted for at all stages of the journey from station to the final destination after sale.

a). Form

Sets of single-number stencil plates of 0 to 9 were common and machine-made plates took a square format with angled or curved corners. They were easy to pick up and hold but also easy to lose in wool or drop through slatted shed floors. Like other stencils, numbers were centred within a metal surround, and on many plates a round or square hole was positioned in a corner of the plate. Numbers were predominantly slab serif in both bracketed and unbracketed styles (fig. 3.28). Hand-made single number stencils were defined by varying plate sizes and individual approaches to the design and placement of ties (fig. 3.29).

Fig. 3.29

As well as single number plates, circular number stencils were seen on nine stations. The circular or clock stencil was a popular time-saving innovation introduced at a later stage (fig. 3.30). It contained numbers 0 to 9 in slab or sans serif numbers positioned around the circumference of the plate with a centrally located handle for faster and more efficient stencilling by shifting the stencil and rotating the plate. Alternative plate designs for number stencils were groups of numbers cut from rectangular plates, and at Glenmore Station numbers 0 to 9 were contained on an aluminium station stencil set in a line below the station name.

Figure 3.28. Slab serif number on machine made plate, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke's Bay. Photographer Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 3.29. Hand-made number stencils, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.30. Stencilling wool bales at Richmond Brook Station, Marlborough. Photographed by Mr Silcock, date unknown. Archway Item ID: R2478831.

Fig. 3.30

Fig. 3.31

Fig. 3.32

Fig. 3.33

Figure 3.31. Number stencil with metal handle, Snowdon Station shearing shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

Figure 3.32. Number stencil with wooden handle, Otematata Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.33. Number stencil with rubber tubing handle, Snowdon Station shearing shed, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

Figure 3.34. Number stencil with riveted metal handle, Glenmore Station shearing shed, Mackenzie Country. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

b). Dimensions

Sets of single-number stencils cut out of square metal plates measured 115 mm or 150 mm. The heights of professionally made numbers consistently measured 75 mm high but older and hand-made stencils varied and could measure half the size of numbers on machine-made plates. Circular number stencil plates typically measured around 380 mm in diameter and number heights were 75 mm high.

c). Materials

Number stencils were typically metal—tin, zinc, aluminium, and occasionally copper. Hand-made stencils were typically made in tin and the most recent circular stencils were plastic.

d). Fabrication

Despite the popularity of commercially made single-number stencils, many were made by hand, demonstrated a mix of plate sizes and shapes, and at times lacked the finish of cut or rounded corners. These displayed individual approaches to cutting and positioning of ties, and repairs were made with wires or welding. Circular stencils were predominantly machine made, although some were found to be hand-made copies. Handles on the front of circular stencils varied in shape, size, and materials, while the back of the plate was flat for stencilling. On early circular plates, handles were three-dimensional metal structures welded onto a raised central base. Other handles were wooden—either shaped or straight—and some were fitted with rubber or plastic tubing (figs 3.31, 3.32, 3.33). A simplified later design was a flat metal plate with a handle riveted to the centre, a style seen on locally made rubbish bin lids (fig. 3.34). Rolled edges were a common feature of early circular stencils, whereas later plates were simplified and typically cut from a flat metal disc.

e). Content

Single number stencils contained single digits from 0 to 9. On circular stencils numbers were cut around the circumference of the plate and large rectangular plates contained groups of numbers.

Fig. 3.34

Fig. 3.35

Fig. 3.36

Fig. 3.37

Figure 3.35. Numbers carved into the ends of wood, date unknown. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2016. Author's own collection.

Figure 3.36. Carved leather of station name, Loudon Farm, Banks Peninsula. Date unknown. Photographed by Sarah Lovell-Smith. Sent to author.

Figure 3.37. Branding pad, Omarama Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015

f). Contextual Material

Design

Early alternatives to the design of wool bale stencils were discovered during the course of the research. Numbers carved into the ends of pieces of native wood found in the upper North Island were an example of innovative use of local resources (fig. 3.35). The same method was used for a letter mark held at the Canterbury Museum.[4] A station name carved into a piece of leather formed a relief printing plate for a South Island farm on Banks Peninsula—both methods required inking and pressing onto bale material (fig. 3.36). At Omarama Station a branding pad with a reservoir for ink carried the brand mark of a triangle. Known as the Resilient Branding Pad, it was patented in 1937 and primarily used for marking sheep but was also used to mark bales (fig. 3.37).[5]

The design of wool bale stencil letters balanced stability of letters on the plate with readability of printed letters. Tie widths were exaggerated to compensate for rigorous processes in applying marks by brush on coarse textured material. The positioning of ties responded to weaknesses in letter shapes and aimed to secure the corners and counters of letters. Decisions regarding the size, weight, and letter styles were guided by regulations of 3 inches (75 mm) high and recommendations to use bold upright letters and were designed to compensate for printing on a three-dimensional object of low-contrast material. Restrictions on where to place marks were imposed by processes of dumping, transporting, and displaying bales, and the function of each stencil. When stacked in warehouses and sales showrooms, stencilling was signage read at a distance and wool descriptions were product labels. The success in their communication depended on the design of stencil letters, the size and weight of the letter in relation to the quality of the recipient material, the viscosity and colour of the substance used for printing, the method of applying the mark, and the expertise of the person applying it.

According to Phil Baines and Catherine Dixon, key factors in the design of readable signs are scale, contrast, and the choice of letterforms.[6] Optimum requirements for readability are: a clear hierarchy of information with space for navigation; even line or stroke weight and open internal spaces or counters on letters; maintaining contrast between the letter and background material; and avoiding unnecessary decoration. The dominant choice for stencil letters was slab serif due to the strong construction of letterforms and their ability to survive the stencilling process.[7] Furthermore, square shapes were easier to cut in metal. Michael Twyman describes the Egyptian slab serif designed in the early nineteenth century as "an almost uniform thickness of line throughout and thick slab serifs. Of all the letterforms of the period it was capable of giving the densest concentration of black ink while still remaining legible".[8] Twyman went on to say, "in its boldest forms it provided a textbook demonstration of the principle of transferring as much ink to paper as possible while

still preserving each letter's distinctiveness as part of a set and its recognizability out of context. It is the bold type par excellence."[9] In *A History of Lettering* (1986) Nicolette Gray describes the slab serif as a letter of utility.[10] She states, "the strong horizontals provide a particular piece of lettering with unity, stability and finish".[11] Slab serifs are often described as sans serif letters with square serifs. Both have even letter strokes and open counters conducive to readability, but the slab serifs serve as underlining and provide the most differentiation from background material.[12] Serif letters, on the other hand, are less suitable for stencilling as the variations in letter structure compromise legibility on coarse material and are more difficult to cut and vulnerable to breaking. Capital letters are more formal and authoritative and present as an even rectangular shape when set, whereas lower case letters are conversational.[13]

Design decisions on the choice of letters and layouts were both aesthetic and practical. The design of curved settings of the name of the station, for example, was said to be a stylistic decision that could set the station brand apart from other information, and, combined with a brand mark, could form a distinctive identity for the station. The design of curved type was also a practical decision as it was easier to stencil by brush in a sweeping action of the arm across the plate, and a curved setting could shorten a particularly long name. Designs of letters and layouts and the choice of content reflected personal and creative preferences of designers and makers. As late as 1981, stock and station agents Williams & Kettle reported problems with non-standard abbreviations on wool description stencils, stating, "the amazing thing is the number of variations a brander can think of for any one particular description abbreviation". They urged branders to use the New Zealand Standard Abbreviations listed on the interior rear cover of their Tally Book and to purchase a "N.Z. Standard Stencil Set" of two circular stencils with the most common abbreviations from their merchandise department.[14]

Where the designers of stencils found their inspiration is difficult to know. There were other stencils for referencing and copying and there would have been newspapers, magazines, and books available on the station. It is well documented that local and international newspapers and magazines were widely available in the colony and on stations. There were stations that had a library for workers and books were distributed to those working in outlying parts of the property. In her analysis of reading material in Brancepeth Station's library, Lydia Wevers reports 88 percent of books were fiction but there were also illustrated papers, reviews, periodicals, and English and Scottish newspapers included in the collection.[15] Alan Scarfe similarly spoke of reading rooms in single men's quarters and out stations that were well used by the men, and although fiction books were the popular choice, scientific journals were also read.[16]

b). Making Practices

The materials used for making stencil plates combined a suitable weight for handling, a firm flat surface for printing, flexibility for fitting to the shape of the bale, and a thin material for close contact with the material during printing and for cutting details of letters and stencil ties. Materials balanced what was available with what was practical, functional, and could withstand multiple uses. A wool bale stencil plate needed to be strong and robust to last multiple uses in a season and to last for many seasons. At Brancepeth Station in 1880 a team of forty-seven shearers and hands were reported to take a month to shear 49,383 sheep and 14,365 lambs to produce 910 bales.[17] On some days at Te Waimate it was necessary to turn out over 50 bales in order to keep the shed clear of wool.[18] During the 1880s, 1,375 bales were pressed at Te Waimate Station in a year; in 1882 54,443 sheep were shorn.[19]

In the early days, many materials including metals were in short supply and imported by sea. Before access by road and rail, stations relied on the delivery of goods by bullock carts or horse-drawn wagons and in some areas supplies were delivered only once or twice a year. During winter, properties accessed by river crossings were cut off for months at a time, fostering an attitude of self-reliance and resourcefulness. Iris Scott, from the isolated Rees Valley Station, recalled how past generations didn't buy new as it was too difficult to get there and spare materials were kept just in case they could find another use. She described how every bolt and piece of wire was kept, if possible, in case it could be reused.[20] Sheep farmers described how in the past stencil plates had been made from beaten corrugated iron and flattened tobacco and kerosene tins; all materials that were commonly available on the station.

The history of New Zealand farm buildings provided clues to building materials used on sheep stations and available for making stencil plates. Galvanised corrugated iron was introduced in the late 1850s, and locally manufactured flat galvanised iron sheets or pan iron was popular for roofing from the early 1860s; both were relatively easy to stack and transport.[21] Other building materials such as tin, lead, steel, and zinc were used for flashing and plumbing and could be used for plate making. Zinc was imported from Australia and didn't rust, was a soft and flexible metal, and was commonly used for stencils. Advertisements by stencil makers listed materials they worked with; for example, in 1886 materials were listed as plain sheet iron, sheet and block tin, and copper.[22]

The most common materials used for stencil plates found on field trips were metal (tin, zinc, copper, aluminium), but without testing and dating the material it was impossible at times to determine. Tin was the cheapest metal and could be identified through rust on plates, while brass was said to be too expensive.

Fig. 3.38

Fig. 3.39

Fig. 3.40

Figure 3.38. Early branding irons, Omarama Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.39. Sheep branding iron, Waitangi Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 3.40. Bucket for sheep branding, Waitangi Station shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Distinctive metals comprised of copper and aluminium were easier to recognise when examining the backs of plates. Copper, was described as a more expensive and softer metal, was easier to cut but prone to breaking. It was a popular material for larger station stencils but only occasionally found in other stencil types.

Apart from stencil plates, other objects seen on station visits demonstrated the same approach to improvising with materials found on the station. Branding irons at Omarama Station were made with an assortment of materials combined to form the shape of a triangle (fig. 3.38). At Waitangi Station letter shapes on branding irons were fashioned from rods of iron, and a container for branding sheep was made from a kerosene tin with a wooden handle attached with fencing wire (figs 3.39, 3.40). 'Number 8' was the gauge of wire used for fencing on New Zealand farms and the four-gallon (18.2 litre) kerosene tins used to supply petrol were always in plentiful supply. It was said that with those materials there wasn't much you couldn't do or make.[23] The term "number 8 wire" later became known to represent Kiwi ingenuity and resourcefulness for this reason.

In the early days conditions in the colony required pioneers to be resourceful and self-sufficient. In 1853 C. Warren Adams wrote, "the settler must be his own handicraftsman and servant, and prepared to encounter all weathers to attend his stock from daylight to dusk, and to sleep soundly, whether in the open air or on a bare plank".[24] Station owner Charles Tripp spoke of the need for self-reliance and adaptability when noted that "a man to succeed must be prepared to give up the… servants he has to attend upon him in England and must rely upon himself. We are all here practical people and know how to do everything or know how it should be done".[25] In 1874 Alexander Bathgate observed, "colonial men appear to have the knack of turning to anything. You may meet a man who has been long in the colonies and discover in the course of half-an-hour's conversation that he has applied himself to some half-dozen occupations during the term of his colonial residence."[26]

The itinerant shearing workforce was influenced by ideas and practices acquired when travelling from station to station and to Australia for seasonal work. David McLeod describes a particular class of station rouseabout who was highly skilled and specialised in fencing, wood cutting, and any other labouring jobs on the station that didn't require tools of the trade, although he recalled they disappeared after the war.[27] In addition, large sheep stations employed a resident blacksmith who had access to a large number of tools. Apart from his work in "flannery" and "smithery" he made and repaired tools, equipment, and items of metalwork for the station and household.[28]

As the demand for stencils grew so did a stencil industry, although making stencils was never these workers' sole occupation. Newspaper advertisements listed the trades and skills of stencil makers as locksmiths, engravers, plumbers, tinsmiths, ironmongers, gunsmiths, metal workers, and bell makers. Messrs Reece Limited, an exhibitor at an Agricultural and Pastoral Show in 1917: repaired guns, locks, lawn movers; cast iron and aluminium; and cut stencil plates.[29] An archived photograph of a shop front belonging to F. J. Lake, a tinsmith, plumber, and gasfitter in Dunedin, listed his goods and services on the front of his shop as: plain and decorated tin plates; weights, scales, and measures adjusted; guns repaired, locks repaired, keys fitted; gas laid on; stencil plates cut; charcoal, billie covers, ears, rivets, every description of tin ware, travelling trunks, deed boxes; and baths made to order (fig. 3.41).

Among the advertisements were names of companies that still exist: John Swan Ltd, Dunedin, was established in 1878, and Parkin & Payne Ltd, Auckland, in 1905. At times, on close inspection of plates the makers could be identified through their name stamped into the metal or attached on the front face of the plate with a plaque. Consistent stencil styles across commercially produced plates from different stations suggested the use of stencil catalogues, and contemporary stencil makers confirmed they had been used in the past, although none were found. Some companies were known for a particular letter or number style and their work could be identified in that way. In addition, early newspapers advertised stencils imported from Britain, announcing the arrival by ship of case stencil combinations, letters and figures, stencil brushes, and stencil ink.[30]

Fig. 3.41

Figure 3.41. F. J. Lake Tinsmith, Dunedin. Photographer and date unknown. University of Otago, ANL Clark Collection: 13432.

Station owners reported that replacement stencils and copies of stencils were ordered through stock and station agents. Former station-owner Michael Hudson reflected that when stencil plates were sent away to be reproduced, they came back different.[31] Another said that a plumber copied the previous station stencil and therefore maintained consistency of the design, while in other cases when plates were updated their plate shapes, letter styles, and arrangement of contents changed. The current director at Parkin & Payne Ltd, Mark Farnham, explained how in the past, letters were smudged or hand drawn onto the plate and cut with a diamond-point chisel and hammer. He described how corners of metal plates were nailed to a solid kauri (native wood) board to anchor the plate while letter shapes were cut.[32] On completion of letter cutting, the corners (and holes) were removed, leaving angled corners and eliminating sharp points. Text and images were centred within the plate with wide margins, and sharp metal edges were filed, rolled, or folded. Other tools used in making stencils were described as tin snips, piercing and fret saws, mechanical routers, and one-to-one copying, however, there was no knowledge of the use of letter punches. Templates were created for making circular stencils and sets of single-number stencils (figs 3.42, 3.43). Farnham described a system of where to position ties and for making optical corrections to letter proportions by adjusting ratios and stroke weights when letter sizes were increased. He recalled extra ties were added for stabilising plates made with flexible materials.

Fig. 3.42

Using Stencils

The shape of stencilled letters was influenced by who made them, how they were made, what tools were used to cut them, and how clean plates were. The quality and permanence of the printed mark was a result of the substance used, how viscous it was, how it was applied, and what external and environmental conditions it was exposed to. As there were no external features to differentiate one bale from another apart from stencilled marks, station owners relied on the quality, clarity, and durability of their marks to represent the quality of their product. Ensuring the correct marks were applied to a bale was the responsibility of the wool classer, who oversaw and directed stencilling. Applying marks was traditionally the job of the

Figure 3.42. Template for one-to-one copying of circular stencil, Parkin & Payne Ltd., Auckland. Photographed by Mark Farnham, 2012. Sent to author.

Figure 3.43. Template for one-to-one copying of single number stencils, Parkin & Payne Ltd., Auckland. Photographed by Mark Farnham, 2012. Sent to author.

Fig. 3.43

presser or pressers, or whoever was available at the time. Stencilling marks on the cap of a bale was a downward process carried out by placing the plate firmly on top of the cap and holding it in place with one hand, while brushing, dabbing, rolling, or spraying a marking substance through the open spaces on the plate with the other hand. Applying a station stencil was either a one-or two-person process, as plates were large and layouts were complex.

A description of stencilling written in 1878 by E. S. Elwell during his eight years of colonial life in Otago, recalls that

> "each bale as it was packed was sewn up and rolled out of the box ready for shipment: but first it was marked with the owner's brand, and numbered in the order of its packing, locks, lamb's wool, washed and greasy being all separately marked. This marking was done by means of plates of tin, with the proper letters and figures cut out on them. They were placed on the bales, and the open spaces were then merely painted over with ink. The ink was bought in powder packets and mixed as required in vinegar."[33]

Advertisements by stencil makers promoted the benefits of a professionally made or proper stencil, pointing out that well-finished stencilling "becomes an object of admiration, and the sender's name and address is fixed in the memory."[34] Shearer Reg Benjamin recalled, "some farmers were pretty fussy too about how they had their bales branded and about everything in general in the shed, they liked the sheep done tidily and they liked the woolshed left tidily at night".[35]

A permanent and clearly defined mark was the principle aim of stencilling—a mark that would remain intact and identifiable despite friction to surfaces through dragging or rubbing, exposure to sun and rain, and long periods of time in storage. A mark was required to penetrate the surface of the fabric but not so much that it risked contaminating the wool beneath. A liquid was more likely to run beneath the plate, blotching the mark and spoiling the wool, but if it was too dry it was less likely to adhere to the bale material. Newspaper articles, advertisements, oral accounts, and evidence found in shearing sheds revealed a variety of substances had been used for stencilling over time with varying degrees of success. Some were identified through newspaper articles stating what not to use and what didn't work, while others were instructions of what should be used and were listed in advertisements of supplies for shearing. The earliest products were lampblack (a pigment made from soot and oil) and tar. Other products were Indian marking ink, dry compressed or powder ink, liquid ink, shoe polish and paint. Products found in station sheds were labelled "Scott's Wool Pack Branding Ink" and "Black Solid Stencil Ink". In 1900 the manager of Molesworth Station instructed workers

to use Chicago Blacking (blue) for marking bales and Kemp Branding oil for marking sheep.[36] However, using what was available on the station also extended to how to apply stencils as well as how to make them. Paint and machine oil were mixed together and if a farmer ran out of black paint or tar, a substitute was made by mixing soot with linseed oil.[37]

There were debates about the effectiveness of products and opinions were given on their lasting properties. A contributor to the *Hawke's Bay Herald* in 1868 recommended a recipe of red lead and boiled linseed oil that would form a mark that would not wash out or wear out.[38] "Hints to Sheep Farmers on Preparation of Wool", written by "An Expert" in 1885, advised marks should be in ink, not tar, or lampblack and oil.[39] In 1892 products listed in newspaper advertisements by hardware merchants and woodware manufacturers in Dunedin were stencil ink, ink powders, and lampblack.[40]

Marks were applied by pressing the plate firmly against the material and brushing or dabbing with cloth, wool, or sponge, rolling with a sponge stencil roller, rubbing, or spraying. Robert Peden recalled stencilling while working as a musterer and station manager, and described how thin pieces of tin were used for early stencils. He also described how wool padding soaked up the ink and was applied by brush with a curved wooden handle, how the ink caused blotching to start with till it dried out, and how bale caps were stencilled in advance. Cleaning plates of the build-up of ink residue was a job for a rainy day.[41] If left, the build-up on a plate could thicken on the edges and deform the shapes of letters (fig. 3.44). Consistent with Peden's experience, a plate with a bed of wool as a sponge for liquid ink was found at Glenmore Station, and on Gwavas Station a tin of solid stencil ink and a curved wooden-handled bristle brush was seen.

Fig. 3.44

Shearer Reg Benjamin recalled the use of "hard ink, water-based ink, the ink that comes out in a solid form and you wet the brush, it's water based and [you] work it up into a lather and then apply it to the thing, [because] back then the wool packs were made out of jute like sacks so they absorbed the ink nicely". When synthetic bales were introduced, he pointed out the ink changed to "a gluer sort of feel [and] it was messy, oh it was horrible. But then they changed to felt pens and then they made the labels and then bar coding came in so it all changed."[42] Tony Dodds remembered using shoe polish, noting that "you'd have the name of the station which was Brinklands and I remember it was that old it had a couple of letters broken out of it and you'd do it with nugget. So you'd dip the brush in the black nugget and brush the Brinklands on, then the bale number was put on it…. I still remember the nugget and of course when you're stacking [them] you get nugget all up your arms [because] it was a hot day and you'd go home black—all over your clothes nugget—then it would be in the bath."[43]

Figure 3.44. Detail of build-up of paint on stencil plate, Glenmore Station shearing shed, Mackenzie Country. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

A report commissioned by the Wool Board in 1981 outlined problems with durability of bale marks through fading in sunlight, reduction in effectiveness through rain and wool grease, and smudging through rubbing. Their recommendations were to use the right amount of ink to give a legible mark that did not penetrate the pack and mark the underlying wool, an intense colour with strong contrast to jute, and a product that was resistant to sunlight and rain, was not affected by wool grease, and was touch dry within a few minutes of application so bales could be moved without smudging. A number of methods of branding were reviewed, including: the Marsh Fountain sponge roller, which was described as less effective for filling in the fine letter details; aerosols, which were expensive but easy to use; solid cake ink, which was supplied in round tins mixed with water and applied with a brush; and nugget or shoe polish, which was prone to smudging. The report recommended Aquaflex, a liquid ink distributed by Hold Fast Ltd approved by the New Zealand Wool Board. It was advised it should be applied in a brush and pad technique and the implements recommended were a stove brush with stiff bristles of 20 mm in length with an ink pad made of felt, sponge rubber, loose wool, hessian, or other porous material.[44]

II. Deduction

Eric Kindel identifies factors that contribute to the form of the stencil as the process of design, the materials they are made from, and the tools and methods employed in their manufacture.[45] The culture of designing, making, and repairing stencils with materials sourced from the station may have been the result of isolation, an immediate need to replace or repair a stencil plate, lack of materials, specialist skills, and cutting equipment, or simply a "do it yourself" attitude to making things on the farm. On most stencils—except for older ones—letter sizes adhered to requirements of British wool importers, but many plates demonstrated individual, creative, and practical solutions to designing and making. Shapes of letters were adjusted to negotiate challenges of complex cuts and ties were placed in the easiest most practical way of cutting metal by hand while securing the stability of the letter, the strength of the plate, and maintaining readability. If ties were unnecessary, at times they were left off. Practical methods were employed in copying other stencils and filling in missing letters. While there were unconventional proportions, letter shapes, and stencil styles, letters remained within the limits of readability and idiosyncrasies were masked to some extent by the coarse material they were printed on.

Although I had presumed that hand-made plates would be more common on remote stations this was unfounded, as they were seen across all stations, suggesting there was a culture of making stencil plates on the stations. Although the age of plates was unknown, the number of hand-made plates recorded across stations and changes to letter sizes suggests they had been made over a longer period of time than just the

early days of stencilling. However, commercially produced stencil plates seen on stations were consistent in style, with rectangular aluminium plates, rounded corners, left-aligned settings, and condensed sans serif text. Innovations in the design of circular stencils and variations in their handles demonstrated attempts to improve the efficiency and ease of stencilling, and resulted in simplification of plates over time. Repairs to plates through wiring, riveting, and welding were evidence that fixing was easier than replacing plates and was consistent with other practical solutions seen on stations.

It was impossible to know when stencils were made, who made them or why they were made. Personal explorations in letter and stencil design and experimentation with layouts were balanced by an understanding of what was required, using materials and tools at hand. Despite their lack of convention, hand-made plates reflected care, attention to detail, and creativity. They demonstrated flexible thinking and practical solutions to what was required and what would work. Hand-drawn letters were approached with a received perception of what letters should look like and a practical attitude to how they could be made.

Improvisation and innovation were seen in the variety of materials, tools, plate design, letter and stencil design, and methods of applying marks. Thin and relatively soft metals were favoured for making stencil plates which meant they could be made by farm workers. Black was the only colour seen on stencil plates as the colour offering the highest contrast against bale material. Others spoke of magenta red—perhaps the recipe identified in the newspaper—and on Molesworth Station blue was used, but there was no evidence of any other colours on the plates documented. Bold capital letters complied with instructions to use bold upright letters and were used on all station stencils except wool description stencils.

Station stencils were considered, carefully detailed, and well-made, and they appeared to be more consistent in letter styles and placement of ties, highlighting the importance of the station stencil to the identity of the owner, station, and bale. These plates are likely to have been made by tradesmen, such as blacksmiths, whereas hand-made description and number stencils were probably made by farm workers or whoever was available. Early station stencil plates were made by hand, with later plates increasingly produced by machine. Maintaining consistency and continuity of layouts, and design of brand marks and letter styles between stencils on the same station was not seen as a priority, as demonstrated on stations with multiple station stencils. This pointed to the perception of wool bale stencil marks as practical and operational rather than aesthetic and portraying a consistent visual identity. Separate plates for the station name and mark reflected changes in regulations of what was required, and suggests the plates were used independently. Stencil plates were

intended to last and repairs were seen on station stencils that were large and complex to make. This was evident at Te Waimate Station, where both station stencils spelled out Waimate, and Te was added to the front of the name by using the letters from the end of the word rather than making a new plate.

Wool description stencils were the most diverse of all stencil groups in sizes, shapes, design, content, materials, and methods of how they were made. Perhaps they were an immediate response to the quality and condition of wool in a particular season that couldn't be anticipated. The makers of hand-made stencils adopted a pragmatic attitude to functionality rather than an aesthetic concern for correctness, detailing, style consistency, and compliance. Individuality was shown in the choice of words, use of punctuation, decorative elements, variety of letter styles, layouts, interpretations, and decisions on where to place ties. Lack of compliance to regulations was particularly noticeable in variations of content on these stencils. Rather than approaching the design as an overall style across words, hand-made stencils represented an individual response to the design of each letter and how it could be cut, driven by what was convenient and available, and by a basic understanding of how they should look and what was required. There were creative and quirky interpretations of letters and innovative layouts. As with other hand-made plates, numbers displayed interesting interpretations and individual styles. The introduction of a circular stencil as a time-saving device replaced single-number plates. Handles on these plates explored different options for shapes and materials in the search for increasing comfort and efficiency. Other measures to make stencilling easier were seen in handles on station stencils and curved settings of station names.

III. Speculation

The resourcefulness and versatility of early farm workers equipped them to respond to what was available in their immediate surroundings and improvise when necessary. Independence in creating and making stencils was balanced with compliance with what was required by the export market. Creative endeavours and non-compliance were seen in the content and design of wool description stencils in particular. What was practical, achievable, and available was measured against what was *required*. Although some stencils pushed conventions of letter and stencil design, they still achieved readability.

Who the designers and makers were was not known or documented. Among the rural workers there were educated men: some were working for experience, others were second sons who emigrated to make their own fortune, and there were wayward sons of good families who had been sent to the colony.[46] They came from a range of backgrounds and had various levels of education and skills. Edward Gibbon Wakefield gave clues to the backgrounds and character traits of rural workers when he described shearers as:

> "extremely mixed, including every description of mankind from the broken-down guardsman or cavalry officer, or the luckless younger son of aristocratic parents, down to the very dregs of the colonial democracy". He observed, "each has his own history and individuality, both curious enough in most cases; but their exposed life, their hard labour, their squalid dress gives them the sameness of appearance that altogether belies their real character". He went on to say, "they have, moreover, a positively aggressive air of independence and of antipathy to all conventionality,—especially to 'the blooming swells', as they call the upper classes,—which is partly genuine and partly affected. Many of them, and those the leaders of opinion among them, are social outcasts and utter Bohemians; and it is these also who set the example and keep up the tradition of class animosity".[47]

Some of the characteristics described by Wakefield could be seen in the analysis of stencil plates. For instance, an individual approach to selecting content and drawing letters, unconventional layouts and letterforms and an pragmatic attitude to how to cut them. While these reflected the characteristics of the people who made them, they also contributed to the distinctiveness of hand made stencils.

Aside from stencils made by workers on the station, blacksmiths were involved in the creative design and production of letters on branding irons and stencil plates. Professional stencil makers demonstrated the same versatility in the wide range of products and services they offered in newspapers advertisements. It appeared that any tradesman who worked with metal was capable of and involved in making stencil plates. The flexibility and self-reliance adopted by early tradesmen was necessary to overcome the restrictions of a small population, the challenges of limited incomes, resources, and skills, the isolation of stations, and the geographical isolation of the country. Limited access to tools, equipment, and materials, particularly on remote properties, enforced self-sufficiency and produced results reflecting what was available. The difficulty in cutting metal by hand was addressed by adjusting letters and practical placement of stencil ties. The fact that so many stencil plates had survived was testament to their success. Convenient and practical solutions often replaced formal considerations and style consistencies and within these limitations many stencils reflected creativity, flair, and independent self-expression.

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Fig. 4.1

Figure 4.1. Stencilled signs, Brancepeth Station, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Chapter 4. Life Stages of Using, Consuming, and Distributing

This chapter explores the life stages of using, consuming, and distributing during the working life of station stencils. It studies their content; that is, the meaning and use of brand marks and station names. It combines object investigation with observation of their social life or how branding irons and stencil plates were used, what they meant, and how this changed over time. It investigates the role of the wool bale stencil as an export and station brand and as a vehicle for other forms of branding, identity, and communication on the station. The period under study begins from the 1850s, when many stations were established; representing the early period of development in wool export and continues until the 1990s, when stencilling was discontinued.

Station Stencils and Branding Irons

I. Description

The station stencil or head brand represented the station at national and international sales. Through familiarity with the brand and the product, the reputation of the station was built internationally. The importance of the brand and the value of how it appeared on bales at overseas markets was emphasised in local newspapers. As early as 1865 it was pointed out that "many clips owe their name, and the long prices they bring, more to the strict attention to those rules than to the superior quality of the fleece, some first-class wool does not fetch anything like its real value, from the slovenly manner in which it is got up".[1] The message was that the quality of the preparation of wool (classing or categorising), the appearance of the bale (pressing, stitching, and marking), and the size, quality, and clarity of marks were an indication to the buyer of the quality of the product inside the bale. Importers and brokers warned station owners of the damage to the reputation of their brand if their wool and bales were not adequately prepared for sale. If preparation of wool and bales was poor, it was reported that buyers would place a black mark against the brand in sales catalogues,[2] and exclaim, "I will never buy another bale from that brand if I can help it".[3] In the case of careless branding without the use of stencil plates and proper branding ink, it was said many buyers would not bid for those bales.[4] In addition to the financial loss to the owner, it had an impact on the broker or selling agent due to loss of commission through poor prices.[5] Conversely, wool sent in the proper way recommended itself to the buyer and obtained a higher price, while the reputation of the station grew with every year; so did the price of the wool.[6]

a). Content

The message from British wool importers and brokers was that a letter mark or symbol on a bale was not strong enough to identify the origin and ownership of wool, and a station name or distinctive mark was required in all cases for station

identity. Before regulations were introduced, many stations relied on a brand mark to identify their bales. The addition of the station name to the station identity was seen in entries in wool sales catalogues at Gwavas Station. In catalogues from 1870 and 1880 the station was represented by a shield. Catalogues in 1928 used a shield and station name, whereas from the late 1940s to 1958 the name Gwavas appeared without a shield.[7] This would explain why station names and marks were seen on separate plates as well as combined on a single plate. On stations where there were a number of station stencils, such as Gwavas, Coldstream, Te Waimate, and Tuna Nui, there were examples of both.

Brand marks derived from a registered sheep brand were often based on the initial letters of the name of the original owner, a symbol to reference an aspect of family history, or facts about their previous lives. The recommendation in *The Brands and Branding Act* (1880)[8] that New Zealand sheep owners should adopt letters, figures, or otherwise as their mark resulted in a variety of marks, including single letters or configurations of initial letters. Marks on branding irons and station stencils seen on station visits were predominantly letter marks or symbols and at times were combined.

Fig. 4.2

Out of the fourteen stations in the study, seven brands were letter marks from the name of the first owner of the station. The 1861 Canterbury Brand Book confirmed the popularity of letter marks for sheep brands showing that 154 out of 213 registered marks contained letters.[9] Numbers were sometimes registered as a sheep brand, but on wool bales these could be confused with the number of the bale. Interestingly, the first registered brand mark for Te Waimate and Coldstream Stations was number 4, but it was changed a year later to the symbol of a bell.[10] Symbols representing personal stories and early histories were popular. At Otematata Station the symbol of crossed keys was derived from the coat of arms for St Peters College in Oxford, where the first owner Reverend J. C. Parson Andrew had been educated. He took up the land in the late 1850s and the crossed keys symbol continued to be used on branding irons after the station was sold to the Cameron brothers in 1908 (fig. 4.2). At Longbeach Station the registered brand mark on a number of irons and

Figure 4.2. Sheep branding irons, Otematata shearing shed, North Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.3. Branding irons, Longbeach Station blacksmiths' forge, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Fig. 4.3

Fig. 4.4

Figure 4.4. Station stencil, Clifton Station shearing shed, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by John O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.5. Mt Peel brand mark, "Brand register 1854 to 1859", in Brand Book for Canterbury: Containing a Fac-simile of Every Sheep-Brand Registered in the Province of Canterbury, with the Name of the Owner or Overseer, Title of the Run, and Situation of the Head Station, Compiled from the Official Records, ed. George Turner (Christchurch: Union Printing Office, 1861), 86.

station stencils combined a letter mark and symbol (fig. 4.3). Other derivative branding irons made by the resident blacksmiths' were stylised and simplified versions of the original registered mark, and on two the letter mark was left off.

The Clifton Station stencil combined a letter mark and symbol—the letters JGG were the initial letters of the name of the original owner James Gillespie Gordon, and were centred below a symbol of an anchor (fig. 4.4). Born in Scotland, Gordon had been a merchant trader in India before emigrating to New Zealand in 1859 to take up land along the Hawke's Bay coast. The anchor referred to his sea-faring ventures, which included sailing a schooner between India and New Zealand. On the second trip he brought back his son, a prefabricated teak house, and furniture for his new home in the colony.[11] He subsequently sailed to Australia to collect sheep to stock his station. The schooner continued to be a significant part of his working life transporting wool bales in the region.[12]

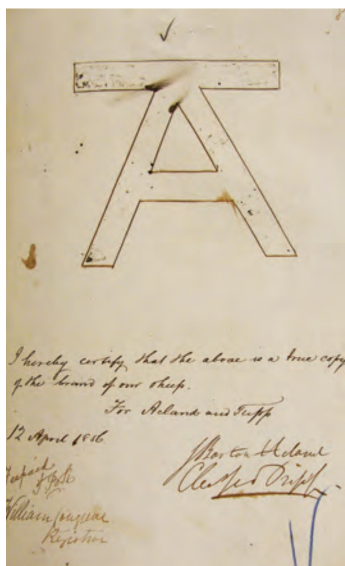

Fig. 4.5

The original joint owners of Mt Peel Station, John Acland and Charles Tripp, arrived in Canterbury in 1854. They were both younger sons eager to make their own fortunes and start a new career sheep farming in New Zealand.[13] They were among the first settlers to venture into the lower levels of the Southern Alps in search of land for farming and risked stocking their high-country property with sheep.[14] The brand mark for Mt Peel Station registered in 1856 reflected the shared ownership of land by the two men in a letter mark that merged the initial letters of their surnames Acland and Tripp (fig. 4.5). In 1862 they divided the property and dissolved the partnership—Tripp took Orari Gorge Station and Acland remained on Mt Peel Station. The branding irons seen at the stations represented the individual owners through their names with A for Acland, and CT for Charles Tripp. The station stencil for Mt Peel Station carried the surname Acland rather than the name of the station, while Orari Gorge Station used the name of the station.

At Tuna Nui Station the name of the station was on one plate and on three others the name was combined with the letters AHR. These were the initial letters of the original owner Andrew Hamilton Russell, but over generations of Russell family ownership there were other owners with names sharing these same initials. Likewise, on Longbeach Station there had been three owners named John Grigg and the letter G continued to represent successive generations who owned the property. In another example, a letter mark on Waitangi Station's stencil was combined with the name of the station. A capital letter S was centred above the station name with reference to the Sutton family, who had owned the station since 1886. Some stations were in possession of a coat of arms and two stations saw this as an opportunity to utilise elements for their brand as an extension of an existing family identity. At Brancepeth Station the symbol of a fleur d'lys from the Beetham coat of arms was designed in a derivative style for marks on branding irons and the station stencil.[15] Gwavas Station took the symbol of the shield from their family coat of arms for the station brand mark.

A station name featured on all station stencils except for Clifton Station, which combined a letter mark with the symbol of an anchor. Five stations used the name of the station without a brand mark on their station stencil—Otematata, Glenmore, Omarama, Orari Gorge, and Richmond Brook Stations. Most stations names represented an aspect of place, either past or present, but two used their surname. Mt Peel Station used Acland, the name of the original and successive owners.

Fig. 4.6

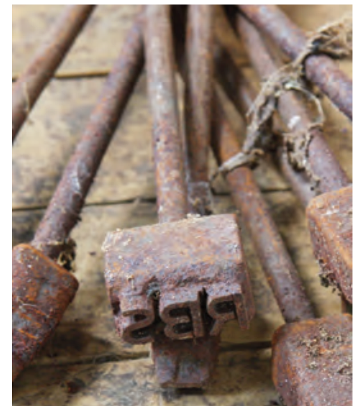

Fig. 4.7

Figure 4.6. Station stencil, Richmond Brook Station shearing shed, Marlborough. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.7. Branding irons, Richmond Brook Station shearing shed, Marlborough. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Richmond Brook Station combined the surname of the first owner Major Mathew Richmond with a water feature on the land (fig. 4.6). On the three station stencils at Richmond Brook the name was used without a mark, while the hot metal branding irons for marking horns of stud rams continued to reference the name of the station through the initial letters RBS (fig. 4.7).

Station names were a dominant feature of station stencils and in order to understand their significance to the station their origins and meaning were explored. Names of a number of stations were taken from physical features of the land. Longbeach and

Te Waimate Stations were swamp lands that required extensive drainage before being converted to pasture. In 1864 the Lands Office Map described the Longbeach property as a "Valueless Bog".[16] Te Waimate was an area of swampy land near the sea, intersected by a number of boggy creeks.[17] The name Waimate or Wai-mate-mate (the original name) was taken from the name of the district and means slowly moving, sluggish, or stagnant water.[18] 'Te' (the) was added to the station name at a later date. Longbeach was the name of the district and described the ninety-mile beach and coastal boundary of the station.[19] Before the property was drained it was a low-lying swamp that ran between the Ashburton River in the north and the Hinds River in the south.

Land and water were recurring features of other station names; either adopting an existing name of the area or responding to a particular aspect of the land. Mt Peel and Orari Gorge Stations took names from their natural boundaries. At Mt Peel Station the east boundary was the base of Mt Peel range, and the Orari River was the eastern and northern boundary of Orari Gorge Station. Otematata and Omarama Stations took the existing names of their location. Otematata meant "place of good flint" or hard stone, and the translation for Omarama was "place of light".[20] The name Waitangi meant weeping waters and described the situation of the Waitangi Station as an isolated sheep station on the north bank of Lake Aviemore in the Waitaki Valley. In the early days the station relied on transport by water for access—by punt or boat across the Waitaki River—as the alternative was an arduous journey by horse along the banks of the river. Coldstream Station was named by the first owners William Scott and Ernest Gray who took up the land in 1854. It was thought the station was named after the Scottish border town of Coldstream and the cold springs that appeared when they built the house.[21]

In the North Island the English translation of the Māori word Tuna Nui meant "plenty of eels", referring to the quantity of eels in the lagoon on the property.[22] Until the 1870s Tuna Nui was one word, but after that time it was divided in two.[23] It could be assumed that Clifton Station was named after the cliffs that ran along the Hawke's Bay coast towards Cape Kidnappers, but the history of the station describes it as otherwise. The name Clifton was selected by James Gillespie Gordon in memory of a popular beach resort for the English on the North Indian coast where he had lived, and was the name of the English school he attended as a boy.[24]

An event that took place on the station inspired the name of Brancepeth Station. In the early days of development, the Beetham brothers were building a whare (house) when they became aware it was being built on the path of a wild boar. It reminded them of a famous story in English history dating back to the year 1200 and set in Durham, north England. A wild boar that had been terrorising the neighbourhood

was trapped and killed on the path it took between feeding grounds. The region became known as Brancepeth, which in the local dialect meant brawn or pig, and peth or path (boar's path).[25] This incident prompted the adoption of the name, which was initially reserved for the homestead but later became the name of the station and appeared on the station stencil.[26] In a similar way, the Gwavas Station name had historical roots in Britain embedded in the family name. Gwavas in Cornish means a permanent steading or homestead.[27] Like Richmond Brook, Gwavas was taken from the name of the owner Major George Gwavas Carlyon.[28] In addition, in 1873 the original owner John McGregor named Glenmore Station after his previous home. He had been a shepherd on the Grampian mountains in Scotland and claimed a piece of land in the forks of the Cass River, which he named Glenmore, after a valley near his former highland home.[29] The current owners, the Murray family, who have owned the property for four generations, inherited and kept the name of the station.

b). Form

When asked, station owners who had used stencils in the past recalled that the station marks on bales represented the property, the stock, and the wool, and were very important to the station at the time. As trade increased and brands gained recognition for the quality and type of wool produced on each station, reputations increased and recognition of each brand grew locally and internationally. Marks of identity sent on bales of wool to overseas markets represented the owner, station, stock, type of wool, selling agent, and country of origin. Locally, it carried the identity of the station in and around the local community. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, stud flocks and herds originating from Longbeach Station gained popularity and reputation at shows and stock sales in New Zealand. The name Longbeach was said to be well regarded as a guarantee of honesty and quality among the farming community.[30]

Photographs were often taken at the end of a shearing season to document the shearers who had worked on the property that year. A typical pose was in front of the wool shed with a branded bale to identify the station (fig. 4.8). Similar photographs

Fig. 4.8

Figure 4.8. The Brancepeth Woolshed, Wairarapa. Photographer unknown, prior to 1908. Wairarapa Archive: 89-008/19.

were taken of wool bales loaded on wagons, trailers, or trucks ready to be transported to the wharf for shipping overseas. The amount and type of wool produced on a station could be identified through marks on bales and were made clearly visible. Photographs hanging in the wool shed kitchen at Richmond Brook Station recorded a history of wool produced over time. Stacked on a horse-drawn wagon, on trailers pulled by a truck dated 1925, and on the back of a lorry in 1950, these photographs documented the achievements of the station over time through numbers on bales. It was common to find similar types of photographs in archives showing the amount of wool produced in a shearing season, and at the same time documenting a local history of transport used in the wool industry. Although it was practical to stack bales on trucks with the caps and marks facing inwards to prevent them splitting open and spilling their contents, many stations chose to display their station brand and numbers facing out. This was a statement of achievement and the numbers of bales were a sign of the prosperity of the station. Trucks laden with bales advertised to onlookers how many bales and what kind of wool the station had produced that year as they paraded their produce through towns on route to the wharf for export overseas. At times the station brand was stencilled on the doors of trucks to reinforce the identity of the station.

Fig. 4.9

Fig. 4.10

Fig. 4.11

Figure 4.9. Hot metal branding irons, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.10. Branding iron for marking sheep, Te Waimate Station shearing shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.11. Station stencil, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Brand marks on wool bales represented the person and station internationally. Even though many names and marks had personal significance, shapes with no obvious meaning could be just as effective in developing a recognisable identity, as demonstrated by the symbol of a bell on Te Waimate and Coldstream Stations. The Studholme family emigrated from Cumberland, England, in 1852 and two brothers took up joint ownership of the stations under the same registered brand mark. Following dissolution of the partnership in 1854, the stations continued to use the same symbol on branding irons, but each had a distinctive version on their station stencils. The "bell brand" of Te Waimate was reputed to be a well-known mark of quality for wool and horses.[31] Other examples of shapes with no obvious meaning were the triangle at Omarama Station, and the connected cross bars at Glenmore Station; neither marks were on the station stencils.

On some stations the visual styles of marks on irons and stencils changed through redesign of the mark for different uses and reinterpretation when they were replaced. On others the mark of identity was not just limited to irons and stencils but was extended to other forms of identity on the station. On Te Waimate Station the symbol of a bell was designed in hot metal irons for marking horses, as paint brands for marking sheep, and on a stencil for marking wool bales (figs 4.9, 4.10, 4.11). During the 1880s and 1890s the bell brand became known in New Zealand, Australia, and India through trade in horses.[32] When presiding over the sale of horses from the station, auctioneer George Freeman of Waimate routinely began the bidding with the

same mantra, "as sound as a bell of brass, and fit to run for a man's life. Now ladies and gentlemen, how much?"[33] The bell brand gained a reputation for quality of wool, and in 1886 the obituary for Michael Studholme stated, "the Waimate bell brand was well known and highly appreciated in the Home markets".[34] The distinctive shape of Te Waimate Station's bell was also printed on the cover of the station history *Te Waimate: Early Station Life in New Zealand* (1954). In a lasting tribute to the importance of the symbol to the history of the station, in the lawn at the

Fig. 4.12

Figure 4.12. Topiary bushes, Te Waimate Station in front of homestead, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

front of the house four yew trees planted in 1914 continue to be cut in topiary shapes of bells (fig. 4.12). Perhaps the number of trees was a reference to the original number 4, the first registered mark of the station.

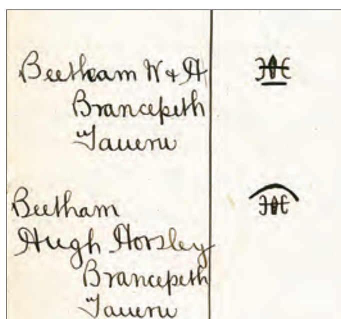

Fig. 4.13

Figure 4.13. Brand marks for Beetham brothers, Brancepeth Station. Wairarapa livestock brands book, circa 1900, n.p. Wairarapa Archives: 00-88/5-1

At Brancepeth Station the symbol of the fleur d'lys derived from the Beetham coat of arms was registered as a sheep brand in 1867. It appeared in two slightly different versions—one with an under rule and the other with a curved over rule—for the Beetham brothers operating under the same brand (fig. 4.13). On entering the house, three stained glass windows contained the Beetham, Bidwill, and Horsely coats of arms.[35] Elements from the Beetham coat of arms were embossed in plaster on the front of the house with the fleur d'lys symbol featured on a shield surrounded by the motto *per ardua surgam* (through adversity we prosper) (fig. 4.14). A repeated pattern of a single fleur d'lys design was custom made in carpet for the inside of the house (fig. 4.15). The station history reported that Hugh Beetham had ordered a coat of arms for the side of his carriage,[36]

Fig. 4.14

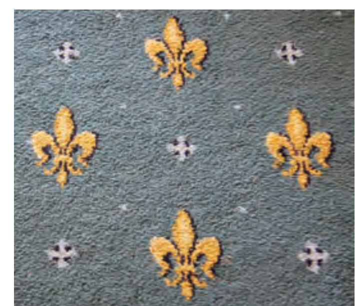

Fig. 4.15

Figure 4.14. Coat of arms on the front of the homestead, Brancepeth Station property, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.15. Detail of carpet, Brancepeth Station homestead, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.16. Sheep brand iron, Brancepeth Station shed, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.17. Rams horn branding iron, Brancepeth Station homestead, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Fig. 4.16

Fig. 4.17

Fig. 4.18

Fig. 4.19

The sheep-branding iron resembled the design listed in the brand register but without a top or bottom rule and with a flatter broader front face designed to carry paint and produce a solid mark (fig. 4.16). A long-handled hot metal iron held a stylized version of the mark with thinner front features measuring 20 mm long for branding horns of stud rams (fig. 4.17). The branding iron was used to mark the station identity on objects belonging to the station. A cricket bat taken to boarding school by a younger Edward Beetham carried the mark, as did handles of tools such as shovels belonging to the station (figs 4.18, 4.19). A more decorative version of the symbol was designed for the copper station stencil plate; it was centred within the curved setting of the name of the station with an under rule, as seen on the registered mark (fig. 4.20). In addition, meat from the station was sold through nine butchers' shops in Wellington; eventually the Williams Beetham partnership established their own fleur d'lys brand and shipped their lamb directly to London.[37] Stencilled signs around the Brancepeth property pointed to the Homestead (a thirty-six-room timber building), Woolshed, Whare (house), Lane Cottage, and Elevation Cottage. In a photograph taken of Hugh Beetham in the station office, a mail bag was stencilled with the name of the station.[38] Other stencilling on the station was printed on internal walls of the shed, labelling the positions for oil, water, and petrol, as well as marking a drum of kerosene. Similar use of stencilling was recorded in the Orari Gorge Station history, where Barbara Harper recalled that in the station stables each hack had their name and stall number stencilled on canvas.[39]

Figure 4.18. Detail of cricket bat, Brancepeth Station homestead, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.19. Detail of shovel handle, Brancepeth Station shed, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.20. Station stencil, Brancepeth Station shed, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Fig. 4.20

At Gwavas Station the Carlyon coat of arms—titled Carlyons of Carlyon, Tregrehan, and Menagwins—was central to the station identity. The shield on the coat of arms inspired the brand mark for the station and was used on station stencils, although the shape of the shield was a simplified version of the design on the original document (fig. 4.21). It was said that the shape of the shield on the station stencil had influenced the shield on the coat of arms in a stained-glass window on the back wall of the stairway installed in the house at the later date of 1900 (fig. 4.22). Elements from the coat of arms, including the lion, shield, and motto, were applied to stationery in various forms, combinations, and layouts for letterheads, envelopes, and calling cards. In a further application of the identity, a lion was chosen as a central figure on an iron gate brought back to the station from England in 1927. It formed the entrance to the brick-walled cemetery on the property where family members were buried.

Fig. 4.21

Fig. 4.22

On Tuna Nui Station the distinctive letter and design style of the station name painted in white on the front of the historic shearing shed inspired the design of a station stencil cut in a similar extended letter style with enlarged capital letters (fig. 4.23). Based on the existing signage, the station stencil was cut in a fibreglass plate linking the identity on the shed with the brand on the plate. (fig. 4.24). It was common to find stencilled graffiti of the names of shearers and the year they worked on the station printed on walls and studs of shearing sheds. Dating back many years they told a social history of the people who had worked there. Imprints of sheep brands, wool bale stencils, names, and dates were seen on the walls of five sheds visited. Although station names were commonly seen stencilled on rural post boxes, gates, signposts, and on farm equipment such as trucks and trailers, no examples were found on stations visited in the study.

c). Contextual Material

Marks on bales were unique to the station, but as a group they represented the quality and type of wool produced in the country. Wool buyers in Britain wanted reliable shipping schedules and good presentation of wool in clean standard-size

Figure 4.21. Station stencil, Gwavas Station, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.22. Stained glass window, Gwavas Station homestead, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2018.

Figure 4.23. Detail on Tuna Nui shearing shed, Tuna Nui Station, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 4.24. Station stencil, Tuna Nui Station shearing shed, Hawke’s Bay. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2015.

Fig. 4.23

Fig. 4.24

bales without holes, with each bale to be clearly marked and holding only one type of wool. However, the best prices were reported to come from bales marked with New Zealand.[40] Place of origin was an indicator of the quality of the product, but well-presented bales with clearly stencilled marks indicated to buyers the quality and type of wool inside the bale. To achieve and maintain that status it was essential for exporters of wool to gain widespread adherence to standards of product, preparation, and appearance of bales for sale at overseas markets.[41]

Consistent brand recognition in association with quality produce built the reputation of the station over time and increased the financial value of the brand. A letter to the editor written in 1902 emphasised the importance of maintaining continuity of the brand of a station, noting that “the alteration of the wool brands becomes a serious financial matter with the London wool-brokers, inasmuch that when a class of wool and the brand of it are well known to buyers it is readily sort [sic] after under its old brand. The mere fact of altering the wool brand would cause London wool brokers to set the bales in question on one side, and they would be catalogued ‘as a star lot’, and until the contents were known not be offered at the front.”[42] The value of a mark of identity was documented in early English wool history. In 1458 wool merchant John Fortney from the Cotswold wool town of Northleach was buried in the middle aisle of the church of St Peter with his merchant’s mark inscribed on a wreathed medallion. He had one foot resting on a wool pack and the other on the figure of a sheep. Historian Kenneth Ponting further points out that the meaning of the mark on a bale of wool meant as much to a mediaeval wool buyer as the brand of an Australian sheep station means to a wool man today.[43]

A brand mark, according to Creative Design Director Paul Biedermann, is “the essence of one’s own unique story” and contemporary concepts of branding originate from marks applied to animals.[44] In *Marks of Excellence: A History and Taxonomy of Trademarks* (2013), Per Mollerup states that at times the impact of a cattle brand could be so great that a ranch was named after it and it became the nickname of the owner.[45] Recognition of a mark, he suggests, is dependent on the context in which it is used, the culture of the user, and the frequency in repetition of the mark.[46] Manfred Wolfenstein compares the design of animal brands to the science of heraldry—both belong to the same classification of marks of identification and rely on functionality, simplicity, clarity, and craftsmanship.[47] However, he maintains, “a brand should convey a definite meaning to the owner, thereby fostering a feeling of possession and pride in ownership. A brand mark which has no meaning or which does not tell a story in capsule form, has little significance.”[48]

"Identifying with Brands", an article published in 1981 by stock and station agents Williams & Kettle, reflected on the variety of station brands on New Zealand wool bales: some used initial letters in many forms—conventional, lying down, conjoined, or reversed. Others used symbols (an anchor, a bee, a lariat), but most chose a name either in Māori or English. Popular themes for station names were derived from: nature (Bushy Knoll, Kowhai Tops, The Oaks, Tawa Hills); water (Te Wai, Deepcreek, The Falls, Springfield, Lakeview); historical connections (Dunvegan, Coventry, Tralee, Roxburgh, Glenloch, Glasgow); or physical features of the land (The Pyramid, Rockybank, Castlehill, Lime Terrace).[49] An objective for the design of a brand mark was identified by Christopher Fyfe, who suggests there were station owners in Australasia who selected their brands with the aim of attracting the attention of wool buyers to their brand in the wool sales catalogue.[50]

For stations whose identity was carried through their station name, that name was perhaps even more important than a family name, as its continuity was guaranteed despite changes of station ownership.[51] If the original station was divided into two properties, the station name went with the homestead, thereby affirming the status of the house as central to the symbolic structure of the station.[52] In her study of high country sheep stations in New Zealand, Michèle Dominy states, "the names of stations are often the names of old family estates in England, of places in the British Isles, or descriptive names such as Redcliffs, Manuka Point or Double Hill. A few stations have Maori names, usually place names, often names that reflect distinctive physical features of the place."[53] The station name was seen on the station gate, the post box, and the road sign, and it was attached to sheep at stock sales and Agricultural and Pastoral Shows; most importantly, it was branded on bales of wool for auction overseas. Embedded in a name was the history and identity of a station, the provenance of the family, the stock line of their breeds, and the economic value of their produce.[54] Dominy points out that when a station property was divided between two sons, one property would continue to carry the station name. In some cases, despite the division of land and stock, the wool continued to be sold under the original brand as it was recognised and had established a reputation with an economic value attached to it. In other words, the brand that appeared on wool bales was a legacy that neither party wanted to give up.[55]

As well as attributing a value to a product, the process of naming and branding had other functions in the early days of settlement—concepts of place and displacement were demonstrated through complex interactions between language, history, and the local environment.[56] In the process of identity formation, naming was a primary colonising factor in appropriating, defining, and creating a sense of place through language.[57] Willis stresses the importance of the naming process when establishing new land, as the peculiarities of place identified in a name were unique and home-

grown, rather than foreign and imposed.[58] However, not all names were impressions of the new land; some were familiar forms of identity associated with past histories and reflected the origins of immigrants. During the nineteenth century the make-up of New Zealand immigrants was predominantly British: many were from the rural counties in the south and west of England, while others were Scottish and a few were from Ireland.[59]

Mixed cultural references were seen in the designs of early trade marks for locally made goods with similar patterns of representing the new and local, as well as traditional and imported. In a review of a century of early commercial trademarks, Richard Wolfe suggests brand marks represented external influences on society and reflected a particular view of the outside world. He observes that although a number of early brands drew on local inspiration—such as the kiwi, moa, tui, tiki, and fern—the British Isles dominated many of the designs with symbols such as the crown, lion, thistle, and bulldog, which reflected a preference for British-made goods while serving as a reminder of 'Home'.[60] Wolfe points out symbols such as lions (derived from heraldry during the crusades) and crowns gave a product the added sense of respectability.[61]

Settlers had left behind a way of life defined by family associations and cultural traditions but brought with them many aspects of their British identity.[62] The dislocation from home for early arrivals was enforced through their geographical isolation—in the early 1880s it took twelve to sixteen weeks to sail to Britain and five days to reach their nearest Australian neighbour of New South Wales.[63] In the early years, Britain was constantly referred to as Home; for instance, early pioneer Edgar Jones recalled how "the old settlers used to speak of Great Britain as 'Home'".[64] Similar sentiments were found in station histories; for example, the author of the history of Coldstream Station states, "all the Bowens (wife of Jack Studholme) loved England, regarding it as their homeland, as so many of the first generation to be born in New Zealand were brought up by their parents to do".[65] In sheep farming areas and in larger towns, families sent their children back Home for their education, and continued to practice English traditions of dressing for dinner and employing servants.[66]

An extract of a report written by the New Zealand Company[67] in 1847 stated, "the aim of this company is not confined to mere emigration, but is… to transport English society with its various gradations in due proportions, carrying out our laws, customs, associations, feelings—everything of England, in short but the soil".[68] The relationship between coloniser and colony was signalled early on in the promotion of New Zealand as "Britain of the South". In 1861 Charles Hursthouse wrote, "the New Zealand colonist has at once all the bright recollections of the England he has

left, and all the bright prospects of the England he has reached: the past glories of the old Land, the dawning splendours of the new".[69] James Belich believes "New Zealand's Greater British future was envisaged as British, sometimes very British, but not subordinate to, or even smaller than, Old Britain. Ideas of Greater Britain contested with those of Better Britain, which were somewhat more modest and subordinate."[70] Connections to Britain and Europe were maintained through regular trips Home. Station owners took the opportunity to visit agricultural shows, they kept up to date with technological changes, observed farming and trade practices, sourced new machinery and equipment, and purchased stud livestock. Hursthouse speculated on the reasons why "Britons of the South" returned to the "mother country", suggesting that some were on public missions, some went back to escort parties of friends, they visited for pleasure or business, purchased racing stock and stud sheep, and returned Home to find wives.[71]

South Island landowners persistently referred to the standards of "Home" as they strove to recreate an aristocratic English life in the colony. Although they believed they were founding a great new country, they also thought of it simply as a bigger, better England. Even those who were born and bred in New Zealand continued to call themselves English gentlemen, and despite the harsh conditions of early colonial life, sheep farming was considered an occupation fit for a gentleman.[72] Early pioneer George Rhodes from the Levels Station advised his brother, "you may please yourself, but I think it is most respectable to look after stock".[73] This notion may have originated in nineteenth-century Britain, where grazing had been described as a gentlemanly profession.[74] Robert Peden suggests it is possible that references made by B. A. Holding inspired young middle-and upper-middle-class men to take up farming in the colonies, and those who were successful went on to adopt the lifestyle of English country gentlemen.[75]

The myth of New Zealand as a progressive British paradise complete with landed gentry was expressed through houses, gardens, and the quality of stock.[76] From the 1860s large-scale sheep stations built grand wooden houses with twenty to thirty rooms and surrounded them with extensive landscaped gardens planted with large quantities of English trees.[77] The station homestead was central to station life and identity and by the 1870s large sheep stations resembled small villages reminiscent of Britain, with the big house, men's quarters and cookhouse, shearing hut, barns, stables, implement sheds, stores, blacksmiths' facilities, and a church.[78] In addition, a property could comprise thirty to forty houses and barracks provided for workers on the station; the equivalent of a town or village.[79]

On Te Waimate Station there were eight out-stations consisting of barracks, cookhouses, stables, and storehouses. During the 1880s at the peak of station

production there were 57 permanent staff and up to 350 employed on the station during harvest. At the time, 1,500–2,200 sheep were killed for station use each year.[80] In the 1870s Longbeach Station had 150 people living on the property, making it necessary for the station to become self-sufficient. As well as employing cooks, a baker, butcher, and carpenters, there was a brickworks, flour mill, school, church, store, and post office.[81] At one stage Brancepeth Station made provision for over 150 men and women employed on the station and out buildings, which included accommodation and facilities, a coach house, blacksmiths' shop, store, stables, a cookhouse, school, and library.[82] By 1890 large landed estates exceeding 5,000 acres represented just 1 percent of all South Island landholders but held 75 percent of the land. At the time, the wealth generated from the sale of wool sustained their lifestyle and fuelled the New Zealand economy.[83]

Belich describes a colonial version of a genteel class structure serviced by servants, marriage, schooling, wealth, and politics,[84] with a lifestyle characterised by activities such as tennis, hunting, and shooting. During that time New Zealanders were intent on proving to the outside world that they lived in a civilised country with all the outward appearance of an English society.[85] The Brancepeth Station history reports Hugh Beetham went to "considerable expense to create an air of Old English grandeur"[86] (fig. 4.25). In Canterbury, those who were entitled to bear coats of arms displayed them on their stationery and the doors of their carriages.[87]

Fig. 4.25

Figure 4.25. Homestead, Brancepeth Station property, Wairarapa. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Coat of arms belonging to station owners had been passed down through generations or gained through marriage, while some were obtained after they arrived. The coat of arms at Clifton Station was the first to be registered in New Zealand. Coats of arms originated from heraldic marks introduced in mid-twelfth-century Europe to identify knights in full armour on the battlefield. Their shields and other equipment were decorated with painted marks of identification that were simple, clear, and

distinctive so they could be recognised at a distance. A shield on a coat of arms contained all the heraldic elements and was an indispensable part of the design, but could also be used on its own.[88] Coats of arms adopted by individuals, families, towns, regions, and countries carried a status and represented symbols of family lineage for future generations. The design could be used for personal identity on signet rings, letterheads, and household objects as an expression of family identity.

Although some station owners originated from the British upper-middle class, others had been poor but astute and experienced Scottish shepherds.[89] Others were remittance men: the black sheep from good families who were sent abroad but not totally disowned by the family.[90] There were second sons who left home to seek their own fortune in the colonies, but on the whole they came from varied backgrounds and brought with them a wide range of incomes. The key to rural success was early arrival with most of those who would become wealthy arriving by 1865. Some were backed by family investment, while others built up their assets by working in trades or for other farmers.[91] Most arrived with limited wealth and their success was built through hard work, by taking advantage of opportunities, and a measure of good luck.[92] The characteristic traits of successful pioneers, according to Peden, were "the Victorian ethos of self-improvement through hard work and the determination to do well".[93] The dominant reason for emigration, however, was a common desire to better oneself and to 'get on'.[94] In 1882 pioneer and owner of Tutira Station, Herbert Gutherie-Smith, reflected on his reasons for emigrating as follows: "to this day indeed I am not sure whether we were splendid young Britons, empire builders, and so forth, in a small way, or asses of the purest water. We bored inland for freedom, for adventure, for stock and soil, in obedience perhaps to an instinctive desire to push further back."[95]

Over time, through owning New Zealand land and by identifying with the local environment, ties to Britain began to weaken.[96] Michael King describes a transitional stage of adjustment as "double patriotism", with pride in belonging to both Britain and New Zealand.[97] Kynan Gentry explains settlers had left behind so much of what gave them stability and meaning that initially they attempted to recreate 'Home' by redefining the landscape, importing familiar plants and animals, using European names, maintaining traditions, developing institutions, and building styles of architecture seen in Britain. He believes the development of new and local traditions and attachments did not begin to emerge until indigenous threats had diminished and settlers began to feel more at home in their new environment.[98]

Although the sizes of station properties were reduced and communities had largely disappeared, grand homesteads, historic woolsheds, and established gardens were lasting reminders of the past and continuing significance of the station. These had

been retained through successive generations of families, particularly in the South Island high country, where isolated properties and their way of life has been preserved along with evidence of branding and identity on the station. Dominy maintains, "inheriting the opportunity to farm by purchasing a lease from parents is a central practice in high country life, and family continuity in property transfer is essential for maintaining high country identity and its link with the past. High country families are rooted to a particular property, not just to farming, and those families are born into place and try to remain in place."[99] The brand identity of a station was formed through history, heritage and a way of life. This was represented in marks and names on plates and irons and through other forms of visual representation.

II. Deduction

The addition of a station name and brand mark strengthened the identity on a station stencil for tracking and selling wool, was a more distinctive identity for the station, and formed a bond between person, place, and product. To sustain the reputation of a station and the value of the product it was essential to maintain the continuity of the brand and station name. This was reflected in the longevity of brands and names on stations in the study. The design of marks, letters, and layouts frequently varied on station stencils, but the contents were preserved, apart from on Mt Peel Station when joint ownership was discontinued and new names were used. The importance of the station brand was seen in a brand register where elements were added for the Beetham brothers on Brancepeth Station, but the brand mark was maintained for both. Stations where the mark and name were combined on some plates but not on others, point to changes in requirements for marking bales and provided flexibility in applying station identity in a variety of ways.

The origins of station names were predominantly related to aspects of place, either in the past or present, whereas brand marks were more likely to have personal associations and were linked to individual stories. Letter marks of names of founding owners and symbols connected with family history formed a strong personal connection between the original owner and subsequent owners, if the station remained in original family ownership. On these stations, brand marks with references to the original owner were more likely to appear on the station stencil. Conversely, if a brand mark for sheep was inherited from a previous owner, it was less likely to appear with the name of the station on the station stencil. Similarly, brand marks of symbols without personal significance were less likely to be used with the station name on the station stencil.

Station plates that used the name of the owner (Acland at Mt Peel and Richmond at Richmond Brook Station) did not use an additional mark of identity. It can be assumed therefore the use of a personal name or initial letter/s was a strong form of

identity. A letter mark of a name, particularly a surname, linked the original owner to future generations of the same family and could apply to subsequent owners, especially when succession went to male members of the family with the same surname. This was seen in the G for Longbeach Station and S at Waitangi Station. It was more complicated when multiple letters were used, as demonstrated by AHR on Tuna Nui Station and JGG on Clifton Station stencil. The fact that three members of the Russell family had the same three initial letters highlighted the importance of maintaining the identity.

Brand marks and names on plates represented a mix of locally inspired and introduced references to the origins of owners. This reflected the makeup of settlers who populated the colony in the nineteenth century and who were predominantly English and Scottish. Local names derived from characteristics of the land were typically taken from existing names in the local language and at times indicated the state of the land when the settlers arrived. Waimate, for example, was a swamp, Waitangi was surrounded by water, and eels were plentiful in the early days on Tuna Nui Station.

The various forms of identity on branding irons, station stencils, and other objects has been preserved through successive generations of family ownership. In most cases stencils and irons were stored or displayed and evidence of their printed form could be seen in graffiti on woolsheds. Other forms of visual identity on the station had typically evolved from or included brand marks of the registered sheep brand and on the station stencil, highlighting their importance to the identity of the station. In some cases, application of station identity appeared to be an organic process that evolved over time in response to increasing recognition of the value of the station brand on wool bales, rather than a conscious attempt to implement a brand identity on the station, as seen in the topiary bell bushes at Te Waimate Station. On Gwavas and Brancepeth Stations, where the brand mark had originated from an existing coat of arms, the implementation followed English traditions of applying it to stained glass windows, stationery, and on other parts of the homestead and station property. On these stations the design of marks on branding irons and station stencils reflected practices of designing and making by the station blacksmith in response to how they were to be used. Brand marks derived from the coat of arms reinforced the heritage and identity of the family and were an expression of their relationship to people, place, past, and present.

The longevity of family ownership of the stations studied was evidence of family attachment to the land and way of life, continuity of family history and identity, and demonstrated an ongoing sense of responsibility for family heritage and stewardship of the land. Brand marks applied to sheep and wool bales originating from early

histories of pioneers were tangible expressions of the past history of the station, the owners, the development of land and stock, the past importance of wool, and the influence it had on the wealth of the station and economy. From its origins as a registered mark for branding sheep, the mark of identity and station name applied to wool bales gained national and international recognition through sales of wool.

Cultural references were reflected in the language used for station names. Some adopted the indigenous Māori language, while others referred to their country of origin. Six stations took a Māori name (Otematata, Omarama, Tuna Nui, Waitangi, and Te Waimate Stations), whereas on five stations their owners opted for names reminiscent of their roots in Britain: Gwavas (Cornish), Brancepeth (English), Clifton (English), Coldstream (Scottish), and Glenmore (Scottish). Despite the signs of an introduced British culture through the meaning of brand marks and names, some aspects were grounded in New Zealand identity. This was evident in the use of Māori language along with references to landscape, wildlife, and personal experiences. It was also seen in the adaption of marks to various forms of identity on the station, including on branding irons designed and made by the blacksmith and stencil plates made on the station. The flexibility of stencils and branding irons for marking property and creating signage seen around properties was a practical and familiar method of applying marks. Inadvertently, this extended the identity of the station through stencils.

III. Speculation

The marks of station identity were not limited to tracking bales and identifying ownership of sheep and wool. In time and through repeated exposure in association with quality produce they gained recognition, reputation, status, and a financial value. A mark of identity stood for the quality of land, stock, and wool, and represented the owner, the station, and the country. By representing a valuable export commodity, marks of station identity became a symbol of success. As a group, brand marks and station names on wool bales represented the quality of wool from New Zealand internationally. The importance of protecting and maintaining identity through a station name and brand mark was seen in their longevity: they were maintained when stations were sold and shared between members of the same family who sold their wool under the same brand. Familiarity with stencilled names and marks was gained through their visibility when transporting bales from the station for export, on stencilled letter boxes, gates, and signs, through exposure at shows and stock sales, and from publicity of the price of wool sold at international markets.

A brand mark based on a name, place, or experience personalised the mark and formed a strong association between people and place. Combining a letter mark with the name of a place connected a person to their new environment through the

naming and branding process. Names and brand marks on station stencils portrayed a mix of nostalgia for the past and optimism for the future. Although some represented the origins of early immigrants, others reflected impressions of recently inhabited land. Letter marks of the initial letters of the name of the original owner, in particular, personalised the mark and linked the provenance of products to the founding settler and their legacy in developing the land. The adoption of indigenous language reflected willingness to embrace the local, while references to the past were attempts to assimilate familiar forms of identity with foreign environments. English traditions were also represented in large houses, introduced plant species, lifestyles, recreational activities, and the continued use of coats of arms.

The relationship between colony and coloniser, home and Home can be viewed through brand marks and names. On some stations home was represented in local names and marks, while Home was represented through imported references. This was also evident in trade-marks where British symbols were well represented. Extended forms of identity on the station reflected the importance of the station brand marks on wool bales. On stations who used their coat of arms for station identity followed British traditions, while on other stations implementation of their identity appeared to be ad hoc rather than formally applied.

Shearers and other seasonal workers who stencilled names and dates on shearing sheds marked their own identity on permanent structures on the property. In this way they became part of the visual identity and history of the station. Additionally, stencilling used for signs and labels on the property were inspired by the use of stencils in the woolshed, the availability of single letter stencils, and familiarity with how to use them. In a similar way, familiarity with the use of branding irons extended to marking property in a logical and practical approach to permanent labelling. Beyond the practical value of stencilling around the property they contributed to a consistent visual identity on the station and in some instances extended to the property's exterior face. Collectively stencilled wool bales represented colonial wool at international sales, while locally the stencil became a distinctive symbol of rural identity.

As markets changed, new regulations, materials, and processes were introduced. Sheep brands were replaced by ear tags and wool bale stencils were no longer required as labels sewn on to synthetic bales were marked with a felt tip marker pen. As a result, the visibility of station identity on sheep and wool bales diminished and the wool bale stencil entered the final stage of discarding and recycling. The next chapter in the life of the wool bale stencil is after the working life of marking wool bales was over and they entered the end of life stages.

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Fig. 5.1

Figure 5.1. Café table number,
Paper Mulberry Café, Otane,
Hawke's Bay. Photographed by
John O'Sullivan, 2015.

Chapter 5. Life Stages of Discarding and Recycling

This chapter forms the end stages of discarding and recycling in the life of a designed object and the life of the wool bale stencil. It primarily covers the period after stencilling on bales was discontinued in the 1990s, although some examples appeared earlier. The chapter explores the social life of objects—the alternative and ongoing uses of original stencil plates, and two-and three-dimensional representations of plates and stencil letters. It involves all types of wool bale stencils, including the station stencil, wool description, number, and wool classers stencil. There were many examples found during the research; however, the criterion for inclusion in this chapter was stencil plates or stencil letters that could demonstrate a link to their original use. The aim was to discover the extent and diversity of ongoing stencil use, explore the influence of wool bale stencils and gain an understanding of the meaning and significance of the stencil in New Zealand culture.

Stencil Plates and Stencil Letters

I. Description

a). Form and Content

Despite the importance of the brand to the history and identity of the station, following their discontinuation in the wool industry, in some cases wool bale stencils became obsolete, while others performed new functions on and off the station. Sixty years have passed since sheep brands were used—thirty years in the case of wool bale stencils—yet many original objects remain on the stations visited. It was also possible to find evidence of discarded objects in archived photographs, sheep brand registers and the occasional mention in early station histories. On Richmond Brook, Tuna Nui, Waitangi, and Clifton Stations, stencil plates and branding irons are preserved as part of the history of the station, the shearing shed, and early methods of shearing and selling wool. At Richmond Brook Station the station stencil, a circular number stencil, and bale hooks are displayed on a wall in the centre of the shearing shed, while wool descriptions are stencilled on wooden beams in the shed as an historical and decorative reference to the past (fig. 5.2). At Tuna Nui Station a large group of stencil plates hang in a section of the shearing-shed in a display of station memorabilia, and on Waitangi Station the station stencil is nailed to a structural beam overlooking the stone and wooden shed. Wool descriptions and number stencils, branding irons, and the original sheep branding bucket are attached to beams below. The Clifton Station Wool World is a working museum operating in the 1890s shearing shed. It provides visitors with an authentic experience, with an extensive display of stencils, branding irons, and other "century old equipment", along with demonstrations of sheep shearing to "capture the rustic aura of life on the farm".[1] Longbeach Station has preserved the blacksmiths' forge in its original state, along with a display of tools, equipment, and an assortment of branding irons made

Fig. 5.2

Figure 5.2. Stencilled beams, Richmond Brook Station shearing shed, Marlborough. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

there. Stencils are not part of the blacksmiths' display and instead are hung on nails in the shearing shed. At Mt Peel, the station stencil is kept in the station office.

Apart from retaining and displaying stencils as objects of station history, some stations continue to recognise their brand mark in new forms of station identity. Due to the decline of the wool industry (sheep numbers have decreased by thirty percent in the last 10 years)[2] and reduction in property sizes, stations had been forced to diversify or specialise. Their history is maintained through restoration and reuse of early farm buildings, and redesign and reuse of the station brand from physical to digital and printed forms. On Longbeach Station a mark resembling a stencilled brand has been redrawn for the station website. It appears as a grey stencilled mark on each page outlining the history of the station and advertising the restored brick cookshop as a venue for wedding receptions, special family events, and corporate functions, with an option of using the Longbeach Station chapel, built in 1873.[3] Clifton Station has reused one of the marks from the station stencil, the symbol of an anchor, on their website in the design of a new identity for Clifton Glamping (glamourous camping), an experience that "nods to the history of Clifton Station with old world touches" (fig. 5.3).[4] The letter mark JGG on the stencil was replaced with the words Clifton Glamping centred below the anchor to reflect the layout on the original station stencil. In another example, the print promotion of Coldstream Corriedale Stud on Coldstream Station features a contemporary colour photograph of the Coldstream bell branding iron. Capturing the essence of the station on the back of the publication, a series of images represents the product, place, and owner. The historic homestead and symbol of the original bell brand conveys a message of history and heritage of the station and stock.

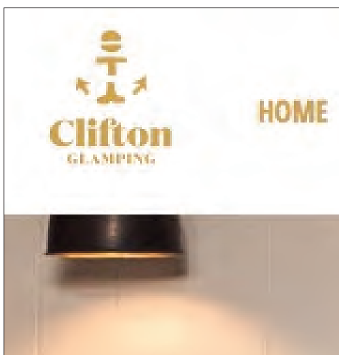

Fig. 5.3

Fig. 5.4

Other historic sheep stations not included in the study have reused their original station identity in contemporary rebranding. Castlepoint Station on the Wairarapa coast has incorporated the original brand mark in a redesign of the station identity. The letter mark of a capital letter G within a circle was the initial letter of the surname of Thomas Gutherie, the founding settler of the station, and is still used to mark wool bales—drawn by hand with felt pen. The new station identity acknowledges the history of the station by integrating the original mark into a circular setting of the name of the station. In the centre, a stylised lighthouse set against a curved sloped line represents the coastal landmark and the hilly terrain of the station. The new identity is applied to staff shirts, stationery, and signage.[5] On Mesopotamia Station, an iconic South Island high-country property, an identity printed with the station stencil is used as the "Mesopotamia Logo". This features on their website, which advertises the station as an "unspoilt South Island paradise offering accommodation, helicopter flights, hunting and other tourism activities" (fig. 5.4).[6] The logo is sewn onto merino woollen garments sold from the station. The symbol of a candlestick was the original brand

Figure 5.3. Contemporary branding. Clifton Station website. Accessed 9 April 2019, https://www.cliftonglamping.co.nz.

Figure 5.4. Contemporary branding. Mesopotamia Station website. Accessed 9 April 2019, http://www.mesopotamia.co.nz.

mark used to brand sheep and cattle. On the station stencil it was combined with the station name in a curved setting surrounding the brand mark. The website outlines the history of the station and background story of the brand and states that the original station stencil plate hangs in the entrance hall of the station homestead.

Fig. 5.5

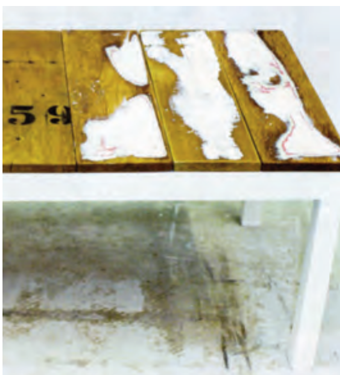
Fig. 5.6

Fig. 5.7

Figure 5.5. Stencil plate for sale. Trade Me auction website. Accessed 8 June 2018, https://www.trademe.co.nz.

Figure 5.6. Numbers stencilled on table. Kia Ora Air New Zealand Inflight Magazine, July 2014, 64.

Figure 5.7. Table mats printed with a number stencil. New Zealand House and Garden Magazine 238, June 2014, 90–98.

Many stencil plates and branding irons were discarded, particularly on stations sold out of family ownership and thus without personal attachment to the brand. However, stencil plates became increasingly visible in other contexts and were used for other purposes. During a year of monitoring the New Zealand online trading auction site Trade Me for sales of wool bale stencil plates, fifty-seven auctions listed plates for sale. All known types of wool bale stencils were for sale during that time: station; number and letter (single and circular); wool description; classers stencils; wool store number stencils; and shipping stencils (destinations of overseas ports). Stencil plates appealed to buyers for a variety of reasons, including as objects for display or decoration, for practical printing purposes, as collectable typographic objects, as examples of vernacular hand-made lettering, and as authentic historical memorabilia. Analysis of titles and descriptions listed by sellers gave clues to their perceived value and suggested how they might be used. The most common words to appear in titles were “wool bale stencil” (29 times), “vintage” (23), “old” (11), “industrial” (5), and “retro” (2).

The potential for stencil plates as objects for display or decoration were described by traders as: “a unique display piece for an industrial style room, café, bar or restaurant”; “great decorator piece for any urban loft or furniture art”; “perfect to use or display in the man cave or as a piece of vintage art in any designer home”; “would look stunning in your house, bach (beach house), studio, apartment”; “aged and well used look… you could never replicate the rusticated look no matter how well you tried”. One trader included a photograph of a circular number stencil displayed on a bedroom wall with the description “super cool vintage stencil. A pretty cool edition to any retro pad or ‘Man Cave’” (fig. 5.5). Local magazines, including *New Zealand House and Garden Magazine*, *Kia Ora Air New Zealand Inflight Magazine*, and *Habitat* home decorating magazine, endorsed original stencil plates as authentic art for interior design by featuring them in their articles. In addition, stencil text and numbers were applied to furniture, upholstery, and soft furnishings such as cushions, curtains and table mats (figs 5.6, 5.7).

On some auction sites there were suggestions for how stencils could be used for printing. Sets of single letter or number stencils were templates for applying text and numbers to objects and surfaces and were recommended for “furniture art”, “industrial style projects”, to “add style to your French country theme”, for “use for school projects”, and as “an awesome set to use on upcycled furniture, writing

on old wooden boxes or to spell out words”. One trader recounted his personal experience of stencilling and gave advice on how to apply them: “these are the type that are used with a brush and dry powder. The finish is awesome. The powder is in a solid block form that you apply to the brush by sweeping on the block… then brush the stencil… the finish looks very old… but fresh.”

As well as objects of art, creative practice, and practical use, discarded stencil plates appealed to collectors of local historical objects. Descriptions targeting collectors of wool bale stencils drew attention to their historical value, with descriptions including: “rare and purposeful collectables”, “you don’t find these very often”, “farm related collectable”, “sought after collectable”, “a piece of local history”, “hard to find”, “family heirloom”, “nice early kiwi item”, “old antique wool bale stencil”, “a true piece of history”, “great Kiwiana piece”, and “a unique piece of NZ sheep farming history”.

Apart from online sales, stencil plates have been recycled in other ways. Some stations have disposed of their stencils as a past practice that is no longer relevant, but others recognise the historic value of their objects and photographs by donating them to local museums. Fairley Heritage Museum in the South Island exhibits a number of stencil plates and branding irons in glass cabinets. Local station brands and numbers are stencilled on bale material and exhibited on the museum wall to reconstruct what appears to be a stack of branded bales. Stencil lettering seen on historical exhibits in the museum reflect the wider use of stencilling for marking objects and equipment. Names of owners and companies were stencilled on old trucks and wagons, farm implements, machinery, and other objects in the exhibition. Reid and Gray Limited was a recurring stencilled name, and referred to engineers and iron founders from Oamaru who had begun supplying farm equipment and machinery from 1868. A truck in the exhibition had “Mackenzie County Council” stencilled on the front doors in a design resembling a curved layout of a station stencil that were, at times, applied to the doors of station trucks. On the footpath outside the museum a stencilled sign reading “Museum Open” gave clues to the rural theme and contents inside (fig. 5.8).

Fig. 5.8

Figure 5.8. Museum sign, Fairley Heritage Museum, Fairley, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O’Sullivan, 2010.

In the North Island, The Wool Shed national museum of sheep and shearing in the Wairarapa town of Masterton has been constructed by merging two original shearing sheds relocated from existing farms. Offering an “authentic” experience to visitors, new and historic shearing equipment is set up like a working shearing shed with a range of stencil plates on display. Names and dates have been stencilled on the structure of the wooden shed to replicate graffiti seen in shearing sheds. As with the Fairley Heritage Museum, stations have either donated their station stencil plates for exhibition, or applied them to bales of wool and hemp sacking for a display

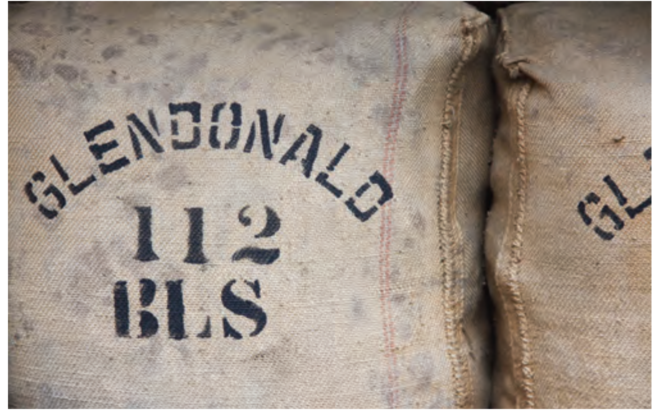

Fig. 5.9

Figure 5.9. Wool bale display, The Wool Shed Museum, Masterton. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2014.

Figure 5.10. Stencilled wall, Glenorchy Hotel, Glenorchy, Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 5.11. Signage, Glenorchy General Store, Glenorchy, Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

of station brands (fig. 5.9). Among them is the fleur d'lys brand mark from Brancepeth Station. Other regional museums have similar displays of historic farming and shearing equipment, notably the Central Hawke's Bay Settlers Museum in Waipawa and The Coach House Museum in Feilding. Although stencils are a noticeable feature of rural museums, it is rare to find them in major city exhibitions or collections. An exception was South Canterbury Museum in the coastal port of Timaru, which had been a major export route for wool and was close to the South Island high country. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington has only two stencils in their collection: a circular number stencil and wool description stencil, but no station stencils. Toitu Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin has one station stencil and Canterbury Museum in Christchurch has none.

Fig. 5.10

Fig. 5.11

In country towns visited on field trips, pubs, cafés, and shops have recreated a sense of rural nostalgia through themed interiors decorated with replica and original objects sourced from shearing sheds—stencil plates and stencilled text were both decorative and functional (figs 5.10, 5.11). In the small South Island settlements of Cardrona, Glenorchy, Fairley, and Geraldine, the stencil was a visual reminder of their past association with wool. Glenorchy, an isolated town at the head of Lake Wakatipu in the Queenstown area, is located near remote historic sheep stations. Stencil typefaces are used on external signage for the café, pub, and general store.

Inside the Glenorchy Hotel, brand marks from local stations are stencilled on sacking lining the walls. There are station, wool description, and number stencil plates hanging on walls and applied to sheets of corrugated iron.

In the countryside, particularly in the South Island, stencil lettering is a recurring feature on post boxes, gates, and signs. Many examples are remnants of the past, applied with the station stencil or single stencils, but some are new three-dimensional signs cut from a range of materials (figs 5.12, 5.13). Other new

Fig. 5.12

Fig. 5.13

stencilling is applied by hand, repeating the past traditions of stencilling on and around the station with wool bale stencils. References to sheep, wool, and sheep farming are made through original stencil plates used as props, and stencil lettering for branding and marketing local businesses. The Shearing Shed shop on the square in the North Island city of Palmerston North sells goods made from sheep skin and wool. These are displayed alongside stencil plates and other shearing equipment sourced from sheep stations in the Hawke's Bay and bold slab serif stencil type is used on all exterior signage (fig. 5.14).

Recent conversions of disused woolsheds into domestic living spaces had incorporated various parts of the original shed into the houses, including stencil plates and stencilling. The owners of the Remarkables Station have converted the historic woolshed at Woolshed Bay on the shores of Lake Wakatipu to a

Figure 5.12. Gate sign, Crown Range Road, near Cardrona, Otago. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2018.

Figure 5.13. Rural post box, Taihape Road, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 5.14. The Shearing Shed, The Square, Palmerston North. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2012.

Fig. 5.14

contemporary dwelling. They describe how the design follows the footprint of the original shed and has retained some of the materials for reuse, including a wooden wall marked with graffiti by shearers and rouseabouts as a central feature of the house.[7] Another woolshed conversion showcased in *New Zealand House and Garden Magazine* has reused materials and fittings from an original shearing shed on a family-owned station. The curtains, stencilled with a border of the letter mark and station name, have been printed with the original tin station stencil, which hangs above the stairs. Table mats of woven sacking are stencilled with numbers, and handwriting on timber selected for the coat rack carries the imprint of a past generation, the grandfather of the current owner.[8]

Contemporary Visual Representations

I. Description

a). Form and Content

New Zealand's long association with sheep is reflected in the names of many cafés and shops. These include: The Wool Press in Arrowtown; Top Paddock Café and The Country Café in Geraldine; The Woolshed Canaan Café on Takaka Hill; Wool Shed Café in Sanson; The Shearing Shed in Palmerston North; the Wool Press Café in Te Kuiti; and the Black Sheep Bar and Grill in Tauranga. All of these establishments reference wool bale stencilling in some form in their branding and promotion; either through the use of stencil typefaces or representations of stencil plates. Six have used bold slab serif stencil text, one has used a sans serif stencil typeface, and two have used circular shapes with text around the circumference as seen on circular stencils. External and internal signs are either designed with a stencil typeface or applied with a stencil by hand. In the North Island, a unique reference to sheep farming is seen in a rural café at Otane in the Hawke's Bay region. Table numbers are made from objects and materials typically found on sheep farms: hand-stencilled numbers printed on sacking are mounted with wire on a wooden base referencing wire fences and wooden fence posts.

A stencil typeface is used in rebranding repurposed buildings with a past connection to wool. A contemporary stencil typeface was chosen for signage on the original Wellington wool store (fig. 5.15). Built in 1911, it had provided storage space for

Fig. 5.15

Figure 5.15. Signage, Woolstore Design Centre, Thorndon, Wellington. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2017.

bales of wool from the lower North Island waiting to be exported by ship from Wellington harbour. Many original features of the brick and wooden building had been retained in the 1980s refurbishment of the renamed Woolstore Design Centre. Stencil type alludes to wool through a raised loop in the centre of the letter W and the choice of a rounded stencil typeface. While retaining a memory of past stencilling on bales, it remains relevant to the interior design practices operating from the building.[9]

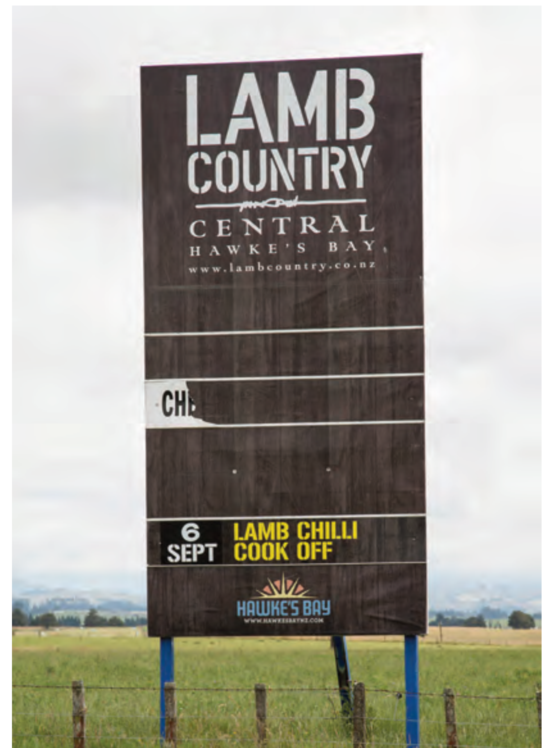

Fig. 5.16

Figure 5.16. Lamb Country sign, state highway 50, Hawke's Bay. Photographed by John O'Sullivan, 2015.

Branding place and product through stencil type is displayed on a roadside sign on approach to the Hawke's Bay region. "Lamb Country" set in a sans serif stencil typeface underlined with a stylised barbed wire graphic is centred above the name of the area (fig. 5.16). This signposts sheep farming country and introduces an event (Lamb Chilli Cook Off). In a series of advertisements, the same identity was redesigned in appropriated forms of a stencil plate and stencilled text on a background of wooden boards.[10] All have a direct connection to place and lamb-related products through the use of a stencil typeface. In gift shops selling New Zealand-made goods, stencil type is seen on packaging of wool-related products. Lanolin,[11] a skin care collection by Wild Ferns New Zealand, portrays a photograph of a sheep against a backdrop of green grass and a native Mount Cook lily.[12] This positions the product in South Island sheep country and the stencil typeface spelling LANOLIN reinforces the relationship of the brand to the product, the location, and the country of origin. The choice of an elegant stencil typeface is sympathetic to the beauty product it represents. In a further example, a point-of-sale

Figure 5.17. Point of sale. Gift shop, Snowdon Road, Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2010.

Fig. 5.17

Fig. 5.18

Fig. 5.19

Figure 5.18. Brand mark, Banks Peninsula Farm identity, Strategy Design. Accessed 1 December 2017, https://www.strategy creative.com/projects/banks peninsula-farms.

Figure 5.19. Information booklet, Banks Peninsula Farm identity, Strategy Design. Accessed 1 December 2017, https://www.strategycreative.com/projects/banks-peninsula-farms.

sign in a South Island shop near Geraldine is hand stencilled in black on a piece of wood. The condensed capital letters stencilled on wooden board links the sheepskin slippers to the production of wool and the location of a shearing shed (fig. 5.17).

A further example of contemporary branding using stencils is the brand identity for Banks Peninsular Farms, "a story of provenance" designed by Strategy Design, Christchurch, in 2009. The designers explained that "on the rugged Banks Peninsula, a group of 19 farmers [had] joined together to create an environmentally sound strong wool product that can be traced right back to the hillside on which it was grown. We saw the opportunity to tap into growing global demand for authentic brands by developing a provenance based brand story, expressed through emotive imagery and typography inspired by traditional wool bales."[13] The mark of identity is a monogram of the initial letters B and P in a letter mark reminiscent of a registered sheep brand seen on station stencils (fig. 5.18). On business cards the mark is cut out as if from a stencil plate, but printed on stationery, publication, website, and product branding (wine and cheese) it has a solid impression, as if it has been printed with the card. Wine is packaged in a fine hessian bag and branded with a mark of identity. Black-and-white photographs of sheep, stencilled wool bales, a shearing shed wall with stencilled graffiti, and skeins of processed wool build a picture of heritage and traceability. The slab serif stencil typeface used for the brand mark refers to traditional stencil letter styles on bales and is combined with a contemporary sans serif stencil typeface for headlines on the website and print promotion. While acknowledging sheep and wool traditions, the brand seeks to reassure customers of up-to-date farming practices through the contemporary stencil and design style (fig. 5.19).

Historic references are used for the visual identity of Wools of New Zealand, a company marketing wool from a group of sheep stations. Cut from an aluminium plate, it is photographed in the traditional setting of a shearing shed for their website. As if it were the latest stencil in a historical collection of plates, it hangs on top of circular stencils in a manner that is typical of how they were stored in a traditional

shed, thereby linking the current brand to past farming traditions. The symbol of a fern leaf is centred above the name of the brand, which is cut in rounded sans serif stencil text. Similar to the design of the W in the Woolstore Design Centre identity, wool is alluded to through a raised loop in the letter l and the choice of stencil typeface. Authenticity of the stencil plate is portrayed through smudges of ink around the letters. The cover of the company annual report in 2017 was stencilled on hessian with the text "100% New Zealand Grower Owned".[14]

Fig. 5.20

Fig. 5.21

Other New Zealand-made products are marketed through references to stencils. Maude Winery, a small family-owned vineyard near Lake Wanaka in the lower South Island took the name of a nearby mountain range. Located at the base of Mount Maude in Central Otago, the winery's branding uses historical and contemporary themes. On the website a sepia photograph of the vineyard against a backdrop of Mount Maude introduces the land and location of the winery.[15] A rusticated rectangular metal sign embossed with Maude Winery can be compared to the design of a tin stencil plate. Further references to wool bale stencils are seen in the design of wine labels: a positive printed version of the winery sign, and stencil letters printed directly on bottles. Drawing inspiration from the sign, the label is printed in rust-coloured text with a shaded rectangular border, as if printed with the metal plate (fig. 5.20). White slab serif stencilled text applied to bottles are labelled EMW 2016 (east meets west), referring to a combination of grapes from two blocks, and KIDS 2015 made from grapes sourced from Kids Block. The abbreviated text is similar to letter codes on wool description stencils. On a wine box with a rusticated sliding tin lid, Maude is cut in stencil letters in the same type style as on the signage and wine labels (fig. 5.21). Although the product is not directly related to sheep or wool, the identity continues traditions of branding local produce with stencils.

Figure 5.20. Wine label, Mount Maude Winery, Central Otago. Author's own. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2019.

Figure 5.21. Wine box, Mount Maude Winery, Central Otago. Private collection. Photographed by John O'Sullivan, 2015.

In a direct extension of the visual identity of wool bale stencilling on sheep stations, Lammermoor Station in the remote Central Otago district of Manioto has branded their organic whisky distillery with slab serif stencil text. Lammermoor Station was

named after Lammermuirs (Lammermoor), a range of hills in southern Scotland; the literal meaning was lambs' moor, derived from the Old English words lambra and mor. The Elliot family of Scottish descent had produced merino wool on the station for ninety years and used stencils on their wool bales. They had been aware that illegal whisky had been made on the property during the 1860s gold rush and decided to reintroduce it on the Lammermoors.[16] Owner John Elliot explained that stencilling was used "to reminisce and appreciate the golden era of wool, gold, and whisky".[17] Stencil signage on the front of the station distillery is cut from a rectangular plate, Lammermoor is stencilled in black on the tops of wooden barrels curved around the periphery, while the word distillery is set across the diameter. A barrel number stencilled below follows the style and layout seen on wool bales. Whisky barrels at the South Island Cardrona Distillery are similarly hand stencilled with white paint. The name of the distillery follows the shape of the barrel with a year and number placed in the centre. Hand-stencilled lettering personalises bales purchased during their production and continues traditions of stencilling in the area. The nearby restored Cardrona Hotel, built in 1863, has preserved its rural heritage through references to historical objects, which includes replica wool presses for bar tables. Stencilling on barrels of wine and spirits imported into the Port of London were documented in photographs taken in the late-nineteenth century. As with wool bales, marking barrels with stencils had roots in British shipping and trade.

A stencil typeface is an obvious choice for titles on book covers related to New Zealand sheep farming, shearing, and wool. Historic sheep station histories illustrated and written by Colin Wheeler, *Historic Sheep Stations of the South Island* (1971) and *Historic Sheep Stations of the North Island* (1973), are designed in what appears to be a hand-cut stencil. *Boards, Blades and Barebellies* (1987), a series of stories of shearing shed experiences was set in a bold slab serif stencil typeface. On the cover of *Wool: A History of New Zealand's Wool Industry* (2003), a photograph depicted the word WOOL stencilled in slab serif text on bale material. More recently, stencil typefaces were used for the titles of *Shear Hard Work*: *A History of Shearing in New Zealand* (2010) and *The Legend of Mt White Station* (2015), set in a stencil typeface designed to mimic the textural qualities of hand printing. *Made in New Zealand: Stories of Iconic Kiwi Brands* (2008) was another book cover stencilled in white slab serif text on a red plastic tomato for dispensing tomato sauce.

In another instance, slab serif stencil text was used for the titles of books, magazines, and video cassette covers promoting the comedy farming character Fred Dagg.[18] In the mid-to late-1970s satirist John Clarke, acting as Fred Dagg, was portrayed as a post-pioneering Kiwi bloke (New Zealand man) and sheep farmer. Dressed in stereotypical gumboots, shorts, and black woollen shearing singlet, he is

accompanied by a sheep dog and speaks in local farming slang. Written and acted by Clarke, the series was produced for stage, film, television, print, and audio.[19] The relationship between the fictional sheep farming character and wool bale stencils is obvious and the angled slab serif text implied his name has been stencilled on.
A further example is found on a t-shirt listed on an online auction site. Designed in the 1970s the text read *New Zealand is…* [a list of things representing New Zealand culture] …*& ME*. The title text "New Zealand … & ME" is set in slab serif stencil text and the list is designed in sans serif. Included in the list are references to sheep and sheep farming such as gumboots, daggs, 73 million sheep, 3 million people, and "she'll be right", a phrase meaning it will be alright, don't worry.[20] Lastly, a contemporary t-shirt also for sale online featured slab serif stencil text reading *Made in New Zealand*, with reference to the person who wore it. The angled stencil text appeared as if it had been stencilled.[21]

b). Contextual Material

According to Claudia Bell there are several ways objects can convey the past: through preservation, restoration, recreation, illustration, and fabrication.[22] Aspects of all of these were found during the investigation of the ongoing life of the wool bale stencil. New functions are found for original stencil plates, and representations are made in two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and digital forms. The introduction of laser and water-jet cutting technologies and the increasing availability of digital stencil typefaces broadened the scope, variety, and availability of stencil letters and increases the possibilities for representation of the stencil in design. Stencil signs are cut from a wide range of materials in derivative stencil plates in a departure from traditional methods of applying stencil letters by hand. The link to wool bale stencils is made through conceptual references and the distinctive breaks in stencil letters.

The recent proliferation of designed digital stencil typefaces added to the range of stencil styles available to designers have increased the profile of the stencil letter. Although designed digital stencil typefaces appear to be a contradiction, as a stencil is designed for hand lettering, their widespread availability has popularised the stencil for use in contemporary design, despite the absence of the idiosyncrasies of hand-made letters and stencilling. Stencil type designer Jeff Levine believes the attraction of stencil letters is the results of the influence of the artist who made them, along with the imperfections, interpretations, and inconsistencies of letters made by hand.[23] The appeal of hand-made stencil plates and printed stencil letters has parallels with the resurgence in popularity of letterpress printing. The interest in learning craft skills of printing by hand and the appeal of textural qualities of printed impressions are a response to the increasing domination of digital reproduction and nostalgia for a return to tactile processes.[24]

However, locally made and hand-crafted goods have not always been popular. Early prejudice in favour of goods imported from Britain had a detrimental effect on the growth of local industries. In the 1940s attempts were made to establish a symbol of trade and an accompanying slogan by launching two national competitions. The results, announced in 1943, were selected from 40,000 entries and consisted of a symbol of a stylised kiwi accompanied by the catch phrase "Well Made New Zealand". Although it was reported that the official campaign did not survive past the 1940s, it undoubtedly had lasting influence. It is likely that the symbol inspired the design of the wool classers stencil introduced to the wool industry by the Massey Wool Association in 1949 (fig. 5.22). The symbol of a kiwi and registered number of a qualified classer was stencilled on a wool bale as a guarantee of the quality and consistency of the type of wool in the bale. It was a personal and professional mark, and in some cases belonged to the owner of the station. The kiwi symbol had a dual

Fig. 5.22

Fig. 5.23

role in representing both the classer and the country at overseas markets.[25] Comparisons can be made with the current New Zealand trade mark of a similar style kiwi symbol accompanied by the words "New Zealand Made" (fig. 5.23).

Provenance has been a marketing strategy for other New Zealand-made goods. In 2008 Ice Breaker merino wool products introduced a "baacode" to promote their woollen garments. The online system allowed customers to trace merino wool purchases to their source on South Island high-country sheep stations.[26] The ability to identify the history and origin of a product elevated the commodity status and added a value of authenticity as a point of difference for global consumers. The appeal of authenticity is seen in the popularity of sales of original wool bale stencils. Aside from their practical uses in applying text to objects and surfaces, to the collector they are authentic, recognisable, and relatable objects familiar to many New Zealanders. They represent pioneering and sheep-farming histories dating back to early European settlement and have been part of New Zealand sheep-farming culture until relatively recently. Wool bale stencils represent a romanticised pioneering history with a lasting impression of simpler and happier times. They link the present

Figure 5.22. Wool classers stencil, Te Waimate Station shed, South Canterbury. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2015.

Figure 5.23. New Zealand Made label, Wellington. Authors own. Photographed by Annette O'Sullivan, 2019.

to the past and represent over 150 years of New Zealand history. A hand-made stencil plate is a tangible reminder of how life used to be in comparison to rapid technological changes and the uncertainty of modern times. The chance to purchase an original stencil plate is an opportunity to own an authentic piece of New Zealand history. Although some plates are advertised as "sand blasted clean", on others, their materiality is a sign that they are authentic, and defects, tool marks, and signs of use is the material evidence. Compared to multiple copies of objects made through mass production of a single prototype, originality is one of the most-valued qualities an object can have.[27] Hand-cut irregular letter shapes, repairs, missing counters, chisel marks, and plates cut from scraps of metal and tobacco tins are evidence that they are a "one off" and imperfections only increase their appeal and financial worth. In some instances they carry layers of materials built up over time to indicate how and for how long they have been used.

The motive for some collectors of original stencil plates is nostalgia for the past—for what and who stencils represent. Judy Attfield believes "the 'past' is comforting in its familiarity—it lends a sense of belonging, but is also intriguing in its capacity to stimulate desire, the longing for a past that cannot really be brought back to life, an evasion of mortality".[28] Nostalgia is a mechanism whereby participants can adjust to cultural change by delaying their involvement in it. As a consequence, nostalgia perpetuates and sustains the formation of national mythologies.[29] The reconstruction of shearing sheds and exhibitions of stencilled wool bales in rural museums perform a similar role. Curators function as keepers of the public memory as they recreate a particular version of local and national identity through the selection and display of objects from the past.[30] Similarly, original stencil plates and stencil text used for props and signage creates a sense of rural nostalgia for New Zealand's past as a country of sheep and sheep farming. This is similar to Irish-and English-themed pubs, which aim to replicate experiences of overseas travellers through reproductions of objects and the use of period display typefaces. In the New Zealand context Bell suggests, "perhaps the employment of nostalgia as a guiding paradigm serves to replace our fragmented origins with a generic past, to construct a more confident ownership of our collective future".[31]

Hand-drawn and hand-cut wool bale stencil plates seen on auction sites reflect past farming practices and what is perceived to be the essence of the Kiwi character—an independent attitude to problem solving, flexibility in adapting to what was available, and the willingness to "give it a go". Drawing letters by hand, cutting them from scraps of tin, and repairing broken sections with wires and welding added to the historical credibility of objects and demonstrated self-reliance and the ability to find practical solutions to problems. Other objects identified as demonstrating traits of the New Zealand character known as Kiwiana are described as "all the

weird and wonderful quirky things from years gone by that contribute to NZ's sense of nationhood—kiwi identity".[32] Barnett and Wolfe (1989, 2001), described their selection as "a quirky list covering objects, images, languages, and ways of doing things that typify life in this land, and to a large degree stem from the country's isolation in colonial times and the independence and self-reliance of its people".[33]

In 1994 the word Kiwiana was added to *The New Zealand Dictionary* and was further endorsed by New Zealand Post, who issued a series of Kiwiana postage stamps.[34] Since then objects of Kiwiana have continued to represent New Zealand identity, reinforced through their use in marketing and advertising campaigns for the local and tourist market. Bell writes, "Kiwiana provides a steady catalogue of symbols of a nation; locally manufactured items, therefore confidently authentic, and accommodating a conception of a distinctive national cultural identity".[35] Contemporary versions of national identity re-present objects and images that have been present in society over a long period of time and are promoted through their commercialisation. Their continuing status and recognition are gained through widespread familiarity and constant repetition.[36]

Cultural symbols or icons represented through objects or people serve as foundational markers in society and stand for the aspirational ideas or values of a group of people.[37] This is perpetuated through visual reminders in everyday life and sustained through entertainment, journalism, advertising, and politics. Douglas Holt states, "brands become iconic when they perform identity myths: simple fictions that address cultural anxieties from afar, from imaginary worlds rather than from the worlds the consumers regularly encounter in their everyday lives".[38] Over time, by performing as a myth, a brand eventually becomes accepted by an audience and achieves mythical status through symbolic representation in a name, a brand mark, or through its material embodiment in an object.[39] Collectors of iconic objects of historical significance, such as items of Kiwiana, inadvertently preserve them in collections of a material history that could otherwise be lost.[40] For this reason private collectors of these New Zealand-made objects are not only participants in the construction of their own personal history and identity, but according to Bell, they become self-appointed "guardians of national artefacts".[41]

The characteristics demonstrated in objects of Kiwiana have origins in the practices of early pioneers and workers, and were demonstrated in the things they made on the station, such as wool bale stencils, branding irons, and other objects. In the early days, lack of specialised skills and resources, low levels of trade and income, isolation, and the high cost of labour forced immigrants to become self-sufficient and resourceful. For this reason, New Zealand authorities targeted rural labourers for immigration as they were thought to be the most likely group to possess

characteristics of adaptability. This was particularly important for itinerant workers, such as shearers, whose work was temporary, seasonal, and required them to travel. Jock Phillips points out that although pioneering work required little capital or training, it demanded hard physical work, the willingness to learn new skills, and the ability to apply them; in other words, the ideal pioneer was a "Jack of all trades".[42] The adaptive skills and resourcefulness demonstrated by settlers were said to be a role model for later generations of New Zealand men.[43] This is further defined by Bell who describes the rural character as "a familiar, worthy stereotype, one to which we can connect nostalgically as part of our own past, or that of the nation".[44]

The pioneer or rural character is associated with high-country sheep stations in the Southern Alps, which for many remain iconic symbols of nationhood and South Island identity. Isolation and extreme conditions of life in the high country tested the endurance, resilience, and self-sufficiency of early settlers. Michèle Dominy explains, the high-country life and landscape are romanticised for "their pastoral tradition, their pioneer heritage and links to the first settlers who explored the wilderness, their continuity of land ownership, their beauty and self-containment, their distinctiveness, [and their] … sense of isolation". The South Island high country therefore forms the context for contemporary nationalism as an idealised image for urban New Zealanders who are resisting increasing pressure to adapt to a modern way of life.[45] To the New Zealand writer and poet Brian Turner, the high country represents a sense of independence, a spirit of adventure and self-reliance, all values he believes motivate and define the New Zealand character.[46] This was confirmed in a survey titled *What it is to be a Kiwi* (2014), in which the attributes that New Zealanders most identified with were found to be "a can-do attitude, proud, easy going and outdoorsy".[47]

Roberta McIntyre compares the New Zealand "high country" to other frontiers, such as the "outback" or "bush" in Australia and the "west" in America, all of which she says share the same sense of mystique and challenge. She believes "the high country represents everything that is thought to be admirable about the New Zealand character. It is associated with images of sturdy, hard-working and resilient men and women who face daily challenges of climate, topography and isolation. High country men are stereotypically tough and uncompromising, in the tradition of the pioneers who broke in the land during the 1850s and 1860s; the women too, possess courage and fortitude."[48] Changes in the use of the high country for tourism have increased accessibility and publicity of stations for activities apart from sheep farming, while sales of iconic properties and reduction in wool production threatens their role as symbols of national identity. Furthermore, by promoting the high-country landscape, film makers and advertising agencies who aim to foster a sense of national identity are threatening to endanger it through over commercialisation.[49]

II. Deduction

Bell outlines a range of possibilities for the continuing life of objects; she states, "objects can be seen, touched, owned; their owners can rate them along a continuum from commonplace and throwaway to extremely rare and precious. They can also stand for the personal, the local, the regional and the national."[50] A wide range of uses and meanings of wool bale stencils evolved in the years since they were no longer used for marking bales. As objects of utility many are not considered by farmers to have further use and are discarded, while others are reassigned to new forms of station identity and preserved in displays of station history. New technologies replicate printed stencil marks for use on station websites. In this way station identity retains a connection to the past and acknowledges the significance of the station stencil while reflecting changes that had occurred on the station. Donated stencil plates and printed station stencils are exhibited in reconstructed versions of the past in regional museums, but are barely represented in national museums or held in their collections. This suggests they are viewed as part of rural identity but not recognised as having national importance.

Public places for retail and recreation maintained a sense of rural nostalgia through displays of stencil plates and the use of stencil text in interior decoration, branding, and signage. Historical stencilling in the countryside has been added to by new three-dimensional stencil signs and sustain a sense of rural identity through stencil letters. Contemporary forms of branding and rebranding with stencil typefaces conveys provenance and heritage of products and places by linking them to past histories of land, sheep, production of wool, and international trade. References to the past through stencil plates and representations through stencil letters perpetuates the popular myth but diminishing reality of New Zealand identity as a country of sheep to growing numbers of tourists. For New Zealanders who are familiar with their historical associations, stencil plates have become a vehicle for nostalgia, representing a past life that is slowly disappearing.

As early as the 1970s, stencil letters began to be used in publishing, promotion, and in association with New Zealand identity, suggesting the representation of wool bale stencils occurred in later stages of their life. The longevity and relatively unchanged appearance of wool bale stencils and their increasing visibility for other uses apart from on wool bales is extended through digital stencil typefaces and new technologies. Book titles demonstrate a range of stencil styles associated with wool bales—slab serif, sans serif, hand cut, printed impression, digital stencil typeface, and digitally destressed representations attempting to replicate the textural effects of hand printing. New digital stencil typefaces have expanded the use of stencils for expressing products while maintaining a link to their original use through stencil letters. Due to the widespread distribution and distinctive look of circular stencil

plates they have become a recognisable shape in representing wool bale stencils. Similarly, slab serif stencil letters are widely acknowledged as the traditional letter style of New Zealand wool bale stencils and the most common letterform used when referencing them. This is seen in items titled *Made in New Zealand* designed in slab serif. However, despite the association between slab serif stencil letters, wool bale stencils, and New Zealand identity, a bespoke wool bale stencil typeface has never been made. Another relationship can be seen with the kiwi symbol on a classers stencil which is a personal identity for the professional classer, and represents the country through the iconic symbol. A similar contemporary symbol continues to be used to represent New Zealand-made goods.

Imperfections on original stencil plates are an indication of their authenticity as one-off hand-made objects, and layers of substances built-up on plates are a material record of how they had been used in the past. This represents numerous engagements with people, places, and things from past eras in New Zealand history. The practices of pioneers who have transformed the land and survived in isolation, lacked tools and materials, and found alternative ways of working and making objects could be imagined in hand-made stencil plates. Moreover, wool bale stencils have had a long association with high-country sheep stations through production and export of merino wool, and were places where isolation and lack of resources forced their inhabitants to be self-sufficient. Despite the unofficial recognition by stencil trader that they are a "great piece of Kiwiana", wool bale stencils have not been identified as objects of Kiwiana. However, they fit the criteria as objects demonstrating characteristics of Kiwi ingenuity in the way they were designed, made and used, and are linked to early pioneers and high-country sheep stations through the personal marks of original owners and iconic station names.

III. Speculation

The online popularity of original stencil plates is evidence of the transformations of the wool bale stencil from tool, to commodity, art, and collectable in a continuation of life after their working life had ended. Despite signs of wear and tear and the patina of layers of tar, ink, and paint, the sales and prices of stencil plates have increased over recent years. This may change as the collective memory of the use of stencilling diminishes, as stencil plates become harder to find, and the culture of the country continues to evolve. It may be that preservation of wool bale stencil plates in displays of rural nostalgia, in branding and rebranding products and places, and as symbols of identity will continue to sustain the stencil as an iconic New Zealand letterform despite the lack of formal recognition. The use of marks from station stencils for new forms of identity on stations maintains their public profile, acknowledges the legacy of pioneers and the importance of a station brand to

the history and identity of that station. In addition, private collectors of historic memorabilia and displays of stencil plates as authentic typographic objects for interior display help to protect and preserve them.

Wool bale stencilling began as an imposed identity required for marking produce for trade to Britain and was shared by all colonies exporting wool. As wool bale stencils progressed through life stages their active social lives became increasingly independent from the constraints of dimensions and forms as they created new visual identities for products, people and places. This could be compared to the transformation of New Zealand from a colony dependent on Britain for investment and trade to increasing independence as a nation.

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Conclusion

This thesis has explored the development of brand identity on fourteen historic New Zealand sheep stations between 1850 and 2019. Brand marks originating from branding sheep were redesigned on stencil plates for marking wool bales. In time they inspired derivative forms of visual identity on stations, and informed the use of stencils in contemporary New Zealand design. This illustrates the transformative abilities of objects to acquire new forms and meaning through engagement with people and their physical environment over a period of time. Furthermore, it demonstrates that when studied through a material culture lens, utilitarian objects can convey cultural meaning, add to new knowledge, and form new histories and identities.

In the introduction, the marks of identity on Longbeach Station branding irons and station stencil were showcased as examples of early station identity. During field trips to sheep stations I found that the original owner's initials and symbols of their previous or new life were typical of brand marks applied to wool bales exported to overseas markets. Likewise, the names of stations—also part of the identity—were a mix of imported and indigenous references and examples of early identity formation in the colony. The brand mark derived from the station stencil, as seen in the contemporary visual identity on the Longbeach Station website, is just one of many examples of New Zealand design using stencil forms with reference to the wool trade. This is proof of the significance and durability of the station brand and the ability of the stencil to evolve into new visual forms.

Despite their ubiquity in past and current New Zealand culture, wool bale stencils have, until this point, never been fully acknowledged, documented, or analysed by historians, design historians, or typographers. My literature review found minor references to wool bale stencils and stencilling in New Zealand sheep farming and station histories, but not in the histories of design in this country. Nor have colonial wool bale stencils featured in Australian and British sheep, wool, or design histories. Although stencilling has been studied by international scholars, wool bale stencils have not been selected for in-depth investigation. This thesis therefore fills a gap in scholarship on the contribution of typographic objects and forms—specifically wool bale stencils—to brand identity and visual identity in New Zealand.

Methodological Contribution

The gap in literature on the wool bale stencil directed my research to the object as the primary source of evidence, with material culture as the lens through which to view typographic objects and changes in their physical and visual forms. This introduced a new way of studying stencils and stencilling through a material culture

perspective. From a review of the various ways in which objects have been studied in material culture literature, I selected Judy Attfield's concept of life stages of a designed object as an organisational framework for the analysis and observation of objects in different contexts and time periods. This structured the research, enabling wool bale stencils to be studied in three progressive life stages: design and making; using, consuming, and distributing; and discarding and recycling. The process called for close reading of material objects in the stages of design and making, contextualisation within historical and contemporary settings, and observation of their socialisation with people in various places during their working and ongoing life stages.

The research was grounded in field trips to sheep stations that were located in recognised sheep-farming regions in the North and South Island, with the additional criterion that they had been owned by the same families for generations. The ownership of some stations date from the time station brand marks were designed and land was developed. The brand identity of stations could therefore be traced to their origins on branding irons and stencils and linked to their original owners. For future generations therefore they functioned as marks of provenance.

Results of Analysis

a). Historical and Contextual Background

My research found that wool bale stencilling began at a stage of colonial dependence on Britain for investment in sheep farming and income through sales of wool in London. As trade increased stencilling was introduced by British importers to control and regulate marks on wool bales and replace inadequate identification and hand-painted marks that were failing to identify imported wool. Stencilling had roots in the British shipping industry as a proven and effective way of tracking and labelling goods imported from foreign countries.

b). Design and Making

The analysis of stencil plates photographed on sheep stations revealed that despite regulations set out by British importers, the designers and makers of stencils were forced to adopt their own strategies to address lack of resources on isolated sheep stations. Stencil makers expressed resourcefulness, ingenuity, and creativity shown through initiatives displayed when using found materials and tools available on the station, and by adopting individual approaches to drawing and cutting stencil letters while broadly adhering to British requirements for trade.

c). Using, Consuming and Distributing

I found that the wealth, reputation and status of the station gained through the sale of wool was represented by brand marks and station names stencilled on bales. Recognition of the value of the brand inspired further implementation of visual

identity on the station through formal and informal applications, and in some cases extended to contemporary station branding. Stencilled brands not only represented the station internationally but were the first export brands to represent the country. In addition, as a familiar and versatile method of applying marks, stencils were utilised in other ways on the station, thus contributing to a broader sense of rural identity through stencil letters. Whereas individual brands represented the owner, the station, the stock, the wool and the land, collectively the consistent stencil style represented the wool industry in New Zealand society.

d). Discarding and Recycling

I discovered that through widespread and repeated exposure to wool bale stencilling in New Zealand culture over a long period of time and familiarity with their associations, from the 1970s stencil letters were adopted by local designers. New visual identities for people, products and places maintained conceptual links to wool, sheep farming and primary production through stencil references. In addition, stencil plates and stencil letters symbolised rural nostalgia for an idealised past in New Zealand sheep-farming history, as evidenced by reconstructions of farming memorabilia in museums and themed interiors. Original stencil plates became increasingly popular in on-line sales for printing, as art objects and as authentic historic collectables.

Contribution of the Thesis

The research has confirmed that when studied through material culture overlooked everyday objects can reveal new understandings of history, including, in this case, a colonial history of wool bale stencilling, a New Zealand sheep-branding history, histories of brand identity on New Zealand sheep stations, a vernacular lettering history, and a design history of visual identity derived from wool bale stencils. Significantly, these histories have been told through the study of typographic objects and forms in a departure from traditional approaches to the study of history.

This thesis provides new insights into the critical relationship between manual practices of making objects on sheep stations, the development of early brand marks for New Zealand's export trade, and the use of stencil letters in the New Zealand design industry. The wool bale stencil began as a utilitarian object made as a requirement of trade, and the design of plates and letters were the result of isolated workplaces and the necessity to improvise and find alternative and practical solutions to how they were designed, made and used. In time the same attributes inherent in their letters and plates increased their value and desirability and elevated them to collectable objects with historical significance. Moreover, the design

elements acquired during their making are evidence of the same characteristics of inventiveness and ingenuity typical of other objects identified as symbols of New Zealand identity.

At the beginning of their life wool bale stencils hung on nails in shearing sheds. In later life they hung as art in feature homes, and were displayed as props for marketing goods, creating an atmosphere of rural nostalgia. The versatility of the stencil as a three-dimensional object, two-dimensional and digital visual form has enabled it to respond to changes in technologies and requirements which in turn has expanded the visibility of the stencil and extended its' life. As with other symbols of identity their re-presentation and commercialisation has sustained and enhanced their mythological status.

The contribution of the Longbeach Station brand on irons and stencils in the introduction was threefold—it marked the beginning of this doctoral research, and the transformations of the station, and the station brand. It illustrated a wool bale stencil history and a story of immigrant settlers who became successful landowners through the wool export industry and careful cultivation of their unique and invaluable brand. The wool bale stencil history is also a story of a dependent colony that became a self-sufficient nation, reflected in the transformation of the stencil from a tool for branding bales to a contemporary visual identity. Like the high country, the value of the wool bale stencil has been harnessed; and furthermore, it has been made our own.

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Appendix

Questions for semi structured interviews
on field trips to sheep stations

1.! What was the mark of station identity and what did it mean?

2.! How was it used on the station?

3.! What was the brand mark on wool bales and did it change over time?

4.! Was the sheep brand and stencil brand related?

5.! What did stencilled marks mean to the station?

6.! How were stencil plates made and who made them?

7.! What were stencil plates made from?

8.! How was a stencil applied and by whom?

9.! What substance was used for stencilling?

10.! Were stencils used for anything else on the station?

11.! Where was wool exported to and from?

12.! Has there been a station history written?

13.! Are there any photos of stencils, wool bales or wool bales being transported?

Appendix 1. List of questions for semi-structured interviews with station owners on station visits.

Annette O'Sullivan
Senior Lecturer
College of Creative Arts
Massey University
PO Box 756
Wellington 6140

9 April 2015

Tracing the station brand: Sheep and wool identification in New Zealand, its heritage and application.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my PhD research on the history of sheep and wool brands in New Zealand. Contextual and archival findings so far confirm that this history is unique to New Zealand and has never been studied or documented.

Vital to the research is the contribution of information from station owners and workers and the documentation of existing station brands and stencils. This will provide material for analysis, contribute evidence of farm practices and gain an understanding of the development of station identity.

Notes from conversations and photographic documentation may be used in the PhD thesis and in academic articles and documents, some of which could be in electronic form. There is also potential for the findings to progress on to exhibition and publication at a post doctorate stage, in which case you will be notified.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to offer information and access to objects and would like permission to use the material. If at any time you want to know more about the research or have other information to contribute please feel free to contact me.

Best wishes
Annette O'Sullivan

Ph 0272 499680
a.m.osullivan@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 2. Introduction letter given to station owners. A copy was left with the participant and I retained a signed copy with permission to use information and photographs.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

7 August 2014

Annette O'Sullivan
36 Severn Street
Island Bay
WELLINGTON 6023

Dear Annette

Re: Tracing the Stencil Brand: The Use and Significance of the New Zealand Sheep Station Stencil from Colonial Times to the Present Day

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 7 August 2014.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

> *"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".*

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

J.O'Neill

John G O'Neill (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

cc Assoc Prof Bronwyn Labrum
School of Art
Wellington

Prof Claire Robinson, Pro VC
College of Creative Arts
Wellington

Assoc Prof Heather Galbraith, HoS
School of Art
Wellington

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T 06 3505573; 06 3505575 F 06 350 5622
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz **www.massey.ac.nz**

Appendix 3. Notification
of low risk ethics approval.
Massey University,
7 August 2014.