

historians or with Jewish–Australian historiography will not be deterred, but it might put off readers new to the authors and the topic. That would be a shame. Books like this one, which combines visual history and powerful narrative that can be enjoyed outside the academy, are like hens’ teeth.

With so many interesting ‘Dunera Boys’ to choose from one can only anticipate the choices the historians will make in volume two. Sadly, the voice of Ken Inglis will be absent. His great mate Bill Gammage will carry the torch, and, with the writing talents of Seumas Spark emerging, volume two promises to let good writers write.

Dunera Lives. Volume 1: A Visual History is prescient in reminding us how quickly fear and loathing can usurp the humanitarian impulse in times of so-called national crisis. However, the final word ought to go to the ‘boys’. Their story is ‘a testament’ to those who have ‘outlived war and the injustices it produces’.

Lucas Jordan

Hanging Rock—A History

By Chris McConville. Friends of Hanging Rock Inc., Melbourne 2017. Pp. 264. \$24.00, paperback.

Like many Australians, I acknowledge that my image of Hanging Rock has been coloured by the haunted idyll of Peter Weir’s film, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, even though I appreciate that Weir’s Rock is a fiction. One of the virtues of Chris McConville’s *Hanging Rock—A History* is that it alerts us to the interesting and revealing history that this geological monument had already acquired before Joan Lindsay set the whole picnic charade in motion in 1967 with the novel that Weir appropriated.

Thomas Mitchell, enjoying the verdant pleasures of Australia Felix, must have passed the Rock but made no comment on it; he was more concerned to find his way to the top of the mountain that he named Macedon. It was Victorian surveyor Robert Hoddle who gave the Rock its first official name, Diogenes Mount, in 1843. Like many early travellers he remarked the rich park-like character of the landscape, and McConville comes close to suggesting that Hoddle may have sensed that its inhabitants, the Aboriginal peoples, might have had something to do with creating it. Squatter Edward Dryden gained a ‘Depasturing

Licence' in 1840 giving him some control of the Rock, which came to have his name attached to it. However, by 1870, when a public recreation reserve next to the Rock was proclaimed, the name Hanging Rock was preferred. In 1884 the Victorian government's repurchase of the Rock itself, and an additional 72 acres, acknowledged the importance that Hanging Rock had acquired.

With its unusual volcanic formation of clustered columns of rock, Hanging Rock commanded attention and, as McConville puts it, 'seems even more odd, even unsettling, since it appears suddenly over undulating paddocks' (p. 8). Its geological character as a mamelon was not fully appreciated until the twentieth century. Nor was its significance for the Aboriginal peoples, particularly its association with trade in the greenstone found near the Rock, understood. The German naturalist, William Blandowski, who had fled Berlin in the wake of the 1848 revolution, was unique in taking a serious interest in Aboriginal kinship and land management. In his romantic sketches of Hanging Rock, Blandowski foregrounded Aboriginal figures 'to heighten a sense of the majesty of nature' (p. 32).

With the onset of closer settlement, nearby farmers squabbled over rights to the Rock's nearby water. In the meantime the reserve was fast becoming a popular destination for both locals and day-trippers from Melbourne. Indeed, thanks to the popular illustrated press, the image of Hanging Rock was spreading far and wide. As early as 1873 some 3,000 people were attracted on New Year's Day when there was, according to the *Kyneton Guardian*, 'a great variety of amusements', including horse racing and dancing booths (p. 138). By the twentieth century the governor was bestowing his patronage on the New Year races, and by 1916 up to 20,000, some now with the aid of the motor car, were attending. The 1980s saw the advent of pop concerts with stars such as The Seekers, Leonard Cohen and Bruce Springsteen taking the stage.

This draws our attention to a familiar issue in Australian cultural history, the tension between the popular pursuit of pleasure and the need felt by society's moral arbiters to regulate and impose respectable order. It is no surprise that some of the churches were disturbed by the spread of horse racing and the gambling associated with it, but increasingly there were also those who valued Hanging Rock and its flora and fauna as an environmental asset—ramblers, bushwalkers and naturalists—and saw the carnival atmosphere as inappropriate and damaging to the site. Even young rock climbers, who might have seemed like bushwalkers,

became a concern for the damage caused by their amateurish assaults on the rock face. Those who wanted to ‘modernise’ the facilities available to tourists found themselves resisted by an odd alliance of moral and environmental forces.

There was always an element of mystery attaching to Hanging Rock, which *Picnic at Hanging Rock* exploited—its unusual geological features for starters. McConville begins his narrative with the experience of an 1870 group of young holiday-makers who made the ascent from a difficult angle, one of their number commenting on its ‘weird and spectral appearance, something like that of a ruined castle’ (p. 8). A hundred years later Peter Weir, a Sydneysider, was seeking out the Rock for the first time, in the company of producer Patricia Lovell. They had got lost, finding themselves in Bacchus Marsh, and had almost given up when, in Lovell’s words,

we suddenly drove over a rise and there on the plain below us was an eerie mass of boulders spewing out of the earth with trees emerging at strange angles from the top. Hovering over this was a single cloud. There were no other clouds in sight. It was chilling to come across it (Hanging Rock) this way. (p. 191)

What better introduction could Peter Weir have had!

Hanging Rock—A History is splendidly illustrated. The early photographs by Richard Daintree, an employee of the Victorian Geological Survey, are notable, but there are also postcards and photographs taken by the pleasure seekers. Hanging Rock has of course attracted painters. McConville discusses McCubbin’s benign images of the Rock, but alas no painting of his makes it into the book—rights too expensive perhaps? However, William Ford’s *At the Hanging Rock* serves a similar purpose in emphasising the relaxed atmosphere and conveying an image of the Rock as a sociable, scenic meeting place. There is also a surprisingly garish Fred Williams. Sometimes I would have appreciated some interpretative comment in the captions.

At \$24 Chris McConville’s handsome and thoughtful *Hanging Rock—A History* is a steal. It can be purchased through hangingrock.net.au. But a surprising omission by the publisher, Friends of Hanging Rock, is a biographical note on the distinguished author, who has published widely on Australian cultural history and heritage.

John Rickard