INTRODUCTION

Germans have played a significant part in the history of Australia. They were among the first Europeans to set eyes on the continent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Germans began settling here – both as convicts and their guardians – from the first days of the colony of New South Wales. Arthur Phillip, the first colonial governor, was the son of a German–English marriage. His father, Jakob Alt, an English teacher in London, came from Frankfurt. His mother Elizabeth, née Breach, had arranged for her son to learn her husband's trade at the School of Navigation in Greenwich. Others of German background who set foot on Australian soil in January 1788 included Heinrich Alt, Sydney's first Surveyor General, and Phillip Schaeffer, Supervisor of the First Fleet. Alt played an important part in the design and construction of the new township, and Schaeffer became one of the earliest settlers in Parramatta and the founder of Australian viticulture.

In the nineteenth century Germans abounded among explorers, scientists, artists and entrepreneurs. Above all, Ludwig Leichhardt, a legend today, led the first European expedition through Australia's vast northwest, to perish without trace in a subsequent attempt to cross the continent from east to west. Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich Mueller (created Baron von Mueller by the King of Württemberg) explored large areas of the Australian Alps and the Snowy Mountains and was a member of A. C. Gregory's 1855–56 north–west expedition in search of Leichhardt. Between 1857 and 1873 he was Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. There were three Germans in the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition, and the expedition's artist, Ludwig Becker, was among its first victims. He and his Austrian friend, Eugene von

Guérard, left behind many magnificent paintings and sketches of life, landscapes and people of their time. Josef Herrgott explored the country around Lake Eyre, and Johannes Menge the mountain regions in the north of South Australia. The latter is known as the founding father of South Australian geology. Georg von Neumayer, founder of the highly productive Melbourne Flagstaff Observatory, was knighted by the Bavarian king.

Other prominent figures, to name but a few, include Wilhelm Blandowski, Government Zoologist of Victoria, Johann Krefft, Curator of the Australian Museum in Sydney, and Robert von Lendenfeld, an acclaimed zoologist and glaciologist. Last but certainly not least in this brief list is Amalia Dietrich. A woman scientist was a rare phenomenon in the nineteenth century, and Dietrich spent nine years in Australia assembling an enormous collection (Aboriginal artefacts, birds, reptiles, insects and plants) for the Hamburg-based shipping house J. W. Godeffroy.

In the cities and towns, German businessmen prospered. Johannes Detogardi set up the first photographic studios in Sydney, while Wilhelm Lindt was one of Melbourne's early photographers. Carl Vahland, Bendigo's chief architect, designed most of the town's magnificent buildings; Friederich Mencken did the same in Newcastle. Brothers Edmund, Emil and Richard Resch founded Resch's Brewery, and Charles Rasp, having detected large silver deposits around Broken Hill, was among the founding fathers of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company (BHP). Some struck it rich in the goldfields. Bernard Otto Holtermann discovered the largest specimen of reef gold at Hill End near Bathurst in October 1871. He invested his money wisely, built a magnificent house for his family at St Leonards, and then devoted most of his life to his real passion – photography. His pictures of the goldfields, the New South Wales countryside, and in particular his panoramic shots of Sydney, provide an excellent record of the colony at the time. In Queensland, Heinrich Paradies and Friedrich Pfeiffer discovered the Day-Dawn goldmine near Charters Towers, which netted them several million pounds sterling. Pfeiffer in particular used his fortune to contribute to the profitable development of the Burdekin region.

Most German immigrants before the Great War (approximately two-thirds of them) went to the countryside. A combination of religious and economic reasons account for the fact that South Australia was the first colony to receive a large number of German settlers in the late-1830s and 1840s. Klemzig, Hahndorf, Lobethal, Tanunda and

smaller hamlets in the Barossa Valley trace their origins to these times. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century industrious agents on commission from the colonial governments of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland brought in close to 30 000 German-speaking newcomers from various parts of central Europe – and the subsequent chain migration was to more than double this figure.

In Victoria, they went first into the hinterland of the rapidly expanding capital and later into the wheat belts of the Wimmera and Mallee districts. In New South Wales, the country around Albury and Holbrook ('Germantown' until 1914) and the Riverina became the most popular regions, but many German families settled in the Illawarra and Bega districts, the Hunter Valley, the Mudgee region and Grafton and its surroundings. In Queensland, immigration was mainly to the southeast: the Logan district south of Brisbane, Rosewood Scrub west of the capital, Fassifern, the Lockyer Valley, the Boonah district and the Darling Downs. Subsidised immigration also brought German migrants to Tasmania, where they settled in the districts of Fingal, Glenorchy, Selby, Kingsborough and in and around Hobart. And although there was no subsidised immigration of continental Europeans in Western Australia, Germans accounted for the largest non-English-speaking group from Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. All told, by the end of the nineteenth century Germans were the fourth-largest European ethnic group in Australia, behind the English, Irish and Scots.

The second major wave of German immigration occurred in the third quarter of the twentieth century, when the wounds left by two world wars healed more quickly than expected. Over 100 000 German-speaking people came to Australia – mainly in the 1950s and 1960s – to make a new home. Like their predecessors a century earlier, they readily integrated into their new society – indeed an expert on Australian immigration has referred to them as 'invisible' migrants[1] – and they were popular newcomers. Opinion surveys taken not long after the cessation of hostilities in 1945 already ranked Germans as the most desirable migrants, after the British.

Germans played a big part in the construction of a new Australia. They became part of the phenomenal development from a largely homogeneous and monocultural community with a reputation for racial intolerance – 90 per cent of the population was then of European, chiefly British and Irish, stock – into a relatively tolerant multicultural, multiethnic society.[2] By the turn of the twenty-first century, close to 150 000 citizens listed a German-speaking country as their place of

birth, and in the 2001 Census over 700 000 claimed German ancestry, making them one of the largest ethnic groups in Australia.

There is considerable ambiguity about the term 'German'. Today it is a political term. It refers to a citizen from the Federal Republic of Germany – or from its predecessor, the German Reich, which was created by the Prussian Minister-President Otto von Bismarck in 1871 and came to an ignominious end in 1945. But this definition of the term 'German' is far too limited. For most of the nineteenth century it was an ethnic reference, with few political connotations. To call someone a German meant that he or she spoke one of the countless dialects of central Europe. Politically, until the beginning of the modern nation state in the twentieth century, people owed their allegiance to a dynastic house – to the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, perhaps, or the King of Württemberg, or the Emperor of the Habsburg Empire, a multinational community with many ethnic groups in east-central and southeastern Europe.

Until well into the nineteenth century a German could be a person from Alsace, which was ruled by the King of France, or from Hanover, which belonged to England, or from Schleswig, which was part of Denmark. A German could also be a citizen of the free city of Bremen, or a peasant from Brandenburg in the heart of Prussia. By the turn of the century there were about 300 political entities in the German-speaking lands, though the Vienna peace treaties of 1814 that followed the defeat of Napoleonic France reduced this number to 39.

Thus, before the creation of the German Empire, German immigrants asked about their background on arrival in Australia would say that they came from Baden, for example, or from the Palatinate, or from Silesia. And in those early days, since many spoke only their regional or local dialect, they would have faced considerable difficulties in communicating with one other. The Australian authorities could hardly be expected to discern such subtle differences, and hence they were all referred to as 'Germans'.

The concept of nationalism was new in European history – the idea of a German, Polish or French nation did not enter European thinking until the nineteenth century and did not reach its full force until well into the twentieth. When Otto von Bismarck achieved unification of Germany, the Prussian King Wilhelm III was crowned German Kaiser Wilhelm I on 18 January 1871, and the spirit of *Deutschtum* (Germandom) was born, there were close to ten million Germans living outside the German Empire (not counting the German population of Switzerland). Austrians and the German-speaking parts

of the Bohemian Lands (today's Czech Republic) remained with the Habsburg dynasty, and there were substantial German communities in towns along the Baltic coast and throughout southeastern Europe. An equally large number of non-Germans were living within the new Germany. Most of them were Poles in Prussia's eastern provinces; and the Sorbs or Wends, a small Slavonic community, had been living under Prussian rule for a long time. In the west Bismarck had annexed Alsace-Lorraine, which meant that many French people had fallen under German rule, as had a small number of Belgians. And there were Danes in the southern part of Schleswig. In this book then, the term 'German' is used in its ethnic sense, to mean all German-speaking people. It includes not only those who lived in the state created by Chancellor Bismarck, but all German communities throughout Europe.

The implications of Bismarck's political achievement were soon to be felt world-wide and greatly influenced the history of the twentieth century – including Australia's. But initially they were of little concern to those who had decided to leave their German homelands for more promising shores in the Antipodes. A few did leave for political reasons. After the failure of the 1848 Revolution most revolutionaries went to the United States, but a small number made their way to Australia. The harsh, lengthy Prussian military service would also have persuaded a number of young men to head for distant shores after their homeland was incorporated into Prussia. The great majority, however, had little interest in politics. They were escaping the twin problems of nineteenth-century Europe: the impact of industrialisation coupled with a huge increase in population.

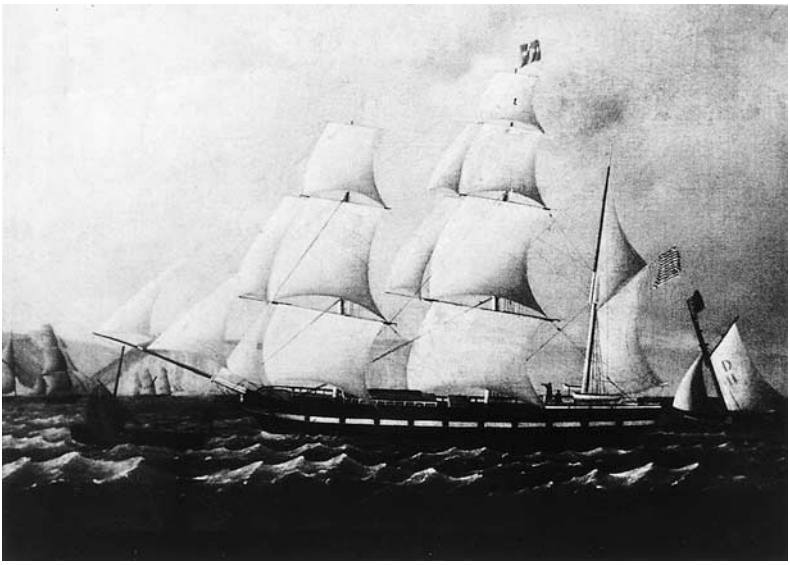
The story of German emigration and settlement has received much attention in recent years. There are now comprehensive works on the history of German settlements in all states, and thorough studies of German communities in the various cities and towns. Detailed studies of rural German communities throughout Australia tell us a great deal about the motives for emigration, adaptation to the new environment, education, religion, social life and so on. Among other things, these works paint a much clearer picture of what really happened to the Germans during World War I. By making use of this large body of scholarship, I hope to bring the story up to date.

1
WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

The century following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814 witnessed the emigration of about 55 million people from Europe. The great majority – over 90 per cent – went to the United States, and a substantial number settled in Canada, South America, Australia, New Zealand and parts of Africa. Among those who turned their backs on Europe were six million Germans. Again, more than 90 per cent went to North America, but several hundred thousand headed for South America, in particular Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and about 70 000 came to Australia. In its wake this massive migration brought equally massive economic, political and social change around the globe.

Why these people left their traditional homelands for an uncertain future far away, in countries they often knew little about, has attracted interest among sociologists, demographers, historians, political theorists and other social scientists. There is general agreement that the transition in Europe from a predominantly rural to an urban industrialised society involved unprecedented economic, social and political changes. Over-population, famine and poverty (or the threat thereof) enticed people to seek more promising shores: countries that offered land ownership, employment, relief from want, and religious and political freedom. This strand of explanation is referred to as the 'push-pull' model. The desire to flee from a life beset by seemingly insurmountable difficulties and an unpromising future is the 'push' factor, and the prospect of a better society that promises security and perhaps even affluence is the 'pull' factor.

The push-pull theory is, of course, not to be taken in too simplistic or straightforward a way. There are indeed instances when human



Barque Eberhardt*, one of the ships bringing German migrants to Australia in the nineteenth century*

misery and poverty in Europe led to escape across the Atlantic or to the Antipodes. The devastating famines that followed the failure of potato harvests in the mid-1840s, for example, brought about a mass exodus from the British Isles – in particular Ireland – and the Continent. But normally the process of emigration is a lengthy one: the development of a desire to leave one's homeland that culminates in the eventual decision to do so is not a speedy affair. And before the planned migration is actually carried out, which demands yet another step to be taken, years may pass.[1] Moreover, it was normally not the most impoverished section of a community that took the decision to emigrate. The majority of migrants came from the lower to middle strata of society, such as crafts and tradesmen, artisans, handymen, small or tenant farmers and some day labourers with smallholdings. Even assisted emigration, which accounts for the bulk of migration to Australia since the early nineteenth century, requires that the emigrants have a small amount of capital to pay travel costs to and living expenses at the port of departure. At times, socio-economic reasons are intertwined with political or, to a lesser degree, religious motivations. And there were always those who left their home country for the

sheer sense of adventure. But all told, the push-pull model provides the most convincing explanation of most of the German emigration to Australia, in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The push factor

Economically, it is customary to divide nineteenth-century Germany between west and east. In those parts of Germany that lay to the west of the River Elbe, farmers and their families at the beginning of the century owned and worked their own land. They often participated in small-scale manufacturing of various kinds in the periods between harvesting and planting. It was in the west that the great bulk of industry was established from around the middle of the century, replacing agriculture as the chief employer and rendering obsolete a large section of the traditional handicraft system. In the east, most of which was politically part of Prussia, aristocratic landlords employed day-labourers to till their huge estates, and as urban settlements were few, there was little opportunity for outside work. Industrial development remained modest, which meant that when the rapid population rise reached East Elbia, many rural dwellers faced a life of idleness and poverty.

By the nineteenth century the southwestern parts of Germany had already reached high population density. Most people were freeholders running a small block of land by means of what was still essentially subsistence agriculture. The longstanding tradition of dividing the farm among all descendants had fragmented arable land to such a degree that most plots were not viable. Unable to live off their land, these peasants had turned to home-based industries such as weaving and straw plaiting, or the manufacture of wooden tools and clocks. Sometimes referred to as the proto-industrial stage of economic development, this was generally a successful enterprise. Families used handicraft methods to work raw materials into finished goods, taking considerable pride in producing high-quality goods that could be exported to other regions. Clocks, tools, linen cloth and cotton thread were exported to the cities of western Europe, across the Atlantic, to the Ottoman Empire and even to distant places in Asia.

This system was dynamic. In normal times it provided many families with a livelihood, and in good times there was a modest degree of prosperity. But there were risks: a sudden decline might be caused by competition from another region, by harvest failure or by something as banal as a change in fashion in distant markets. Such events could

leave a region to stagnate, with a population too large for its resources facing economic disarray. Because if the peasant was suffering, the situation became precarious all around. Small business, artisans and craftsmen relied upon a surplus of agricultural production to exchange for their goods and services. The saying was that 'if the peasant has money, all the world has money'. Blacksmiths, carpenters, cobblers, masons and wheelwrights all did well when the farmers could afford repairs and innovations. But with the gradual arrival of the industrial revolution, real hardship was knocking at the door.

The same was true in the east. Although legislation had freed all peasants east of the Elbe from serfdom in 1807, a subsequent host of Prussian decrees and laws meant that over the next half century 70 per cent of them lost access to land that was theirs by right.[2] After the defeat of Napoleon a grateful Prussian government thanked its rural population, which had provided the bulk of its fighting force, by restricting grants of lands to those peasants who had enough land to support a pair of oxen. Smallholders and all those with tenure of less than two generations lost their land. Fifty more laws passed in Prussia between 1816 and 1850 resulted in the transfer of one million hectares of land from the peasants to the landlords, and peasants who retained their land owed heavy compensation payments to their landlords.[3] The results of these policies were predictable:

> As production for cash profit became the theme of East Elbian agriculture, the owner became more determined to hold his labour force to a minimum; meanwhile the population grew at a fast rate. There came to be more people than the economic structure would absorb; in this sense, despite the sparse distribution of people and the high productivity of much of the land, there was overpopulation. The owner often found that he could even dispense with contract tenant labor and the housing and services it required, because he could rely on the free labor force always available. He would hire at plowing and harvest times, and he was free of obligation at other times. Crops became more specialized, and employment more seasonal; that was more profitable if labor was plentiful and could be hired and dismissed at any time. For the agricultural labor force it was a period of decline, of proletarianization.[4]

All this was accompanied by the onslaught of industrialisation, which after a slow start had gathered momentum in Germany by the 1840s. Initially, governments had been careful about uncontrolled industrial development. The Prussian government in particular was reluctant to give the go-ahead for railroad construction, mainly

because of the huge costs involved. There were also fears that railroads would threaten security in wartime, and a restrictive banking policy led to a shortage of investment funds. But the rise of large-scale industry in Central Europe could not be halted for long, and nor could the entrepreneurial spirit of the age. Techniques of mechanisation, introduced in textile mills and coal mines, spread to other branches of manufacture and influenced the entire economic life of most German states. Gradually, banks and private investors began to transfer their funds from government bonds and commercial ventures to manufacturing enterprises. Owners of iron mills and other industrialists, financiers and businessmen asked for an end to the custom-ridden economic map of Central Europe, where a variety of monetary systems, commercial regulations, excise taxes and state boundaries crippled all efforts to liberalise trade and commerce. Eventually Prussia took the lead.

The formation of the *Zollverein* or customs union removed all trade barriers between most German states,[5] and less than a decade later the burgeoning industrial centres had all been linked by rail. Leipzig and Dresden were connected in 1839, Leipzig and Magdeburg in 1840, Dresden with Prague in 1840. The chief commercial and industrial cities in the Rhineland also linked together: Frankfurt with Mainz and Mannheim with Heidelberg in 1840, Düsseldorf with Elberfeld and Cologne with Aachen in 1841. By 1846 the Prussian capital, Berlin, was linked by rail to key harbours in the North and Baltic seas and to central Germany's chief economic regions. Due to pressure of competition from the new factories, the traditional local manufacturers of metal goods and textiles suffered. Southwestern Germany was hit particularly hard by the low tariff trends of the *Zollverein*. A surplus of artisans of all kinds grew steadily, particularly after 1840. Scores of weavers went bankrupt; carpenters, saddlers, masons and blacksmiths saw their incomes decline drastically.

Population growth was adding to the social problems. Improvements in farming methods, diet, sanitary conditions and medical know-how led to a sharp decline in child mortality, which was the main reason for the leap in population across Europe throughout the nineteenth century. There was also a rise in marriage rates. In the traditional guild system, only master artisans with full citizenship rights could marry, which meant that younger sons and daughters in both country and town could be left out. This marriage pattern meant that many who wanted to marry were forced to wait. But with the flourishing trade in manufactured goods in the early decades of the nineteenth