

Chapter 1

An Inheritance of Intangibles, 1890s



[N]onconformists believe that beauty comes from within, and are mindful of what Christ had to say about the difficulties a rich man may encounter on attempting to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Methodists can make money as well as anyone, but they cannot enter “society” without imperiling their principles. McCalman (1993)

Joseph Lade Pawsey was born in the Western Districts of Victoria (Australia) at Ararat on 14 May 1908, the only child of Joseph Andrews Pawsey (27 November 1865–30 June 1943) and Margaret née Lade (27 December 1879–8 August 1969). It was a humble enough beginning for a man who would have a life so different to almost all his countrymen. And yet Joseph Lade Pawsey’s individual experiences and unique career were shaped by the general trajectories of his generation. Spending money may have been very limited, and the family’s fortunes somewhat fragile, but the young “Lade” was nonetheless born into the growing social prosperity of a fresh new nation, the economic and technological growth of the twentieth century. He was a product, too, of the socially progressive values of the time, strongly reflected in his family (McCalman, 1993 and Bashford & Macintyre, eds., 2013).

Joe’s parents were idealistic in their own way, and harboured dreams beyond their material circumstances in their youth—as young people do. Such dreams were a feature of the social mobility that the Industrial Revolution produced in the nineteenth century, and the impetus and courage they gave to immigrant families who sailed half way around the world to their new lives in Australia, were not their least important feature. Despite having married a second wife from a successful shopkeeping family, Lade’s great grandfather Robert Pawsey, a bootmaker, took advantage of the sponsored fares offered by Presbyterian Minister Reverend John Dunmore Lang (Baker, 1998) to emigrate to the Colony of Victoria in 1849. Robert

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Pawsey, his second wife Elizabeth, their young sons Charles and Henry, and his eldest son Joseph Josiah, aged 15, who was born to Robert's first wife (who died giving birth to a sibling who died also) and who would become Joseph Lade's grandfather, arrived in Hobson's Bay and the city of Melbourne in February, 1850, and headed out for Geelong.

The Pawseys arrived just before the rushed influx of half a million who came to the colony over the next decade in pursuit of gold. The bootmaker Robert brought more than social aspiration to the Colonies, however, and an inheritance of ideas and values is part of what gave young Lade his start in life. Typical of his generation of migrants, Robert Pawsey was one of the "poor but honest" in whom religious and radical idealism were mixed in Nonconformist religious practice (McCalman, 1993). Nonconformist groups and churches—that is, those who did not conform to the Church of England—abounded in the first half of the nineteenth century, rejecting the governance of high society bishops and seeking a more authentic and direct religion through the practice of good works, direct experiences of conversion, faith and prayer, lay preaching, and collective meetings for worship, confession and mutual spiritual support. Nonconformist Christianity, as biographer of Australia's middle class has put it, is perfect for pioneers (McCalman, 1993): it preached a self-disciplined work ethic focused on temperance, parsimony and virtuous conduct, while granting all participants equal value, power and participation in religion, providing experiences of skill and leadership in the congregation-led meetings and preaching and conveying the glowing inner certainty of a personal relationship with one's saviour.

Robert Pawsey was exactly such a man. His passage on the frigate *Clifton* (the last of the three ships chartered by John Dunmore Lang to bring families to Australia) was likely no accident. Lang was a trenchant Scottish Presbyterian whose subsidy of serious minded Protestant immigrants was explicitly intended to build a population whose morals might reform the immorality in Colonial society that the overrepresentation of convicts and Catholics (the two being strongly equated in his mind) had produced (Baker, 1998). Shortly after arriving in Australia, Robert Pawsey joined a small independent church group that met in each man's home by turn, to worship and pray and engage in Bible study. He was a man of principle. The family remembers that he left this group when it accepted a gift of a block of land on which to erect a church building from the Victorian government. He either objected stringently to taxation and to profiting indirectly from it, or to the blurring of boundaries between Church and State, both hallmarks of a true Congregationalist. Instead Robert established an independent chapel, the "Ebenezer Independent Chapel" and remained its minister, without salary, until his death in 1891.

Robert's son Joseph Josiah established a hardware store, initially for miners in Ballarat, and another later in Stawell; he also established a general supplies store in the small northwestern Victorian town of Jeparit. Material prosperity, however, is one thing, and happiness another. Like his own mother, Joseph Josiah's first wife died in childbirth and the infant did not long survive her. His second marriage, to the daughter of a similarly prospering family (Elizabeth Andrews) was more successful if that is judged by their 8 children, but in the end, 8 children resulted in only two

grandchildren: a granddaughter, and the young “Lade”. Joseph Josiah, Lade’s grandfather, retired to Melbourne. His general store in Jeparit was eventually bought by Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies’s family, which too had a blend of Methodism and Presbyterianism. Joseph Josiah’s son Joseph Andrews, Lade’s father, however—his middle name was his mother’s maiden name—expended money in pursuit of various ideals, shaped strongly by the Nonconformist churches, then having a profound impact on progressive social movements at the end of the nineteenth century. The Churches were evangelical, given to literal interpretations of the Bible and strict in their moral disciplines, but were also determinedly egalitarian and idealist. They powered the temperance movement, movements for women’s education and suffrage, the baby health movement, took reformist attitudes to prostitution and to the imprisoned, and forwarded a host of other “progressive” social and political projects of the era (Catterall, 2016). Joseph Andrews was suffused by such visions of a more perfect social future.

The verging-on-middle-class valued education, and Joseph Andrews Pawsey was a scholastically inclined child, who won numerous school prizes, culminating in Fifth form Dux with top prizes in English and Mathematics at the Establishment Stawell Grammar School. He sat and passed the Matriculation examination, needed for entry into the Victorian Civil Service. It is not known why he did not pursue this career. He may not have had much opportunity, for the Depression of the 1890s had severely curtailed spending and opportunities for many. Perhaps an early marriage prompted him to look for more swiftly lucrative support for his family—or perhaps grief at the death of wife and child in childbirth (the third generation to have this melancholy experience) prompted him to seek a change of location. He opened a general store in Ararat, Victoria, but it was not very successful, perhaps as a result of the predilection that his son Lade could remember, for abandoning work only half completed while absorbed in political and social discussion. Whatever the reason, in 1902 he went gold mining in Wild Dog Gully above the small village of Strath Creek.

In Strath Creek he met 22-year-old Margaret Lade, the daughter of a local dairy farmer, one of ten children. Margaret knew a lot about practical farming and life in the dirt, and she too must have dreamed about an enlarged sphere of existence, one where women had more influence and more opportunities. The year before she met Joseph Pawsey—it was 1901, the first year of the new Commonwealth nation of Australia, redolent as it was with possibilities for social improvement and attainment—Margaret had spent a year at Methodist Ladies’ College (MLC) Melbourne, one of the string of “colleges” to which the middle class sent their children (and still do) (McCalman, 1993). MLC offered mature age students various courses, and Margaret learned singing and nursing there. This combination of the practical and the exploratory was quintessential of her, and Joseph Andrews Pawsey maybe seemed a man of a similarly expansive vision to herself. He proposed, offering a world tour as a honeymoon, and she accepted. And when shortly after the goldmining venture failed as was inevitable, and he offered to release her from an engagement that was unlikely ever to fulfil the promise of a world tour after all, she did not decide to be released. They were married in 1906.

The Pawseys bought a 2000-acre large farm, “Kuvindra”, near Willaura adjacent to the Grampian mountains in Victoria, in partnership with a brother and a brother-in-law from the Lade side, and on 14 May 1908, Joseph Lade Pawsey was born there. He did not remain there long. Kuvindra is remembered for the impracticality of its management, directed by Joseph Andrews’s enthusiasm for change and improvement, the application of theory with little practical experience to temper it. It too failed, and the Pawseys moved to different farms and towns during small Lade’s early years, eventually purchasing “Glencoe”, a small dairy and sheep farm near Camperdown. This farm was approximately 100 acres—they may have leased another 60 acres—and Margaret’s practical experience in cheese making and farm work provided the core stability for its management. The family must have struggled financially nonetheless. Joseph Andrews dabbled in a number of non-farming activities, including being the enthusiastic local agent for Riley and Stoewer cars. Margaret became an unofficial neighbourhood midwife. She attended expectant mothers by horse and cart, and later by model T Ford, becoming expert in car maintenance and repair as she coped with frequent burst tyres and mechanical breakdowns. She returned horses to stalls and put away ploughs when her husband left them in fields in his enthusiasm for political debate. And for all her passionate devotion to her son, she did not have another child. Perhaps experience as a midwife was offputting; decades later she confided in her granddaughter-in-law that she was not willing to face birth again.

If Joseph and Margaret were not particularly wealthy, if they struggled to maintain their foothold in the middle class and did not have the knack of turning their ideas into successful ventures, were *they* happy? Perhaps they were. They certainly lived a life actively engaged in politics and in the progressive issues and concerns of the day. Joseph was a prolific writer of letters to various editors on social, financial, political and philosophical questions. In the mid-1920s, Margaret canvassed heavily in support of women voting in Council and government elections. Margaret went even further. In 1924 she was lobbying for the Women’s section of the Victorian Farmer’s Union to have baby health centres established in their towns. “This is great national work,” she wrote, “for if we take care of the babies and start them out in life with health and sound constitutions, we can look forward to many of our social evils naturally disappearing” (Smart & Quartly, 2015; Sheard, 2017; Lovelace, 2012). Two years later, while her son Lade was exploring Europe on an impressive schoolboy tour, she became President of the Section and advocated for temperance, in particular for preventing girls under 21 from having access to alcohol. In the 1930s, she had advanced to being President of the Women’s Country Party in Victoria; by the end of the decade, she was advocating strongly for expanded women’s roles in the war.

It seems reasonable to infer that the Pawsey family lived a fairly rich social and intellectual life, one formed by the moral framework of Progressive Nonconformism (even if their religious practice had receded into the background), and studded with principles that undergirded their strong opinions on social and political matters. Although Robert and Joseph Andrews were struggling financially (though not disproportionately to many others at that time), they shared with other upwardly

mobile families a sense of the importance of their action in the world, and the strong sense of social duty that arises from moral sensibility. Margaret's hopes for what improving population health might achieve—for example, by building baby health centres—is typical of the optimism of the Progressives of the day, despite the setbacks of the first World War and the Depression. They were a family interested in new ideas and confident that scientific advances would bring improvement. The young Lade's long dead Nonconformist great grandfather (Robert) would have understood how rich an inheritance this was.

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