

The story of Australia: CHANGE AND CONSTANCY

Throughout the whole last year, Bridge focused on Australia, its nature and culture. One thing that wasn't covered in depth was Australian history. So let's have a closer look at it now. In the May-June issue, you can then look forward to learning more about Australian literature.

Australia is an ancient land as well as a relatively young country. Aboriginals have inhabited the continent for about 40,000 years, though the country as most recognise it today started to **take shape** a little over 200 years ago. Since then, waves of immigrants from Britain, Europe and Asia have continued to shape Australian society.

ABORIGINAL COUNTRY

Aboriginal people arrived via a 'landbridge' from Asia during the **Ice Age** when the sea levels were much lower. Generally, they lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. However, it would be wrong to think that Australian Aboriginals were a single culture. They were and remain a **diverse** people, with many languages, social systems, **artistic** styles, traditional stories and spiritual beliefs. Because of the oral nature of these societies, we have **few records** of their long history.

PENAL SETTLEMENT

The lives of Aboriginal people changed dramatically with the arrival of Europeans. The Dutch are considered to be the first Europeans to make contact with Australia. However, they didn't establish any colonies. The first European colony was



When Europeans settled in Australia, there were about 300,000 – 750,000 Aboriginals living on the continent. Now they make up about 2.6% of Australia's population.

set up by the British in 1788. It was intended to be a penal settlement – prisoners from England, known as convicts, were sent to Australia as punishment.

Life in the early colony was harsh. **Unlike** the Aboriginal people, who had an **intimate understanding** of the Australian natural world, the British arrived with their old views in a new land. They wanted to plant European **crops** and even wanted to follow the European natural cycle. Unfortunately, the seasons in Australia **are reversed**. Plus, Australia receives much less rainfall than Europe. The first **settlers** almost died of **starvation**. Over time and **through trial and error** the settlers found the crops, like **wheat**, and animals, like sheep, which could prosper. But the

lives of the convicts were still brutal. Living conditions were poor and **corporal punishment** was a common fact of life.

GROWTH OF THE COLONIES

Slowly more colonies were established. Transportation of convicts began to slow down and stopped **entirely** by the 1860s as more free settlers, who had come to Australia attracted by very cheap land, **opposed the practice**. In 1835, Melbourne was established not as a prison but as a village. By the 1880s, this 'village' grew to become the second largest city in the whole British Empire.

The growth of Melbourne, along with other cities, was **spurred** by the **gold rush** of the second half of the nineteenth century. Up to 2% of the British

population emigrated to Australia during this period. People also came from North America and China. Such an **influx** of people changed the situation in Australia. The people demanded certain rights, including a **free press**, **trial by jury** and **greater representation**. It was during this time that the Australian political institutions started to take shape. Moreover, many adults at that time were actually Australian born. To them, Australia was 'the Mother Country'. This growing **national consciousness** was reflected in the growing demands for a **federation** and even a republic.

The Aboriginal reaction to the new colonies was **understandably hostile**. The two groups **were in competition**

for resources and land. Many Australian cities were established in places where Aboriginal communities were **densest** because there was enough water. **Clashes** were common, with **casualties** on both sides, more of them among Aboriginals. Even more devastating than guns were the diseases **unintentionally** brought by the settlers. Many Aboriginal people died of diseases such as **small pox, chicken pox, the flu and measles**. In 1901, when Australian federation was declared, the Aboriginal population was 10% of what it had been at the time of the first European settlement.



In 1915, Australian and New Zealand soldiers (fighting in WWI on the side of the Allies) set out for Gallipoli, Turkey, to capture Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, an ally of Germany. The fighting dragged on unsuccessfully for months and thousands of soldiers died. The heavy casualties are commemorated and the soldiers are honoured on ANZAC Day (April 25) every year.

FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Federated Australia remained a part of the British Empire and for much of the first half of the twentieth century kept very strong **ties** with Britain. It had a discriminatory immigration policy called the White Australia Policy, which limited the number of non-Europeans, especially non-British, who could enter. These **restrictions** were not officially lifted until 1973. Australia also maintained very close foreign policy relations with Britain. In 1914, it entered the First World War as a member

of the British Empire. Australians also fought in the Second World War. When Japan entered into the war, battles were fought in nearby Papua New Guinea and some of Australia's northern cities were bombed.

POST-WAR PROSPERITY

Despite these attacks, Australia was relatively **unscarred compared to** many other countries. For this reason, it was an attractive place for families to **relocate** after the war. The Australian government encouraged people to settle

there, assisting them with travel and finding them work. This was the second great influx of immigrants. They changed the population into a much more mixed one; other languages were starting to be spoken in Australia and this **diversity** has become a permanent part of the Australian society. In fact, 43% of Australians today were the immigrants from this period.

The post-war period was also a time when the rights of Aboriginals improved. By 1965, they were granted **full voting rights**. But Aboriginals also

demanded the **recognition of past ownership**. This wish was finally achieved when the famous Mabo case in 1992 officially acknowledged the **continuous** ownership of Aboriginal land.

The Australian Republican movement didn't completely disappear. In November 1999, Republicans hoped to **sever** all ties with Britain when a referendum was held to change the **constitution** to introduce a **parliamentary appointed** president. But the Republicans lost in all states and the British monarch remained the official head of state.

AUSTRALIA TODAY

At the turn of the millennium, Australia was increasingly more prosperous but conservative. Unemployment was low and living standards were high, but the open cosmopolitan nature of Australia seemed **in decline**. Many Australians wanted a more restrictive immigration policy and felt that they had moved away too much from their British roots.

Then in 2007, Australia made another turn and elected a prime minister who is among other things fluent in Mandarin Chinese. Perhaps all this goes to show is that the one **constant** in Australian history is change.

Ryan Scott (Australia)

VOCABULARY

to take shape - utvářet se
via ['vaɪə] - přes
Ice Age - doba ledová
diverse [daɪ'vɜ:s, 'daɪvɜ:s] - rozmanitý
artistic [ɑ:'tɪstɪk] - umělecký
few records of - velice málo dokladů o
penal settlement ['pi:n(ə)l 'set(ə)lm(ə)nt] - trestanecké osídlení
to set up - založit
unlike [ʌn'laɪk] - na rozdíl od
intimate understanding ['ɪntɪmət] - důvěrné porozumění
crops [krɒps] - (zemědělské) plodiny
are reversed [rɪ'vɜ:st] - jsou opačně
settler ['setlɚ] - osadník
starvation [stɑ:'veɪʃ(ə)n] - vyhladovění
through trial and error ['traɪəl] - metodou pokusu a omylu
wheat [wi:t] - pšenice
corporal punishment ['kɔ:p(ə)r(ə)l] - tělesné tresty

entirely [ɪn'taɪəli] - úplně
opposed the practice [ə'pəʊzd] - byli proti takovému počínání
to spur [spɜ:] - podnítit
gold rush - zlatá horečka
influx ['ɪnflʌks] - příval, příliv
free press - svoboda tisku
trial by jury ['traɪəl 'dʒʊəri] - soudní procesy před porotou
greater representation [ˌreɪzɪzen'teɪʃ(ə)n] - lepší (politické) zastoupení
national consciousness ['næʃnəl kɒnʃənsɪs] - národní citění
federation [fɛdə'reɪʃ(ə)n] - federace
understandably hostile [ˌʌndə'stændəbəlɪ 'hɒstɪl] - z pochopitelných důvodů nepřátelská
to be in competition - soupeřit
dense [dens] - hustý
clash [klæʃ] - střet
casualty ['kæʒjuəlti] - oběť, mrtvý
unintentionally [ʌnɪn'tenʃ(ə)n(ə)li] - neúmyslně

small pox - neštovice
chicken pox - plané neštovice
measles ['mi:z(ə)lz] - spalničky
ties [taɪz] - vazby
restriction [rɪ'strɪkʃ(ə)n] - omezení
unscarred [ʌn'skɑ:d] - nepoznamenaný
compared to [kəm'peəd] - ve srovnání s
to relocate [rɪ:lə(ə)'keɪt] - přesídlit
diversity [daɪ'vɜ:stɪ] - rozmanitost, různorodost
full voting rights - plné volební právo
recognition of past ownership [ˌrekəg'nɪʃ(ə)n 'əʊnəʃɪp] - uznání bývalého vlastnictví
continuous [kən'tɪnjuəs] - nepřetržitý
to sever ['sevə] - zprětrhat
constitution [kɒnstɪ'tju:ʃ(ə)n] - ústava
parliamentary appointed [pɑ:lə'ment(ə)rɪ ə'pɔɪntɪd] - parlamentem jmenovaného
in decline [ɪn 'klaɪn] - na ústupu
constant ['kɒnst(ə)nt] - konstanta

GLOSSARY

landbridge - a strip of land which allows animals or people to cross and colonise new lands
hunter-gatherer lifestyle - they hunted for animals and gathered plants and berries to eat
oral nature - stories and culture were passed down from generation to generation in a spoken way, without being written down
mother country - the country where you were born

LANGUAGE POINT

The verb **"to lift"** usually means to move something from a lower to a higher position. (Please, help me lift this armchair, it is heavy. She lifted her eyes from the book she was reading.) But it can also mean to end a rule or law. (These restrictions were not officially lifted until 1973.)