Adelaide is well-known for its encircling park lands and beautiful gardens. They have been the site of many prestigious events and at times the source of much contention.

The essays in this book trace the philosophical beginnings of what became an international municipal-park movement to create park lands for the well-being and recreation of city people. Adelaide’s park lands are central to this movement, their development set during the social, political and intellectual uncertainties of early nineteenth-century philosophical developments and emigration debates in England.

In Anticipating Municipal Parks, Don Johnson contests the accepted understanding that Colonel William Light was the sole architect of the city of Adelaide, revealing the often-ignored role of Light’s Deputy Surveyor, George Strickland Kingston. Johnson also investigates the role and influence of John Arthur Roebuck and John Claudius Loudon on the course of town-planning theory, and the political and theoretical influences leading to the economic and social ideas of Ebenezer Howard and his Garden City.

Anticipating Municipal Parks is a fascinating look at how Adelaide helped define city planning ideas in the nineteenth century.
Anticipating Municipal Parks

Donald Leslie Johnson has written extensively for books and journals on Australian and American architectural history and American city planning history and is completing research on Romanesque architecture and on the education of Frank Lloyd Wright. He attended Louis I. Kahn’s masterclass of 1960 at the University of Pennsylvania and was a member of the American Institute of Architects. He is an Adjunct Professor of Architectural History at the University of South Australia, has taught design and history in a number of American and Australian universities, and is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects and currently resides in Kangarilla, South Australia.
By the same author

The Architecture of Walter Burley Griffin
Australian Architecture 1901–1951: Sources of Modernism
Canberra and Walter Burley Griffin
18th and 19th Century Architecture Books and Serials in South Australia
(with Maureen S. Fallon)
The Adelaide City Plan: fiction and fact
(with Donald Langmead)
Frank Lloyd Wright versus America: the 1930s
Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture
(with Donald Langmead)
Architectural Excursions: Frank Lloyd Wright, Holland and Europe
(with Donald Langmead)
The Fountainheads: Wright, Rand, the FBI, and Hollywood
On Frank Lloyd Wright’s Concrete Adobe
This book is in memory of Professor Donald Langmead who shared with me the comment of Voltaire

It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.
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Abbreviations

ADB  
Australian Dictionary of Biography, Melbourne

AGSA  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

CO  
Colonial Office, Great Britain, London

FHSA  
The Flinders History of South Australia, 2 vols, Eric Richards, Editor, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1986

JHSSA  
Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia, Adelaide

JSAH  
Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Chicago

JPH  

ODNB  

OSTOffice  
Old System Title Office, Adelaide

PRO  
Public Records Office, London, historical documents, Australian Joint Copying Program, micro-film as held in Flinders University Library, Adelaide

RGSA, SAB  
Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, Adelaide

SAG&CRegister  
South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register, No. 1, London 1836, then Adelaide 1837+

SARRecord  
South Australian Record, London

SARRegister  
South Australian Register, Adelaide. Successor to SAG&CRegister

SLSA  
State Library of South Australia, Adelaide

TPReview  
Town Planning Review, Liverpool

Conversions

one mile  
1610 metres or 1.61 kilometre

one metre  
3'-3\frac{1}{8}""

one foot  
305 mm

one chain  
20.1 metres or 66 feet

one link  
7.9"

£100 in 1835 was equivalent to £82,000 average earnings in today’s English currency.
Preface

Essays in this book trace the philosophical genesis of what became an international movement to create park lands for the well-being and recreation of city people. They summarise social distresses and responding theoretical discourse found in Britain around 1830, the profound influence of J.C. Loudon, and the resulting interpretation in practice for the town of Adelaide in South Australia, the case study. There a great park land surrounds a colonial town that was planned first in 1835 and realised to fit the physical environment in 1837. From that antipodean beginning I move on to outline influences leading to the creation of city and municipal parks, in Britain occasionally called people’s parks, in the last half of the nineteenth century. To illustrate longevity of the concept the focus is then upon the divergent examples of Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City concept as first revealed in 1898, and of Chandigarh in Punjab, India, as planned by Le Corbusier in 1951.

Yet when we ponder the City of Adelaide’s encircling park lands, it is not their rather ample size that seizes our curiosity but a series of teasing questions. Why forgo such a large area of real estate when the colonisation enterprise was almost wholly driven by commercial speculation? Why their inclusion in a plan for a distant English colonial town designed in the 1830s? Why surround the town? Why have successive generations of Adelaidians fought mightily to preserve that precious open land? And why do other people work to destroy it? Responding to the first three questions is a principal subject of these essays, correctly leaving the last two to others more qualified and less susceptible to frustrations too often mixed with anger.

Answers to the first three are found in a jumbled, 180-year historical record that needs be untangled, freed of prejudice and released from inhibitions. With the addition of considerably more reputable evidence than heretofore, this study reconfirms or questions or corrects previous historical studies. Moreover, it reveals that the creation of the city’s plan and its beloved gardens and parks was one result of English involvement in the enticements of Mediterranean antiquity. This was mixed with the antidote of a quaint Picturesque, with the perceived innocuous but stimulating revelations of nature, and with the enduring omnipotent processes of industrialisation. To this was added incredible reactions by all levels of society to the ‘fetid’ city industrialisation spawned. In other words, with the major intellectual,
technological and social episodes and conditions that were tested in the decades leading to the establishment of South Australia in 1834–1837.

At the practical enabling level of social action we need to remember that England was gingerly progressing toward casting off its monarchical personal state in favour of the ennobling idea of a public state. Public states were and are understood as being embodied in the public generally and collectively, where the people are empowered through suffrage. Most arguments about the manifold internal problems posed by choking cities revolved wildly around the evils of rural displacement and urban oppression. Change was hastened by power-wielding commercialists and industrialists who had risen out of middle societies and by the eloquent voices of trustworthy if idealistic reformers. They were persuasive in promoting the passage of the 1832 Reform Act. With it the lawful positions of crown and parliament were clarified and the undeniable role of voters enhanced. Thus it was the crown that acquiesced to capitalists promoting the speculative commercialisation of South Australia.

Prior to and immediately after passage of the Act, radicals, humanitarians, communitarians, nascent socialists, religious and political reformers, and the good hearted, looked for measures to ameliorate the dramatic human consequences of political and economic expediency and social and physical abuse induced by a dominant acquisitive mentality. Reducing the beleaguered population by emigration was one solution. Reformers in concert with utilitarian capitalists acting with the authority of their self-styled laissez-faire doctrine also conducted one course of colonisation. Their influence controlled the establishment of the commercial venture to settle South Australia and create its capital city. A resultant by-product was the institution in 1837 of public city parks. The many benefits of parks in urban situations then became a hallmark of municipal concern and political aggrandisement throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century as the municipal park movement expanded.

During that century’s last decade the Adelaide city plan helped define one of the most popular – if over-analysed and misunderstood – city planning ideas, the Garden City. Then in the mid-twentieth century Adelaide’s plan played a role in the design of the new city of Chandigarh in northern India prepared by a Swiss/French architect who practised under the name of Le Corbusier.

These essays further identify the enticing principles upon which the Adelaide city plan and park lands were founded. This research became necessary because relevant factual evidence about events before and in 1835,
1836 and 1837 had not been readily accepted by lazy minds content with myth, and because the park lands have been always under threat by the ignorant, vane and facile for political and commercial expediency. This is a pity, for Adelaide’s park lands comprised the first public park and the first public botanic garden in the world, both freely accessible to all comers. They were the first in the empire (and at home) to adequately respond to aspects of humanitarian reforms so earnestly advanced in the two decades immediately before 1835. In that year Adelaide’s street and park lands were first designed. Adelaide’s plan, we learn, was not another colonial street grid but a responsible re-examination of Italian Renaissance architecture and planning theory as understood in the waning throes of neoclassical Britain. Further, the very suggestion of a single founder of Adelaide is easily struck down. These and other thoughts, discoveries and conclusions are offered in the light of critical primary and secondary evidence. It is from what was said and done at the time that we find a logically connected and inspiring history.

The historical record, constantly in flux, is more than a reminder for it seeks to understand our composition: we are the sum total of all that has passed. Thus, when new evidence comes to hand the record must be examined, refreshed for scholarly and public scrutiny, corrected if obviously wrong. In the course of those evaluations there will be divergent views. These arise because inevitable changes instigated by human progress have altered our perceptions of all things including past events. The process then requires society to ignore or denigrate or question or accept that knowledge.

It is necessary to note here that I have been persuasively moved by an erudite and passionate essay by Professor Peter Howell entitled ‘The Quest for Truth in History’. It appeared in the November 1987 issue of the Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia. In 1986 Donald Langmead and I were unaware of his engagement in such a necessary search. But we knew him to be of a most objective mind and were pleased when he agreed to write a foreword to our pamphlet The Adelaide City Plan. We now know why.

There are timely values in the gist and gift of his resolute essay as revealed in the following passages:

… any writer who ventures to depart from the received wisdom on any historical matter has an obligation to all, but especially to the non-specialist reader, to note and explain the reasons for that departure …

Now [today] the media and the general public pay far more attention to parliamentarians than they do to books or learned journals. So, if historians are in earnest about the business of explaining a community to itself, they
ought to be prepared to help eliminate not only the errors their colleagues
fall into but also those bits of historical nonsense that are from time to time
propagated by politicians …

The business of explaining a community to itself: of course history is
not wholly or merely an internal and insular academic pursuit. To be of
value historical studies must serve a social function or they wither, leaving
culture un-nourished. Professor Howell continued the lesson: ‘In the quest
for historical truth, the correction of faulty analyses can never be deemed
pointless when it is focused, not on trifles, but on matters which have inhib-
ited our understanding.’
Acknowledgements

An academic cannot satisfactorily conduct research without help, not least that offered by the many writers and scholars worldwide whose published works and dissertations have been a source of knowledge and inspiration. They are identified in the references and notes. Additionally, it is with great joy that I acknowledge the generosity, encouragement or assistance of the following people and organisations.

My gratitude goes to three teachers: foremost the late Professor Donald Langmead introduced the subject to me when I guided his PhD dissertation to acceptance in 1983 at Flinders University and then counselled me; then to historian Professor Peter Howell who offered encouragement; and to historian Dr Brian Dickey who valiantly read major portions of the manuscript and offered sound advice. As well, the University of South Australia has supported me in retirement with the position of Adjunct Professor and by consistently providing research grants over the past 15 years.

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One of the great assets of historical research, or most research of any kind, is free access to material on the internet. Many organisations participate and two of the more useful to me were JSTOR and Gale Cengage for ‘British Newspapers 1600–1900’ and ‘19th Century British Library Newspapers’.

Marian Minson, Curator at the The Alexander Turnbull Library, the National Library of New Zealand, was most helpful in processing the Adelaide in Embryo watercolour, one of the most exciting yet informative British colonial paintings. The peripatetic Chris Bowe has been singularly encouraging.
For many years I have published essays on aspects of this study, and their content is now updated and linked. From the list of references herein these include Johnson/Langmead (1986), Johnson (2004–2005), Johnson (2006a and b, 2008), and Johnson (forthcoming) on J.C. Loudon. It is not unreasonable to again say thank you to those acknowledged therein and to the publishers and editors of the journals.

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Stephanie Johnston, Director of Wakefield Press, has been fully supportive since first approached a couple of years ago. Ryan Paine and Michael Deves have been valuable, patient and deliberative editors. Dr Kerry Round provided valuable assistance with the text.

Sonya, Karl and Adam … thank you for all that is worthwhile.
‘Part of South Australia ...’, a map reproduced as a fold out in nearly all promotional literature emanating from London 1834 to 1841. Over the years the names of sites were added to the original lithograph, Port Adelaide, Rapid Bay, and Adelaide among them. This 1838 version was published by Smith, Elder at Cornhill in London.
Part of South Australia from the 132° to 141° degree of EAST LONGITUDE.
HISTORICAL INCENTIVES
George I ascended the English throne in 1714. George IV died in 1830. The intervening 116 years of Hanoverian rule we now refer to as Georgian. During those years, momentous events graced and scared everyone – ordinary people were blessed or trapped. In addition, an over-arching cultural custom begun 300 years before was succumbing to inevitable change. Geographical expeditions discovered the world’s physical and human diversity, its exotic differences, and highlighted the limits and pallidness of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century modernisation of Augustan thought. A resulting artifice was coupled with imitations of Graeco-Roman artefacts of every sort. Disillusionment was aimed at the strictures of enlightenment, the destruction of rural and village habit, and the ever-growing dirtiness of cities and the disaffecting pains of urban life. In reaction to things ancient and artificial, the English began to place value on their own achievements, their own history, their own technical and creative accomplishments.

A parallel and more far-reaching continuum advanced within the political contests that informed those years. England was in the throes of a long-simmering, bloodless revolution that pitted the personal state in the form of an absolute monarchy against the idea of a public state, where the public generally and collectively are empowered. The gross capacity of commercialists and industrialists after around 1760 was the critical factor in promotions for political reforms that would again rework the balance that had been settled after the Restoration. With passage of the Reform Act of 1832 the roles of crown, of parliament, and of voters were, to a useful degree, clarified with a slight advantage to voters.

It was a political turn that could not be recalled, only varied. With the
Act a public state was closer to full realisation. Persuasive to all politicians and aristocrats was the American example after 1789, not that of the self-consuming French that followed in the same year, or the fearful events, at least to the crown, that took place in Paris in 1830. It was the English crown, therefore, that acquiesced to citified ‘capitalists’, as they wanted to be called. It was they who were insisting on a greater commercialisation of colonial settlements in the expanding empire and of the special one for South Australia.

The general cultural reaction of disillusioned Europeans during the decades around 1800 is now called ‘romanticism’, an un-useful but generally accepted term, particularly for the arts. For instance, at the height of their creativity Keats died in 1821, Shelley in 1822, Goethe (widely studied in the United Kingdom) and Walter Scott in 1832. Romanticism identified revolts against conventions, inflexibility and restraints inherent in classicism, indeed in the immutable of any sort. Its characteristics were an emphasis on sentiment and nature as opposed to depersonalised reason and jaded artificiality; a glorification of the individual against a ruled society as a whole; and an insistence on diversity against uniformity: change therefore was essential. Oddly, observers then and now often refer to one variant as ‘romantic classicism’.

The two most episodic, overriding and long-lasting events were the unrestrained economic, political and social power resulting from, one, centralised factory-based industry and, two, from an enlarged, more-efficient agricultural system. Changes in agricultural production encouraged the creation of large land holdings where improved methods were tested and applied.

A national parliament, composed almost entirely of country gentlemen and grandees, manoeuvred land enclosures to consolidate or increase their acreage. They began slowly around 1700 but between 1760 and 1844 when the process was stopped, 4000 enclosure acts were passed. Without practical options the majority of cottagers, farmers and villagers went to cities where they became labourers in dirty factories, or street vendors. As historian and literati Raymond Williams has informed in an essay nicely entitled ‘The Shadowed Country’:

As late as the 1830s, with the national population rapidly expanding, well over ninety percent of the demand for grain was met from home growing, and food production in general continued the long upward rise from the eighteenth-century improvements. Yet what happened in the villages to the labourers and the poor was, after 1815, as bad as anything in the long centuries of exploitation and degradation.
Many emigrated to North America. An increasing urban influx was catalytic to social inequities, to human degradation, yes, but also to one beneficial factor central to these essays: to a redefinition of nature. It was not a refocus of man’s dependence upon it, but a discovery of the aesthetic and social value of landscape, of clean air and gardens. To refurbish the healthful and spiritual person and the man-made physical urban environment was essential.

Therefore, some people chose to venerate nature, not as the laboratory for science but as something with subjective, visceral components and, dare we say, transcendental values. One distinguished form occurred in English art, literature, landscape and architecture: the Picturesque. In its pursuit, some people concentrated on history, not of the pseudo-ancients on Mediterranean shores but of the middle ages when, throughout Europe and the British Isles there were hundreds of independent states with subjected but necessary peasantry. Ann Radcliffe’s and Scott’s regional historical stories were exemplars. Some people turned to the exotic and unusual or pined for what had not been, others to mysticism and religious illusions. We can recall the examination of science as a human activity in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* of 1816. Indulgent and fanciful, the Picturesque has also been described as ‘the desire to find in nature a force powerful enough to resist the advance of an increasingly rationalistic and scientific civilisation’.³ The genteel fled England’s fetid, smelly, immoral, avaricious cities (as they put it), which they had created and, as if pursued by a plague (as they often were), rushed to clean, green and sylvan hinterlands and hid behind ha-has at country seats or rode with hounds. There, while furthering agricultural technology they fostered a romantic, sentimental, simplistic attitude toward country life, a splendid participatory theatre with no other purpose than hedonism. Ordinary people suffered in cities and on the land.

I

*It is more difficult to write of the technical beauties of the romantic revival than to explain those of the Augustan age; since with the romantics we are removed from the delights and splendours of architecture, and of the different textures of marble, stone, jewel and silk, to those of the garden and of the forest. It is more difficult to explain the growth of a flower than the growth of the Parthenon …*

— Edith Sitwell, 1958

The industrial revolution shattered everything but capitalists’ joy. A rapacious commercialised urban society quickly overwhelmed an aged, eighteenth-century country society. Tradition was strained, values tested, no
pattern emerged for replacement. Equilibrium was surely impossible. While the kind-hearted joined the Society for Bettering the Conditions of the Poor, as formed in 1797, other people, the majority of the English majority, were untroubled, completely absorbed by social rituals and within insulated cliques where style, manners and conformity were fashioned. They had become excited by the discovery of their history.

Excavations that began in 1748 at Pompeii and Herculaneum excited a fashion that became known as neo-classicism. In other countries neo-classicism became a symbol of nationalism, notably with Napoleon in Paris and Jefferson in Virginia. But another nationalism, centred on historical England, was rising in parallel with antique formalism. A thoroughly indulgent medievalism in societal taste soon followed, to be shared with things exotic and oriental, including landscapes. Later, England’s early Gothic architecture became the national, if not the natural, symbol for a correct religiosity.

Another catalytic parallel was a Rousseauan worship of nature. It was not the nature sought in an idealistic man-centred reality, but as found in the natural world. To be with nature in an undeveloped countryside would cleanse the human mind and diminish physical woes. (There was, people said, ‘innocence in the country, vice in the city’.) This was nicely supported by a burst of scientific activity directed to understanding nature’s world using Baconian methodology and, oddly, by a revived and strident religiosity that attempted to counter – better, to thwart – the seemingly unstoppable spread of materialism and the rise of wayward technology. Added to the mix was the worry of increasing dissenting Protestants and nonconformists as social and political movements. The eighteenth century was an age of unsettling contradictions that citizens of the nineteenth century tried to resolve in practical ways, often with humanistic resolve. The obvious problems of urban living were atop nearly all agendas.

Further and under the impress of scientific philosophy at the tail end of the misnamed Age of Reason, the intelligentsia studied the natural worlds, the discipline of botany a favourite. Expeditions of discovery, including to Australia, were financed for both economic and scientific purposes: James Cook (with Joseph Banks) and George Vancouver travelled north and south on Pacific waters in 1768–1795; James Macrae to South American lands in 1814–1824; John Reeves to China in 1812, where he died in 1831; and so on. And Napoleon showed Europeans the wonders of Egypt. The Horticultural Society of London was established in 1804. To house live specimens, horticultural conservatories of glass and iron first appeared around 1815. For the increasingly literate middle class, the first horticultural periodical The
Botanical Magazine was started in 1787; Curtis's Botanical Magazine began in 1810 (to 1880), and the Botanist began in 1838 (to 1840). After anonymously publishing The Green-House Companion in 1824, the prolific writer and garden designer John Claudius Loudon began The Gardener's Magazine in 1826.7

The movement away from Georgian prescriptions, from ancient and sacred authority so in step with the inhibitions of rationalism at the end of the eighteenth century, is best revealed by the great romantic artists. In music Gluck, Bach's children and Haydn were out. In and at their creative peak were Paganini, Chopin, van Beethoven and Mendelssohn. After a visit to Fingal's Cave on Staffa Island in the Hebrides, Mendelssohn composed Hebrides Overture during 1829 and 1830. Thomas Gainsborough painted an unspoiled beauty in naturalistic landscapes as well as stiffly posed aristocrats. He was followed by J.M.W. Turner, who painted amazing coloured impressions of the land, Fingal's Cave, and the sea that was Britain. Other landscapists painted rustic rural scenes less imaginatively but more poignantly. That included the admired, placid and untroubled rural world portrayed by John Constable who, in 1821, remarked:

The sound of water escaping from mill-dams, etc., willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork … those scenes made me a painter and I am grateful.8

Nature's wilderness was the earth's textbook. But nature also became a refuge, a place of contemplation and inspiration with sublimine power to transform emotions and stimulate thought. The poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, and William Wordsworth were hymns to nature, romantic idylls captured. Their inspiration was the mystical life-giving landscape.9

The places that captured the eye of romantic artists were ocean shores and seascapes and underdeveloped or agricultural land that consisted of openly accessible fields worked by relatively independent farmers. Yet, after a flood of parliamentary enclosure acts, traditional common fields and farms were usurped by gentry or demanded by landlords and fenced off. Of course those larger farms became more efficient producers. With the loss of their precious independence, farmers necessarily became tenants or seasonal labourers or shifted to cities. Enclosures altered the countryside of the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. In some instances, villages taken by the landed aristocracy were destroyed or appropriated into expanded private manorial parks and hunting moors and forests.10
While groups of alms houses and a number of ideal village houses were actually built for farm labourers before and after 1800, most were within estate properties, some in their villages. Beginning around 1790 learned men of taste began producing books containing ideas for buildings thought necessary for the gentleman farmer. Many, perhaps 45 per cent, were devoted to housing a manor’s cottagers and labourers: ‘improving the condition of the peasantry’ or ‘the labourer and his cottage’ or ‘designs for gate lodges, game-keepers cottages’, and so forth. All were based on ‘the moral and aesthetic advantages’ of applying ‘gracefulness of form and proportion’, of course.¹¹

Those land acquisitions were for the economic, intellectual or social pleasure of the very wealthy. They were yet another cause for a long-simmering hatred of privilege, inelastic traditionalism and cosy politics. People on the street or in hovels nurturing children or in factories or tilling soil were more interested in stories about the Americas, or the American and French revolutions that held the promise of political and social equity, or in Napoleon’s wars, his defeats by Wellington’s coalition at Salamanca in 1812 and Waterloo in 1815 and his death (recorded in Adelaide¹²), or in rumours about the successful 1830 July Revolution in Paris. Or they were participants in – or spectators to – an increasingly well-read middle class and to the rapid growth of non-conforming Protestant church membership. It was they who, for the most part, were the most concerned and active reformers.

The ‘million pound’ Church Building Act of 1818 was easily passed by those Anglicans threatened by the ‘peril of “democracy” among the lower orders’ and ‘the enormous spread of nonconformity’.¹³ Using their own funds, other denominations were building anywhere at any time. As a function of the state the Church of England required an act of parliament to construct new facilities. With an end to the Napoleonic campaigns in 1815, war monies were redirected, some to fund something of a construction boom. All in all, the 1820s and 1830s was a ‘tense period’ for English religion as it struggled for significance.¹⁴ And in 1832 religious and intellectual people were tested persuasively by A.N.W. Pugin, the Tractarians, and then Ruskin. Pugin’s influence was such that, after the destruction of the houses of parliament by fire in 1834, decoration of the entirely new buildings by architect Charles Barry were derived by him from the stock of Gothic religious buildings, not from Graeco-Roman sources as had been for too long.

Very testing, yes, but more practically urgent for the general population was the correction of cruel city environments: horse manure fouling streets, deadly open or broken sewers and stinking air, overcrowded hovels, bastard children, drunkenness, high crime rates, disease and pestilence. Or there was
a family's need for the extra income of a child labourer working in a filthy factory, or a family's wish for proper sanitation and sufficient domestic space, for safe and humane working conditions, and so on. Charles Dickens wrote with literate clarity about the backstreets in novels such as *Oliver Twist* of 1837–1839 and later in *Bleak House* of 1851. In 1800 there were 4000 workhouses and poorhouses in England.

Quite simply, the vast majority of rural and urban people did not give a damn for the Society of Dilettanti or cheer Lord Elgin's pursuit of Greek sculpture or salute fops with Claude glass in hand or celebrate oriental art and landscape and the Regent's aesthetic extravaganza at Brighton, or the Regency style of dress that imitated Napoleon's *empire* style. There was little relief for the plight of middle- and low-income earners. But laughing at the satirical drawings and colourful prints of artists such as George Cruikshank, Rowlandson, and James Gillray helped. Cruickshank was renowned for his caricatures of ordinary people and life in London, his hometown, and satirically delineated Tories, Whigs and radicals impartially. A crusader who once attacked the aristocracy, in midlife he developed moralistic themes and supported temperance. He produced illustrations for books, noteworthy among them for his close friend Charles Dickens in *Sketches by Boz* of 1836 and *Oliver Twist* of 1837.

The overpopulated and packed dirtiness of cities in the eighteenth century was a bonanza for disease. ‘Epidemics were so common’ in cities, ‘life so precarious, it was often said that there was no third generation of true Londoners’. Cholera claimed thousands of lives in 1831 and about 3000 Londoners in 1832. One researcher found that, ‘Not until the beginning of the 20th century did Europe’s urban populations finally become self-sustaining: before then, constant immigration of healthy peasants from the countryside was necessary to make up for the constant deaths of city dwellers from crowd diseases’. The word ‘slum’ was first used in the 1820s, from ‘slump’, meaning mire. It referred to filthy streets but very soon to poor-quality housing in ramshackle urban environments.

With Napoleon's defeat in 1815 an economic depression set in and lingered into the 1830s. Unemployment and discontent naturally affected attitudes about all things, including emigration. Gross inequalities and alienation within England's structured yet dangerously imbalanced society led to mayhem, riots and, looking to France, talk of revolution. When the first significant reform bill was defeated by the House of Lords in October 1831, riots followed, those in Bristol the more deadly. Not even Wellington was safe. A ‘mob surrounded’ his house, ‘they broke Windows’, he said, and
stones littered rooms. And in that month there began the most serious cholera epidemic.

The years 1830–1832 were indeed filled with provocative tests that became powerful incentives to emigrate o’er the seas. Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine editorially commented:

South Australia is, at present, in the ascendant to what is to us a most interesting class of emigrants – respectable labourers and artisans, and intelligent and educated small capitalists, aspiring to improve their condition, or to keep their place in society, after the struggle has become hopeless in the Old World.

The political response by moralising Tories was, as noted earlier, for parliament to authorise the construction of more Anglican churches. By Whigs it was to ensure passage of the new or third reform bill in 1832. When the bill became an act that year it led to a fatally weakened old aristocratic order that itself had earlier set aside the older chiefdom of kleptocracy by tribute. The Act was deceptively modest. Of England’s 13 million people, the electorate was only 653,000. The Act enlarged that number by about 50 per cent or so, to just less than one million. And of course women were again excluded. Some rural seats were given to a few towns or to populous counties, but the new ballot favoured prosperous urbanites. In all, it was a forward step toward a stronger parliamentary democracy. As political power slowly passed from country to city, over the decades there ensued an equally slow process of government and public intervention into alleviating social problems of city and rural people. Attempts at alleviation became more frequent and were one measure of a loosened conservative power base and of the progress of liberal thought in an increasingly educated society. Still, the disenchanted or adventurous fled to colonies: 1000 a week in the 1830s, 1000 a day in the late 1840s. And that was exactly what the establishment had planned: for them a tax burden relieved. For the minority with cash to spare there was the potential – in fact the likelihood – of profits in land speculation at faraway colonies.
Foundations

II

[Foundation plans to colonise South Australia] were made ... and implemented by men bred in opposition and inspired by the moralistic convictions of a frustrated English minority. Their stubborn determination has been the enduring legacy of the pioneer generation.

– Douglas Pike, 1967

A tempting epigraph but not wholly correct. Emigration had been a topic of considerable attention with employers and the ranks of their obedient politicians, especially after the American War of Independence. With the Industrial Revolution well underway Thomas Robert Malthus’s Essay on the Principle of Population of 1798 and 1803 invigorated debate: ‘the power of the population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to provide subsistence for man’. Of course: populations must live within their resource base. He urged voluntary checks such as birth control, abstinence or delayed marriage while involuntary checks were the scourges of war, famine and disease. But he also thought one corrective was emigration, insufficient unless in vast numbers. The debate was rationalised during the 1820s in studies about conditions of the destitute and the need for and effects of a series of poor laws.

The learned and literate searched for practical ideas that would help understand and perhaps lead to management of the increasingly unsavoury conditions, rural and urban, that might lead to equilibrium. Their search would examine public health, commerce, capitalism, horticulture, political inaction and municipal administration, poor law, housing, and all else including philanthropy and the exclusiveness of religion.21 An unsullied Australia was looking better and better.

Parliamentary reports released in 1826 and 1827 are relevant. They found an ‘excess’, a ‘redundant’ population in England, an abundance of ‘unoccupied tracts of land’ in Australia, an ‘advantage’ to removing superfluous people to new colonies, and the rejection of forced migration in favour of volunteers. Other reports provided further evidence supporting emigration as a neat remedy. One drew a ‘Distinction between Emigration and Colonisation. – 1st, Without capital; – 2nd, With capital’. Other than through poor rates it seemed the only salvation for the ‘distressed state of the working class’ was to send those without capital over the horizon to antipodes.22

Historian Betty Wood put it crudely if not wholly accurately, at least for South Australia: ‘colonies offered England the opportunity to rid itself of the unemployed and unemployable – those who were a drain on, and a potential social and moral threat to, society as a whole’.23
The idea of settling migrants on the ‘waste lands’ of southern Australia was supported by Edward Gibbon Wakefield and Robert Gouger when they collaboratively released a pamphlet entitled *Sketch of a Proposal for Colonising Australasia etc*, and then their serial pamphlets and essays entitled *A Letter from Sydney*. Soon Gouger formed the South Australian Land Company but it failed to attract sufficient support from wealthy friends. This provoked Wakefield into writing *England and America* in two volumes where he set out ‘the true reasons’ for failed colonies and then ‘to expound the principles of systematic colonisation’. The book was widely read and led to negotiations and operations to inaugurate a colony of an undefined South Australia.\(^{24}\)

John Stephens, Methodist, reformer, abolitionist, London author (later an emigrant to South Australia and owner of Adelaide’s first newspaper, *The Register*), recorded a widely held view, especially among an anxious middle class: ‘The population of Great Britain and Ireland is annually increasing, while the means of providing for its wants are at a stand-still … Farmers increase in number but acres are not multiplied … more and still more mouths are requiring to be fed’.\(^{25}\)

William Smillie, London solicitor (and later colonial Advocate-GENERAL in Adelaide), questioned Malthus’s pessimistic evaluation of emigration. Smillie believed in the value of careful planning,

> either for an effectual relief to the mother country from the pressure of superabundant population, or for the establishment of a happy and prosperous Colonial community.

The prevalence of distress among the labouring classes of late years, and the alarming increase of pauperism in the country, led … to a view to remedial measures by extensive Emigration. [A]s regards the mother country, it [systematic colonisation] seeks to provide the most effectual check on redundant population, and Colonies, it seeks to promote the settlement, not of promiscuous adventurers, but persons of such classes …\(^{26}\)

When Irish-born Robert Torrens, an unorthodox political economist, publisher, self-publicist and MP, spoke to a motion in the House of Commons relevant to the select committee on emigration he was ‘prepared to show’, as had earlier reports, ‘that emigration would cost less than maintaining paupers in their parishes at home, and would thus prove a measure of permanent economy and retrenchment’.\(^{27}\) It was a reiteration of his position put back in 1817 concerning rates to support Irish poor and a comment rather typical of utilitarians. After 1835 Torrens acted as chief manager of the South Australian colonisation experiment.
Migration from Ireland and Scotland, from within England and from the Continent to an industrialising England was of such a magnitude that, as we’ve discovered, an economical response was urgent. But responses twisted virtue, and humanitarian issues were set aside, at least initially. Exporting only criminals had proven insufficient. The dumping grounds of the American colonies were no longer available. So Sydney, New South Wales (in 1788), Hobart and Launceston, Tasmania (in 1803), and Brisbane, Queensland (in 1824) were established as convict enclaves or, in polite terms, penal colonies. In contrast, Perth, Western Australia (in 1824), Adelaide (in 1836), and Melbourne and Geelong, Victoria (less in 1835 and more in 1837) were founded as commercial settlements.28

The prison hulks of unseaworthy ships moored on River Thames and off Brighton on the south coast were unspeakably horrific and practically limited, too temporary. Malthusian theory gained acceptance; now it was necessary to stimulate cottagers, paupers and labourers to volunteer as emigrants. Some might say, as Lewis Mumford has, that through exploration and colonisation the ‘primitive impulses’ of Western man found a ‘fresh outlet’, that those

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\text{with a little resolution [could] carve out a new kind of life for themselves at the edge of the wilderness. There the fundamental primitive types, long sublimated in the city, the hunter, the fisherman, the miner, the quarryman, the herdsman and the peasant, once more were dominant.29}
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In exploration endeavours perhaps. But that romantic primeval view of the human spirit darkens when the evidence about emigration points too often to banishment (of some) and escape (by others) as the urgent motives, with adventure a distant third.

Participants in this maelstrom of words, claims and judgements were gentry, bankers, entrepreneurs and rentiers. In early 1831 they advanced the idea that colonisation could be more efficiently managed by commercial developers through a land company. Debate was led by MPs Daniel Wakefield, Robert Torrens, William Whitmore, George Grote, Matthew Davenport Hill, and almost clandestinely through Edward Wakefield, who nonetheless grudgingly agreed. But as historian Julie-Ann Ellis found,

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\text{[the overriding] ambition of the small group … was to own the land themselves, and resell it at a profit to colonists or speculators. It was not part of their intention that there be public land … Despite the cautious redrafting [of the May 1831 land company document], the emphasis was on speculation for private profit, not on public administration of public lands.30}
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Their commercial plan was formally rejected in 1832 by the Colonial Office, which saw it as decidedly subversive, saying that only the crown could exercise such a responsibility. It was also rejected by radicals in public debates and through pamphlets. The promoters were again ‘driven to redraft their plans. They accordingly offered to undertake the work as an experiment in colonisation technique, managed by a commission, but under government [not crown] control’. This was much as Wakefield had proposed. ‘Systematic colonisation’, as they called it (‘self-supporting colonisation’ as Torrens more correctly called it), was pursued. The term ‘self-supporting’ referred to the need to sell land in South Australia for cash. Proceeds would fund the passage of selected volunteer emigrants.

The intense attention to emigration issues attracted equally intense comment. Some of it found space in the press. The following letter to the London Times is probably typical:

For some time past, it has been the plan of certain individuals to get up schemes for colonising certain districts of the globe, not with any intention of conferring benefit on those who are to become the agents of their designs, or of relieving the community of which they are members from the pressure of increasing population, but solely with a view to their own individual profit, or for the aggrandisement of their own selfish ends, and the extension of their sinister popularity …

‘South Australia’ is the first favourite in the race of avarice, speculation, and ignorance.

Negative, yes, but not wholly wrong.

Aspects of the plan were also queried, in fact challenged, by religious dissenters, by radicals and reformers who gave the debate greater breadth and philosophical substance. When it was agreed that the composition of the commission would include political and religious reformers the new parliament enacted a statute in 1834 authorising the establishment of a new colony. Letters Patent, the parliamentary instrument described as ‘the legal basis for the establishment of the colony’, effectively the South Australian charter, were issued on 19 February 1836. That was contemporary with William IV’s announcement that the new town would be named Adelaide. Interestingly, this was three months after the Adelaide city plan was posted for public viewing in London and two months after sales of town acres had begun at No. 6 Adelphi Terrace, the commissioners’ headquarters.

Yet multitudes throughout the nation, still trapped in their home country as demeaningly superfluous, were in a constant struggle just to survive.
Social and environmental improvement kept slipping off agendas, despite the increasing body of newly literate middle class blending with the pragmatic tendency of liberalism, to promote – and now and then gain – moderate social reforms.34

One reform and the subject of these essays was understood as but one amelioration. It advocated public city parks accessible for ordinary peoples’ pleasure, open skyward for exercise along tree-shaded walks and taking fresh air away from urban stinks. The authority to create such parks, however, had to be transferred from an apathetic crown and uninterested aristocracy to locally elected municipal administration where the finance of public services would be assumed through taxes: by the people, for the people. City walks, park lands, and other municipal reforms infused plans for and practices in Adelaide. The English-speaking world took note and followed.

III

In cities beside Mediterranean waters the traditional public gathering space was open to the sky as a marketplace, an agora, a forum, plaza, piazza or square. Those urban spaces became one focus of and an element in Western city planning, particularly after the fifteenth century and, for purposes herein, around 1830. Relevant to our time period, in Ireland and since around 1580 ‘town parks’ were fields lying nearby a small town or village. Portions were usually let to locals to till or for pasture. The influence of those parks on later events is not yet known. But the general use of English commons with accommodations similar to Ireland’s town parks was also a historical right, although often appropriated (through one means or another) by gentry for private use.

Landscape as a formal idea has had multiple values. As geographer J.M. Houston has informed us:

The concept of ‘landscape’ is of course both concrete and elusive. In its Anglo-Saxon origin, landskift referred to some unit of area that was a natural entity, such as the lands of a tribe or of a feudal lord. It was only at the end of the sixteenth century that, through the influence of Dutch landscape painters, the word also acquired the idea of a unit of visual perceptions, of a view.35

‘A unit of visual perceptions’? Why did Houston shy away from the words ‘aesthetic value’? Anyway, even during Constable’s time the idea was probably without practical virtue.

Land called ‘parks’ was the property of royalty and nobility. Between
1260 and the mid-nineteenth century an English park (or parc) was defined as an enclosed tract of land held by royal grant. (A forest or chase was not fenced.) Often called estates, the general public were allowed access only occasionally, if at all. In north Oxfordshire, for example, there were parks called Kiddington, Rousham and Blenheim. In London, as the population increased, common practice had allowed a privileged few access to the royal hunting park of Kensington Gardens and to St James's, Green and Hyde parks, but commoners only now and then.

It became evident in France (in the 1600s) and England (in the 1700s) that the creation of urban gardens within private town squares offered enticing commercial advantages in housing speculation. West London’s squares were financed by – and on the estates of – the nobility and aristocracy (Figure 1.1). Town squares were not equilateral squares but nearly always rectangles.

Figure 1.1 ‘Grovenor Square’, print, drawn and engraved by Sutton Nicholls, 1754. Farm land beyond. Richard Grosvenor, Duke of Westminster, obtained a licence to develop the property in 1710, work commenced in 1721 and it became one of London’s most fashionable residential addresses; some houses had to be rebuilt after about 80 years and nearly all were demolished during the twentieth century, replaced with imitation Georgian-facade flats or hotels or embassies; the central garden was greatly modified and opened to the public around 1900 and is now managed by The Royal Parks. From Gutkind (1971).