

Caversham Working Paper, 1998-4

THE LOCAL AND THE NATIONAL; AN OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION FOR CAVERSHAM

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Our work on the occupational structure of Caversham and New Zealand is essential if we are to identify the rates, pathways, and structures of social movement and upwards and downwards mobility. Only by doing this is it possible to map the stratification order and assess the importance of social class in determining opportunity and fostering equality. Because of the destruction of the Census enumerators' returns, systematically done in New Zealand since the first Census, it is impossible to construct a national profile of New Zealand's occupational structure. It would also be extremely difficult and labour intensive to construct Dunedin's occupational structure from between five and (later) four electoral rolls.

Advances in electronic technology may make such an approach feasible at some point but until then the only way in which to determine the rates and pathways of social movement is to focus on a specific community. Caversham was chosen as the study area because the area contained within the Borough represented, as best we could tell before starting work, an approximate microrocosm of the larger urban occupational and class structure. In this respect Caversham was unique. Some sub-areas were exclusively residential and well-to-do by New Zealand standards whereas others were dominated by large and dirty industries and were relatively poor by comparison. What was assumed has to be tested, of course, and so we have done considerable work on constructing from the Census occupational tables a national occupational structure so that we can always identify the extent to which Caversham was typical of urban New Zealand. Because local case studies are the only viable way of identifying occupational structure and mobility in New Zealand, and assumptions about both are central to our sense of ourselves as a nation, this discussion of the relationship between local and national structures will also provide others with a new and more advanced starting point for their work.

Two problems emerge in constructing an occupational classification for a particular community in early-twentieth century New Zealand.

¹This chapter includes 'An Occupational Classification for Caversham', Caversham Working Paper, Occupational Classification III.

First, and simplest, we need to use different sources to construct a profile of the local occupational structure than were available to construct the national one. Second, and more complex, the national urban-occupational structure, while of fundamental importance, constitutes a highly-general macro-level portrait. It does not describe the occupational structure of rural or small-town New Zealand, it ignores the significance of regional variations, and it pays little attention to the relationship between the regional and national occupational structures and the larger international division of labour. Geographers have made considerable progress in constructing a typology of different social structures in the different regions and the principal changes in the New Zealand economy over this period are well understood. Caversham, however, was an industrial suburb of an industrial city in a region and a nation which depended primarily upon the export of a narrow range of primary products to Britain. Caversham's major industries - the railway workshops, Shiels' brickworks, Lamberts' pipe-manufactory, McKinlay's boot factory, the New Zealand Wax Vesta Company and Methven's engineering works - operated within regional markets although the railway workshops were part of a national system. Most workshops and businesses, however, operated within a local or at most a Dunedin market.

The extent to which Caversham can be thought of as urban as against small-town, however, is not entirely clear. Some scholars have concluded, indeed, that New Zealanders shaped the main towns - the only ones with any claim to be urban in 1901 - to be like small towns. Each main town, and Dunedin is no exception, consisted of a series of independent communities, often endowed with the legal status of boroughs, clustered around the central city. Caversham was an independent borough until the ratepayers voted to amalgamate with the city, which happened in 1905 (largely because they could not afford to pay for a modern electric tramway system). Over the next 20 years, however, Caversham remained in many respects a small town on the edge of the city. Until 1917 the use of the ward system in municipal politics encouraged this survival.² The problem of having to use different sources converges directly with the difficulty of locating a small-town stratification order within a national one - the local large employers/higher managers, men of substance and status, were not necessarily of sufficient status and

²K.C. McDonald, *City of Dunedin: A Century of Civic Enterprise*, Dunedin, 1965, p. 301.

substance to be considered part of a national stratum of large employers higher managers. This also has implications for the small employers.

As David Pearson pointed out, 'small-town capitalism' generated its own distinctive inflections on the urban stratification system.³ The small town might be in a rural area or, as with Johnsonville or Caversham, 'of the city but not strictly speaking within it'.⁴ In such communities the local elite, measured in terms of property ownership, was likely to consist of small shopkeepers, builders, self-employed/small employers in petty production, and farmers. Their incomes, however, may not have been greater than those of skilled workers.⁵ The question of scale is intimately related to this difficulty. The geographical smallness of the small town or borough/suburb, and its relatively small population, meant that the stratification order was embedded within a community characterised by relatively dense personal and even kin links. Mr Grimmett, journeyman carpenter for most of our period, then self-employed builder, had as a brother-in-law one of the city's largest and wealthiest auctioneers. The two families met each week. Grimmett's brothers were also involved either in skilled trades or small businesses. The Ingrams provide another example. One brother ran a small factory, inherited from his father, while another was a boilermaker and later union secretary. Caversham, in short, typified the small-town and suburban patterns which were so pervasive in New Zealand and modified even the meaning of urban. As Pearson concluded, 'The intimacy of personal relationships in such small scale settings ... may decree that class deference is minimal. Indeed, it may be totally submerged ...'. In Caversham indeed, this was pretty much the case although that did not preclude political or industrial organisation on the basis of class.⁶

³See 'Small-town Capitalism and Stratification', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 14 (Oct. 1980), pp. 107-31; *Johnsonville: Continuity and Change in a New Zealand Township*, Sydney, 1980; and with David C. Thorns, *Eclipse of Equality: Stratification in New Zealand*, Sydney, 1983, especially ch. 9. Pearson borrows the term 'small-town capitalism' from an article by E. Batstone, in M. Bulmer (ed.), *Working Class Images of Society*, London, 1975.

⁴'Small-Town Capitalism', p. 110.

⁵'Small-Town Capitalism', p. 120 (Pearson's figures on income are derived from the 1926 Census, the first analysis of income available for New Zealand).

⁶'Small-Town Capitalism', p. 130 and Olssen, *Building the New World: work, politics and society in Caversham, 1880s-1920s*, Auckland, 1995, ch. 10.

Before looking more carefully at the distinctive features of small-town/suburban occupational structure it is worth commenting on the meaning of urban. In 1900 only about 29 per cent of New Zealanders lived in one of the four-main towns and there were no other towns larger than 8,000 people. Even by 1926 only 10 cities or boroughs had populations greater than 5,000 people and some 30 per cent of the population lived in the four-main towns. By international standards, however, these towns were fairly small and the population densities were low. Most people lived in single-unit houses which occupied at least a small section and, at least by 1916, almost half the population owned their own houses. Denis Glover's quip that Auckland was a series of villages which shared a common sewerage system might well be true of all the main towns. As Peter Gibbons remarked, when New Zealanders settled in the main towns they 'often preferred to organise city life after the pattern and values of the town'.⁷ Not only that but few workers were employed in establishments with a labour force of more than ten. Caversham was a partial exception to this because the railway workshops employed around 400 in 1901 and 750 in 1926 while other establishments, both in Caversham and just outside the borders, employed between 20 and 40 men during most of the year. The substantial size of many local industries did not, however, alter the fact that the majority of establishments employed less than ten, self-employment was very common, and the community had many of the characteristics of a small town.⁸ At this conceptual level the problem is larger, of course, for it entails using a taxonomy of occupations largely invented in industrial Britain, where many cities were substantially larger than Dunedin or Auckland, to capture the stratification system in New Zealand.

I

Before we discuss the importance of scale it will be helpful to identify the problems which emerge from using electoral rolls and directories to reconstruct the occupational structure of Caversham

⁷'The Climate of Opinion', in W.H. Oliver and B.R. Williams (eds), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington and Oxford, 1981, p. 21?

⁸As my earlier work on social class in urban New Zealand has often been cited to substantiate the importance of distinctively urban forms of social inequality - e.g. Pearson and Thorns, *Eclipse of Equality*, p. 226 - it should be noted that this characterisation of Caversham entails a qualification, not an abandonment, of the earlier view.

whereas the Census provides the basic data for constructing a national occupational structure. The reason for doing this is simple enough. The problems create difficulties in comparing the occupational structures of New Zealand and Caversham, but many of those difficulties go to the heart of the conceptual problem - the impact of scale on the occupational structure and the stratification order. Some difficulties flow directly from the fact that the Census provides the basis for the urban New Zealand Occupational Structure whereas the electoral rolls, cross-checked against *John Stone's Directory for Otago and Southland*,⁹ an annual publication throughout our period, provide the basis for Caversham's. The main problems are: first, unlike the Census the electoral rolls provide no information on anyone younger than 21 years old, the voting age. For the purposes of this comparison, therefore, the national data have been adjusted by removing all identifiable juveniles, although most children left school by the time that they were 14 years old and entered the labour market. Apprentices, doubtless some assistants, and most relatives assisting cannot be identified from the electoral rolls or the directories. Assuming that these groups in Caversham had the same demographic characteristics as the national groups the problem is less significant than might be expected. If we remove from the national figures apprentices and relatives assisting, predominantly teenagers in the rural sector, the occupational structure derived from the Census is comparable with that derived from electoral rolls. The issue of assistants is more refractory. According to the Census, however, most assistants were adults and so the degree of divergence is negligible.

The second major difficulty in achieving comparability impacts mainly on constructing an occupational classification for women in Caversham. Again, the Census counted everyone gainfully employed but the electoral rolls, by contrast, only included adults. To make matters worse, however, between 1902 and 1905 the local Registrar of Electors, working to instructions from head office, stopped describing women by their occupations and used instead their

* Those interested in a fuller discussion of some of the larger generalisations in this paper should see Caversham Project Working Paper 2, 'Towards An Occupational Classification For Urban New Zealand, 1901- 1926.'

⁹For a history of John Stone and his Directory see Michael Hamblyn, 'John Stone, Champion of the Provinces and his New Zealand Directories, 1884-1954', Paper presented to the History of the Book in New Zealand Conference, Auckland, 1995; and 'KEI HEA TI WHARE? TITIRO KIROTO: JOHN STONE'S NEW ZEALAND DIRECTORIES, PART ONE: 1884-1897, *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand: Bulletin*, vol. 19, 1, 1995, pp.15-31.

marital status except for the handful of women who had clearly embarked on careers instead of marrying. Nor were the Directories useful in remedying this situation. Only heads of household were listed and the woman's husband was assigned that status if present (despite that over 20 per cent of households were usually headed by women). Except for those who ran businesses, roughly 70 per cent of all women listed as heads of household, no occupation was given. The task of constructing an occupational structure for women in Caversham thus poses formidable problems. We need to bear in mind, of course, that the national pattern certainly existed locally and a majority of gainfully-employed women left the labour market when they married. This was widely considered normal and was a European custom.¹⁰ Widows and deserted wives, and wives whose husbands were ill or injured, or under employed/unemployed because of economic conditions, often had to work. Although some of these women found employment in the Wax Vesta factory, and we can identify them from the company's wage books, the great majority took a number of jobs, many of them done within their own homes. Because the local labour market was deeply gendered, however, women in paid work or working for money constitute a distinct analytical problem.¹¹

In some respects, fortunately, the local sources are superior to the Census (and after Caversham's amalgamation with Dunedin in 1905 the Census gave no information for the old borough, including Caversham as part of Dunedin). As indicated earlier, the Census completely obscures the distinction between large and small employers, whereas the directories allow the distinction to be identified in Caversham. We have assumed that most large employers registered their business as a company. The directories included that information and provided a crucial criterion for assigning men. Besides, our intimate knowledge of Caversham and Dunedin provides considerable help in identifying the large employers and higher managers. Many of those in Caversham who have been coded small employer/self employed (04), however,

¹⁰ Other sources will be used in an attempt to reduce the size of this problem, especially the membership records of the International Order of Oddfellows and the wage books of certain firms. Until that has been systematically undertaken, however, it will be impossible to know how difficult the record-linking enterprise will prove to be. Many members of the Order will be younger than 21 years old, which will compound the well-known problems of record linking.

¹¹For an excellent study of women's quest for income, based on the case books of the Charitable Aid Board, see Marion Horan,

owned and managed quite substantial small businesses. The self employed (i.e. working on own account), reported separately in the Census, can not be identified in the local sources and the local evidence suggests that the Census category was probably more elastic than was acknowledged.¹² In the English Census, of course, anyone employing less than ten people was reported as self employed and on that basis, even in 1926, there would have been relatively few employers in New Zealand. Unfortunately the New Zealand Census only provides 'if on own account, but not employing others for wages and salary', as a limited definition of the category 'self employed'.¹³

Our inability to make comparable discriminations from the Census and the local sources means that many small businessmen/women have been included in the large-employer/higher managerial (01) class for New Zealand; in Caversham, by contrast, the (01) class has not been inflated. As a result, however, the national totals for self-employed/small employers (04) are smaller than they would have been had those tables been constructed from electoral rolls and directories. The problem of classifying agents, discussed earlier, exaggerates this distortion between the national and the local. The Census aggregated all agents, as did the English Census, ignoring the fact that the occupational status of any agent was largely a function of the capital intensiveness of the economic sector in which they worked. Because it was impossible to disaggregate the Census category 'agents' we assigned them all to large employer/higher managerial. In Caversham, by contrast, the 'Trades Directory' allowed us to discriminate more effectively. Insurance agents, for example, worked in a sector dominated by large national or imperial firms and were clearly employees (even if they worked on some form of commission basis). Agents in other sectors, such as land and estate agents, were usually self-employed or, at most in this period, small employers.

That said, however, we must confront a more complex problem and one more usually ignored than confronted. Most occupational or labour-force analyses proceed at the national level and ignore the way in which locality might complicate the results. The clearest

¹²In some occupations, such as building, it was relatively easy to set up on one's own account and men did so depending on the state of the local economy; see *Building the New World*, pp.

¹³'Industrial and Occupational Distribution - Introductory Notes', *Census, 1926*, Wellington, 1927, vol. IX, p.1.

example of this problem relates to large employers/higher managers. At issue is the complex linguistic puzzle: how large is large and how high is high? Any New Zealander who has been asked to admire the grandeur of Mont Real - Montreal - will recognise the problem, for that mighty peak soars a mere 700 feet above sea level, and the sea is 700 miles away! By our standards it is not worthy of the name mountain and would scarcely be considered high. It seems quite clear, however, that the distinction between the owner of a registered company and someone in a partnership, whether with kin or a friend, might have had some local relevance but would not necessarily have seemed significant viewed from the head office of Wright Stephenson or Dalgety's. Some of the local partnerships, such as that between the Shiel brothers, brickmakers and quarry owners, probably involved more capital and employed more men than some of the registered companies. One cannot be certain.

Another major problem in comparing a national occupational structure derived from the Census and a local one from electoral rolls has been the identification of the boundary between small employers/self employed and skilled workers. As explained, the occupational-status tables allowed an effective reclassification of the occupations detailed in the Census but the electoral rolls provided no such assistance. People sometimes inflated their occupational status on electoral rolls (as they did on other official forms, such as marriage certificates), and many major employers, by contrast, described themselves by their craft or trade rather than their status. For instance, the Shiel brothers described themselves as brickmakers and the Shacklock boys, who took over the firm in 190?, continued to describe themselves as clerk, engineer, and iron founder. More surprising to modern scholars was Hugh Fox who owned a substantial quarry but invariably described himself as a labourer in the electoral rolls. As a rule this tendency was most marked among the men of the manufacturing trades and our local knowledge of Caversham's industries allowed us to recognise each instance. This problem was easily solved in the case of substantial local businessmen but in one trade, building, an occasional builder preferred to list himself as a carpenter or a bricklayer. We checked each carpenter and bricklayer in the 'Trades and Professions' section of each Directory immediately after the election. The main electoral roll was usually compiled during the winter, the supplementary roll in the spring, and the directory in mid-summer.

The problem was not so easily solved in instances where men inflated their status. The term engineer was especially difficult although the difficulty, as is often the case, pointed to a sociological complexity. Several branches of engineering were recognised professions and *Stones Directory* listed such engineers in the 'Trades and Professions Directory' - civil engineers, mining engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers etc. Some recognised branches of engineering, such as marine engineers, did not receive a separate entry. Entrance to these occupations did not invariably require a formal qualification in engineering and, indeed, the University of Canterbury only introduced the first professional qualification in 1894.¹⁴ Many engineers in New Zealand, in fact, were surveyors by training, and the Institute of Surveyors successfully prevented the Society of Civil Engineers from obtaining a Registration Act throughout our period.¹⁵ Those with the most secure claim to professional status had been trained in Britain, or occasionally the United States, but the fluidity of certain branches of the trade meant that quite a few engineers had risen from the metal trades, especially the ranks of the fitters. Most marine engineers and quite a few drainage engineers prepared for their careers by serving as apprentice fitters. Almost all of Dunedin's mechanical engineers had done the same. Quite apart from this, however, men in the metal trades thought of themselves as engineers. Their union, an Imperial organisation, was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Although most tradesmen listed themselves according to their specific craft skill, e.g. boilermaker or fitter, we strongly suspect that others simply listed themselves as engineers. Whether they were making a point about the tendency to restrict the use of this once general occupational label we cannot tell. Nor can we tell how the Census dealt with this problem, but one suspects that the Departmental clerks took people at their own valuation. The directories, by contrast, allowed us to check whether men described as engineers were listed in the 'Trades Directory'. If they were not we then checked the 'Alphabetical Directory' and the 'Street Directory' because, especially in the early years of the century, men unlisted in the 'Trades and Professions Directory' were sometimes reported in one of the other sections as having a separate business address. We took the existence of a separate

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¹⁵*New Zealand Society of Civil Engineers, History 1914-1935 ...*, Wellington, 1935, provides a brief account of attempts to organise and register.

business address as conclusive evidence that they were practising as independent professionals.

The directories provided a similar solution for another problem which the electoral rolls presented. A draper's assistant or a grocer's assistant often reported himself as a draper or a grocer.¹⁶ A high proportion of assistants, especially in the first years of the century, were actually listed as assistants but in many trades the occupational name - eg. butcher, baker, blacksmith - could refer to an employee, a self-employed tradesman or artisan, or an employer. For manufacturing trades which existed before the Industrial Revolution the directories often used the suffix journeyman in reporting occupations; where this occurred we classified journeymen as skilled (07) and checked in the 'Trades and Professions Directory', a separate section in each year's *Directory*, to see whether those not listed as journeymen were listed in the relevant section of the 'Trades and Professions' directory. As with the example of the engineers, we also searched the cumulative alphabetical listing for Otago and Southland, and if all else failed we searched the street directory where individuals were listed according to where they lived. If a separate business address was given we took that as conclusive evidence that they were self employed/small employer.¹⁷ Despite this elaborate procedure that size of the skilled in Caversham has probably been inflated somewhat at the expense of the self-employed/small employers because in many trades where men worked from home in a low-capital sector of the economy it was possible to move back and forth across this boundary quite easily.

¹⁶*Census, 1926*, p. 1 suggests that the problem was mainly confined to 'juveniles, who represent themselves by terms connoting a status which they have probably not attained ...'.

¹⁷Anybody might be listed three times in a Directory. Every head of household usually appeared in the street of residence and in the alphabetical directory. Those in business, including professionals, also appeared in the trades directory. The relevant information we needed to classify someone might be found in any one of those three places. The method used to sort out ambiguities and some of the problems associated with the directories are outlined in S. Ryan, 'Notes on using Stone's Trade Directory' in *The Caversham Coalface: Reports and other Miscellanea from the Caversham Project Research Assistants*. For the potential uses and problems associated with directories and electoral rolls and a summary of how other researchers view these sources, see D. J McDonald, 'City Directories and Electoral Rolls', Department of Social Work, University of Canterbury.

A more complex problem emerged in relation to ambiguous occupational names - i.e. either self-employed/small employers (04) or skilled (07) - where *Stone's Directory* did not provide the suffix journeyman. Here the solution was less satisfactory and involved considerable work although, fortunately, in the great majority of cases the person whose occupational status was problematic in the electoral roll could be given an accurate classification on the basis of information in the directories. In the first instance we began with the strategy outlined above. First, the 'Trades and Professions Directory' for that industry/sector was searched. If the person was not found there then related industries were searched. *Stone's* often guided the widening search. For instance, following 'Blacksmiths' the directory instructs the reader to 'see also Mechanical engineers, Coachbuilders and Wheelwrights'. On other occasions familiarity with the directory's categories and the local economy proved essential because several apparently distinct occupations were listed under one heading (e.g. 'Seedsman' included nurserymen, florists and gardeners). Where this strategy failed to solve the problem the alphabetical directory for Otago and Southland and the street directories were searched because, as mentioned previously, these sometimes provided additional information which allowed the problem to be solved (usually because the person's business was listed and sometimes because a business address or private residence was noted).

In the case of a few trades we also used the awards of the Arbitration Court. In unionised occupations within the Arbitration Court's jurisdiction, regardless of their size, awards were invariably prefaced with a list, compiled by the union's secretary, of all 'employers' (the secretary had a strong incentive to include everyone because only those cited as parties to the dispute were bound by awards).¹⁸ In other words, nobody was classified as self-employed/small employer (04) unless clear evidence existed that they were in business. Usually, however, the information from sources other than the electoral rolls was used to confirm or clarify rather than to challenge the accuracy of the description in the electoral roll. Given that the different sources were compiled for different purposes at different dates, although separated by no more than six months, it was possible that different descriptions might be

¹⁸In proceeding before the Court, unions cited all employers as parties to the dispute and the Court listed them in a preface to any award given. Presumably the union did not usually cite the self-employed.

correct. Thus if someone was listed as an accountant in an electoral roll but appeared as a stationer and bookseller in the directory, for instance, we assumed that both descriptions were correct and that the change had occurred between the dates on which the two sources had been compiled. This may also have been the case, however, where a grocer's assistant in the electoral roll appeared as a grocer in the 'Trades and Professions' directory three to six months later. In order to decide such instances we then checked the prior and subsequent directories to determine whether this was likely. Where doubt still existed the electoral roll's description was used. John Norrish, for instance, was listed in the electoral roll as a proprietor of a merry-go-round; Stone's had him as a caretaker. Usually we followed the electoral roll's occupation because that was the best source for constructing the data base. In the case of Norrish, given what we knew about the merry-go-round industry in Caversham and Dunedin, we classified him as a caretaker who sometimes operated a merry-go-round. In short, after searching both sources an informed judgement was made.

By and large there were few difficulties in classifying Caversham occupations as skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled. Because industry dominated most skilled men worked in trades which were normally entered by serving an apprenticeship. All such trades came under the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court which specified the terms governing apprenticeships. For skilled occupations which did not require a formal apprenticeship, such as miner, seaman, or work in foundries, we used the Arbitration Court's minimum wage rates and the Efficiency Board's classification of occupations by industry to settle the issue. In a proportion of cases none of these methods worked because the information listed in the electoral roll and repeated in *Stone's Directory* was inadequate. This was the case in the railways and the printing industry where men occasionally described themselves in such terms as 'printer's employee' or 'railway employee'. Only a small number of men used such a vague description and we classified them as unskilled. In the case of the railways, however, this may not have been the case, for it was possible that men derived more status, at least in their own eyes, from the status of their employer than they did from their own skill.

It needs to be remembered - as explained in 'Towards an Occupational Classification for New Zealand' - that the occupational groups identified are not always internally homogeneous whether at the national or local level. This is especially true of the self-

employed/small employers and the large-employers/higher managers. Each category is internally differentiated and the boundary is conceptually important but difficult to identify empirically. Elvin Hatch has provided a good discussion of this issue from a local perspective in his analysis of 'The Occupational System' in a small rural town in the 1980s. 'At the bottom of the scale [of business owners] are several ... whose standing is hardly distinguishable from that of skilled workers ... and the businesses they acquired had fairly small starting-up costs.' Many of these men had been skilled workers. By contrast 'Three of four local businesses fall at the upper end of the scale, the owners of which clearly rank ... [high] in local standing'. Hatch distinguished the top and bottom of his category 'business owner', a category which locals used, in terms of capital worth, number of employees, and whether or not they worked at their trade or devoted most of their time to managerialial tasks.¹⁹ The same criteria would work for Caversham and, adjusted, would be useful in differentiating the equally elastic category 'large-employers/higher managers'. The difficulty is that while we have a reasonably clear notion of the capital cost of entering a specific trade we do not know how many employees were engaged by any business. At this point, however, we merely need to note that skilled, self-employed/small-employers, and large-employers constitute a continuum. Although most people can be classified with a high degree of certainty each occupational group contains considerable variation and the boundaries are fluid and inexact.

II

Overall the national and local occupational structures are remarkably similar. The principal differences between the urban New Zealand occupational structure and that in Caversham are fairly predictable.

Table Comparing National Occupation Census with Caversham 1901 & 1926.

	census 1901		Caversham 1902		census 1926		Caversham 1922	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%

¹⁹*Respectable Lives: Social Standing in Rural New Zealand*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992, pp. 63-64.

1	3851	2.13	52	3.99	16515	5.20	73	4.09
2	3617	2.00	46	3.53	11896	3.74	86	4.82
3	5581	3.08	20	1.53	8742	2.75	31	1.74
4	28326	15.64	135	10.36	41237	12.97	167	9.35
5	8773	4.84	39	2.99	18002	5.66	70	3.92
6	19011	10.50	195	14.97	52842	16.62	271	15.17
7	46544	25.70	477	36.61	74788	23.53	572	32.03
8	15618	8.63	79	6.06	22207	6.99	138	7.73
9	49753	27.48	260	19.95	71618	22.53	378	21.16
Total	181074	100.00	1303	100.00	317847	100.00	1786	100.00

The inflation of (01) in the 1926 New Zealand total, discussed in Working Paper II, in part explains its greater size and the fact that the (04) class in Caversham was proportionately smaller. The inclusion of the country's large number of secondary towns and small towns, presumably dominated by small employers, also contributes. Caversham's (02) class was substantially larger than the country's, although not by that much, and doubtless reflects the role of St Clair as a residential area for professionals and large employers/higher managers. The (03) - semi-professionals - were smaller in Caversham than nationally but this doubtless reflects the predominance of teachers and clergy. The (05) class is too small in absolute terms to allow us to attach much importance to the difference but, contrary to our expectations, Caversham's white-collar class was substantially bigger than New Zealand's in 1901. By 1926, by contrast, it was somewhat smaller. The skilled, not surprisingly, were proportionately more important in Caversham but were shrinking, relatively, because of the growth of white-collar occupations. In 1926 the Census shows a decrease in the overall size of the semi-skilled whereas the numbers in Caversham show an increase from 1901. Similarly, the mechanisation of agriculture and the dairy industry saw the national unskilled shrink quite sharply across the period. In Caversham they expanded slightly, presumably because many industries grew substantially across the period (the number of navvies, by contrast, almost certainly fell after 1911-12 once the major public works had been finished). None of these differences provide unsurmountable problems and most are so small that they confirm Caversham's typicality of urban New Zealand.

We are now in a position to return to one of our opening questions: In what ways, then, is the occupational structure and the stratification order shaped by the size of the town or suburb? There are three aspects to this: first, status or honour attaches to different occupations; second, the widespread tendency to home ownership and the use of sections to obtain supplementary income also meant, especially once the 40-hour week had been achieved, that many men were self-employed for part of the week; and third, the nature of the regional economy, with dairying and sheep-farming dominant, meant that many industries were seasonal and a proportion of working men, including some self-employed, had more than one job in the course of any one year.

Small-town variations in status and honour are the most easily documented. Phoebe Meikle, 'Infant Sociologist ...', recalled the Tauranga of her childhood. 'Top ranking was given to doctors, lawyers, architects, at least one dentist, bank managers, the Anglican clergyman, one headmaster, the priorietor of the *Bay of Plenty Times*, the shipping agent, and their wives, with lawyers and doctors top of the tops.' The postmaster's position was uncertain and chemists varied. The stationmaster, however, did not rate. Meikle decided that local status was the product of 'the interplay of several factors: occupation, church, race, date of arrival in Tauranga, and, for a woman, her husband's position or her lack of a husband'.²⁰ Despite the complexity of social standing Meikle used occupational labels as her primary signifiers of standing. Tauranga was a rural-service town and port, however, unlike Caversham. In Caversham and on the Flat the leading manufacturers enjoyed considerable status and the Presbyterian minister, partly because of the length of time he served in Caversham, did not bow to his Anglican counterpart (Dunedin's substantially Presbyterian character, of course, meant that Anglicanism was not the only source of status). The presence of St Clair, in part a residential suburb for men who worked in the city and were often substantial merchants or businessmen, also made Caversham borough different to Tauranga. Despite such differences the local 'elite', in short, tended to consist of the doctor and lawyer, followed by other professional men. Semi-professionals, especially clergy and teachers (including headmasters), might enjoy equivalent status if they were

²⁰*Accidental Life*, Auckland, 1994, p. 15. Hatch, *Respectable Lives*, p. 67, confirms Meikle's judgement about the ranking of the chemist as a shopkeeper rather than a professional. He did what the doctor said.

well-respected and long-standing members of the community. It was the same with the local chemist (Frank Wilkinson), the stationmaster, and even the postmaster. Most of these people commanded such status because they had been educated and were men of knowledge and integrity. Education also brought a degree of refinement in personal style which commanded widespread respect.²¹

In Caversham township and on the Flat generally, however, men of substance often enjoyed considerable status even when they lacked education beyond Standard IV. In an industrial suburb like Caversham people respected all those who willingly worked and skill in particular commanded respect. Many of the high-status employers commanded respect and status not because of the number they employed but because of their craft knowledge and skill. Most employers had served apprenticeships and worked as journeymen. Most still actively worked in their trades and supervised the training of their apprentices. The authority enjoyed by such men as H.E. Shacklock, founder of a company with a national market, or George Methven, who also founded an engineering company with a national market, derived as much from their willingness to work and their craft skill as it did from the size of their fortune or the palatial nature of their homes. Both men actually lived in quite modest houses. Any form of skill could command status, however, regardless of the occupational status of the person. Plumbers, brewers, stairmakers, bakers, confectioners, or bootmakers - all could command status (although factory workers and labourers, as a rule, derived no status from their occupations as such). Indeed, the community's most-honoured citizens were those who excelled in unpaid work, those who gave without seeking a return. Sport, for this reason, became a currency of honour and status which was parallel to that derived from occupation. In a local community status, in short, was based both on the formal attributes of occupations, on reputation (including sporting prowess and length of residence in some cases), and on commitment to the commonweal.²²

²¹Hatch, *Respectable Lives*, p. 67 and chs. 7 and 8 provides the fullest analysis of the concept of 'refinement' and its importance in New Zealand.

²²Pearson, *Johnsonville*, pp. discusses the importance of 'close individual or group interaction' in assessing reputation locally and argued that it was important when Johnsonville was a village but became less so as the village became a suburb in which neighbours did not know each other necessarily

This situation was not peculiar to industrial suburbs. Two detailed ethnographic studies of small rural towns have found a not dissimilar situation later in the twentieth century. H.C.D. Somerset, in his study of Littledene, a small town in north Canterbury, provides a portrait of stratification in the 1930s. Landownership and credit worthiness were important determinants of social standing and the farmers dominated the town and the wider community. Within this small town, however, he found patterns of social mixing which brought men of all occupational groups together and a strong community sense of identity which he described as parochialism. Considerable importance attached to length of residence and newcomers had to earn acceptance. Littledene was more rural than Caversham and its farms were more important. Somerset identified 88 farms smaller than 20 acres, 40 farms larger than 1000 acres, and seven with more than 5000 acres. On this basis he distinguished between labourers, smallholders, and more substantial farmers (size of farm had no importance independently of type of land use which varied from mixed farms to sheep runs). The labourers and smallholders all supplemented the income from their subsistence holdings with various forms of employment. Even in the 1980s Elvin Hatch, in his study of Fairlie, a town in South Canterbury, reached similar conclusions, although his discussion of stratification and social status was more thorough and 'farmers' and 'workers', the two primary occupational groups, did not mix much. This may have reflected the decline in farm employment.²³

The importance of land and subsistence was noteworthy in these two rural townships and alerts us to its potential importance in Caversham or any urban area. Land was readily available in a new society, at least by comparison with Britain, and the desire for freehold land one of the driving aspirations for many immigrants from Britain. Nor were there any local controversies over the rights

and leisure had become privatised and specialised. See also the summary in *Eclipse of Equality*, pp. 231-32.

²³*Littledene: Patterns of Change*, Wellington, 1974 (this includes an account of 'Littledene Revisited') and Hatch, *Respectable Lives: Social Standing in Rural New Zealand*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1992, chs. 3 and 4. Pearson and Thorns, *Eclipse of Equality*, pp. 233-38 review other studies of small and local communities. Rollo Arnold, *Kaponga 1881-1914: A Frontier Fragment of the Western World*, Wellington, 1997, has studied the growth of a small town in Taranaki, the centre for a dairying district, and while he ignores the local stratification order his evidence suggests that the patterns were similar to those in the Canterbury towns.

of the tanagata whenua in Caversham. Whereas in rural townships the labourers supplemented the subsistence holdings by taking waged-work in Caversham, by contrast, many workers supplemented their wage income with the produce of their own sections (in this sense it made little difference whether they were leased or freehold). Equally important, of course, was the house that stood on the land. The high levels of home ownership, and the home invariably included the land on which it stood, alert us to the fact that property ownership not only constituted an independent dimension of the stratification order but might also modify the consequences of the occupational structure in important respects. Although this is not the place to provide a full account of property ownership and residential differentiation we do need to discuss it at the conceptual level because it constitutes a potentially large complication to any discussion of the occupational structure.

IV

The occupational structure is rooted in the division of labour and is expressed in the labour market. That market, however, is but one of three markets which have widely been considered central to capitalist society. The credit market and the commodity market are also important (in Littledeane, during the depression of the 1930s, Somerset, found credit worthiness of central importance in determining status).²⁴ In New World societies, however, the property market must also be considered of potential importance because levels of home ownership are often very high. We need to make a distinction here, however, between the subsistence value of the land, the monetary value of the land (mainly relevant where subdivision was possible), and the monetary value of the house and section. Too little is known about the first two to allow any systematic analysis at this stage and there are no studies of either issue in other towns or suburbs. It is relevant to note that photographic evidence, and some oral-histories, indicate that it was quite common to grow vegetables on the back of the section and some men actually went further and obtained the right to use empty sections elsewhere on which they could supplement their income (they were almost always producing vegetables for the use of their

²⁴Norman Wiley, 'America's Unique Class Politics: The Interplay of the Labor, Credit and Commodity Markets', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 32 (1967), pp. 529-41.

own family rather than for sale). As Max Herz observed, 'The single home is general everywhere ... [and] A garden, too, is never wanting ...'.²⁵ The same sources also indicate that many families also owned hens, or chooks as they were called. These were kept in hen houses, as a rule. One or two families also kept a milk-cow which, it seems, was often allowed to wander the streets and vacant sections. The widespread use of horses, at least before the 1920s, meant that Caversham was not badly off for grazing areas and paddocks. Besides which the hills above the suburb had plenty of grazing although most of this land was farmed by Caversham's farmers.²⁶ For this reason, no doubt, one of Dunedin's artisans, a tailor and a prominent unionist, apologetically explained to a worldly French socialist, Albert Metin, 'that a little property was essential to the well-being of the worker'.²⁷

If it is now impossible to estimate what proportion of householders developed gardens and kept hens but there are valuable records relating to property ownership (although only in 1916 did the Census inquire into the subject). In his study of Johnsonville David Pearson first investigated the importance of property ownership as an independent dimension of the stratification order in New Zealand and used it to qualify the 'over-simplistic working/middle class dichotomy' which had bedevilled previous analyses of stratification in New Zealand.²⁸ In *Eclipse of Equality*, written with David Thorns, a sociologist who had done considerable work on the domestic property market in Britain, the importance of property ownership was addressed as a theoretical issue. 'In any theoretical conceptualisation of class, [whether Weberian or Marxist,] property ownership is a central issue.' In new societies, such as New Zealand, Pearson and Thorns argued that 'the question of the role of property and land ownership upon the formation of class relationships takes on a new meaning'.²⁹ Land has been a highly valued form of investment, a major determinant of status, and potentially a source of wealth accumulation since Europeans first began settling in New Zealand in the 1800s. Nothing changed when systematic colonisation began in 1840. By 1891, according to Miles Fairburn, 52 per cent of

²⁵ *New Zealand; the country and the people*, London, 1912, p. 376.

²⁶ Alma Rutherford, *On the Edge of the Town*:

²⁷ *Socialism without Doctrine*, p. 155.

²⁸ 'Small-Town Capitalism', p. 110.

²⁹ *Eclipse of Equality*, p. 63 and for a fuller discussion of the theoretical issues see pp. 67-69.

the labour force were freeholders although, as Claire Toynbee showed, a clear relationship existed between the value of land owned and position within the occupational hierarchy.³⁰ This is not surprising but does not remove the potential role of owner-occupancy in modifying inequalities rooted in the occupational stratification order.

'Property', as Pearson remarked, 'has always provided the acid test of equality or its converse in New Zealand.'³¹ In Johnsonville Pearson identified 'important variations' in the property-holdings within occupational groups but concluded that 'there was a clear division of property ownership according to employment status ...'. Yet the skilled men of Johnsonville tended to own property and in this sense were 'closer to white collar ... than unskilled blue collar workers ...'.³² Moreover his local 'elite' consisted largely of business owners - farmers, builders, and shopkeepers. They tended to own more than men in lesser occupational groups but were hardly 'elite' by national standards. One suspects that many of his builders and shopkeepers may well have served apprenticeships and worked as journeymen. Be that as it may, however, the importance of property ownership, apart from the fact that it constitutes a form of independence, was that it provided the potential to generate a capital gain either by sub-division or sale. 'However, the rate of return and, therefore, the potential for accumulation amongst owner occupiers is not even, but varies depending upon the time and place of purchase and sale of their properties.' It also varies depending on the number of improvements made to the property between purchase and sale.³³ We have no way of estimating capital gains for sellers but it is noteworthy that the manual workers and self-employed/small employers were much more likely to be owner-occupiers than men who belonged to the upper-middle groups (i.e. large employers/higher managers, professionals, and semi-professionals). This suggest that manual workers self consciously used property ownership to modify the consequences of

³⁰Fairburn, 'Social Mobility and Opportunity in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. (1979), pp. and Toynbee, 'Class and social structure in Nineteenth-century New Zealand', *ibid.*, Vol. 13 (April 1979), pp. 65-82.

³¹'Small-Town Capitalism', p. 110.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 1114.

³³Pearson and Thorns, *Eclipse of Equality*, pp. 86-87.

dependence on wage labour. A handful, it might be noted, actually ended up owning several properties.³⁴

In operating a vegetable garden, running hens or even livestock, and in making improvements to their properties men achieved, within that sphere, the status of self-employment. The Census did not consider them self-employed, of course, but that does not alter the fact that for a substantial number of hours each week a fully-employed man might be working on his own account. To say this ignores the fact that the man's family - i.e. wife and older children - might also be contributing to this business just as they often sought supplementary forms of cash income when necessary. One national survey found that many unskilled and skilled men with large families of dependents were likely to be living in 'poverty' until the older children began earning.³⁵ In that period much depended on the wife's skill at earning money and reducing expenditure. Most workers were not fully-employed, however. The seasonal nature of work in this urban community, for it beat to the rhythm of the pastoral-agricultural sector, meant that many men worked short time during the year, which gave them more time in which to work on their own account.³⁶ Day labourers, the least skilled among the unskilled, also worked on a day-to-day basis and could freely absent themselves from work if they chose without the risk of any legal penalty for their contractual obligations began at the start of each day and ended when they knocked off. In short, within this urban community, but reflecting its small-town character, something akin to the Irish 'cottier system' seems to have existed which, as E.G. Wakefield had once remarked, 'turns ... [many labourers] into something between capitalists and workers'.³⁷

³⁴Clyde Griffen, 'A More Egalitarian World?: residential differentiation and mobility in Caversham suburb, Dunedin, 1902-1922', Caversham Working Paper, 1997, pp. 13-33, discusses the complex patterns of residential differentiation and home/property ownership by occupational group.

³⁵J.W. Collins, *Inquiry into the Cost of Living*, Wellington, 1912, summarised the results of the Department of Labour's survey (1800 questionnaires were sent out but only 69 replies were received).

³⁶The most thorough discussion of wage rates and income is provided by Margaret Galt, 'Wealth and Income in New Zealand c. 1870 - c. 1939', PhD thesis, Victoria University, 1985, chs. 15 and 16. See also the only official report on actual earnings and short-time, 'Table Showing the Number of People Employed in Factories, Etc.', *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1911, H-11, pp. 42-56 (for Dunedin City).

³⁷*England and America*, p. 338. This is a different arrangement to the 'penny capitalism' identified and analysed in Britain by Benson, although 'penny capitalism' may also have existed locally;

The importance of small communities, even within the main towns, and the distinctive status systems reflected, in part at least, the fact that New Zealand was a new society. Caversham had first been settled by Europeans in the 1870s, Otago in the period 1848-60, and New Zealand itself only since 1840. As in other societies of the New World egalitarianism and democracy flourished. The autonomy of the small-town and the small community - what I have referred to as localism - was part of this egalitarian-democratic ethos. As a result, as E.G. Wakefield himself finally observed, 'whilst in old countries modes and manners flow downwards from the higher classes, they must, in new countries, ascend from the lowest class.'³⁸ In such small and recent communities the 'immediacy of present actions and beliefs frequently outweighed the importance of social origins' while local institutions, including sports clubs and the public schools, 'mediated between strata and established small town customs and values ...'.³⁹ The social fabric of Caversham, and New Zealand, clearly bore the imprint of being part of the New World and this contributed to the shape and nature of the occupational structure and the status attached to particular jobs and categories of jobs.

IV

It would be a mistake to conclude that the local or micro perspective had more validity than the macro or national one. 'Micro and macro perspectives', as Pearson and Thorns remarked, 'have only limited relevance in isolation, so the successful blending of these levels of analysis is required in order to accomplish a comprehensive appraisal of the structure and process of social stratification.'⁴⁰ The partial disjunction between the national and the local occupational structures, in short, needs constantly to be kept in mind but neither, taken alone, provides an adequate sense of the situation. In this particular instance, however, the larger changes occurring nationally were echoed somewhat feebly in Caversham. The shift towards a society in which everybody had but one occupation, in which specialisation was more important, in which education was increasingly essential to enter a growing number of

³⁸Cited by Pearson, *Johnsonville*, p. 126.

³⁹*Eclipse of Equality*, p. 225.

⁴⁰*Eclipse of Equality*, p. 221.

jobs can be seen in the national figures. In some senses Caversham started on this road earlier and then moved more slowly, partly because it was increasingly a suburb of Dunedin rather than an independent borough/suburb and certain occupational groups increasingly preferred to live in other parts of greater Dunedin. More to the point, however, the major industries of Caversham remained buoyant across the period and ensured that the demand for skilled and even unskilled labour did not greatly diminish.

Kaponga; Meikle on Tauranga; Littledene; Fairlie

Erik Olssen and Shaun Ryan,
28/6/96