

**Jupp, James, 2004. *The English in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.  
Reviewed by Catherine Schwerin, Universität Hamburg**

*The English in Australia* is a broad outline of the migrant history of the English as an ethnic group in Australia, a group that has been so taken for granted – even by themselves – that they have virtually been hitherto ignored as a serious subject of observation and interest. And who better to deal with this history than James Jupp, an English-born Australian who is Director of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies at the Australian National University, a man who has been awarded the Order of Australia for services to multicultural and immigration studies and to recording Australian history.

The previous lack of academic attention paid to the English may seem surprising, considering that they make up the largest overseas-born ethnic group in Australia and that in the 2001 census more than one third of Australia's population professed to have English ancestry (p. 1). However, in Jupp's view, it is the very fact of Australia's 'Englishness' that may account for this. Our English heritage leads to an almost schizophrenic sense of 'English is us' on the one hand and liberty in bantering abuse of all things English, including the English themselves, on the other, with the familiar 'whinging pom' as a prime example. The English – not the Scots or the Welsh or the Irish – are the ones we love to hate. And yet, according to Jupp, what we share with the English, among other things, is a basic belief in democracy and 'fairness', a sense of social responsibility towards the less fortunate, a preference for suburban life, and an underlying xenophobia.

In the relatively brief space of 204 pages, *The English in Australia* leads the reader through over 200 years of English immigration history. The book is divided into eight chapters essentially in chronological order and taking as its launching point the question of who the English were when settlement of Australia began, while providing a historical background of the social and political conditions that prevailed in England immediately prior to the first convict transports setting out for this alien land. Thus, Chapter One looks at the demographics of the earliest arrivals, their religious makeup, and the reasons why the people came. It also deals with the

myths of 'Old England' and the notion of the English as being 'insular' and 'ungovernable'.

The following Chapter is entitled "Convicts, Labourers and Servants". Those arriving in Australia in her formative years were for the most part male labourers with little skill and low education, while the few women were either family members or domestic servants with even lower standards of literacy. In general terms, it was poor social conditions and rural unrest that prompted increased arrests leading to transportation, which was obviously the greatest initiator of 'emigration' in the early years. Later waves were generated by state-sponsored activity designed to alleviate rural poverty in the homelands and meet the demand for farm labour in the fledgling colony. Thus it was the penal system on the one hand and the Poor Law on the other that drove and characterised early emigration to Australia.

The focus turns in Chapter Three, 'Farmers, Miners, Artisans and Unionists', to free emigration and assisted passages, which were designed to attract the classes that would establish the infrastructure of the colony. This period saw the issue of land grants and the development of bounty systems to encourage migration. Private charities also played a role in encouraging settlers, some of which particularly encouraged single women to migrate, to counter the imbalance between men and women in the colony. At this time, an increased influx of miners took place, not least because of the gold-rush years of the 1850s and the establishment of coal mining in Australia in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What is more, once the ban on emigration placed on artisans was lifted after 1824, more artisans and mechanics, who were socially and economically above labourers, moved out to the colony. Artisans and miners brought trade unionism with them, another English institution which came to shape the character of Australia.

Chapter Four moves on to examine the notion of equality as a movement away from the entrenched class system of Britain. Resentment against the ruling classes, pollution and congested cities, and rural unrest in England contributed towards the appeal that free passage schemes to the colonies held. On the other hand, this period also attracted a large number of middle class settlers who saw Australia as a land of opportunity, while a certain localised elite 'class' formed, for example, around the government houses and their social circles. However, in the new colony the class and social distinctions were much more fluid than in Britain.

The shift in immigration patterns after a century of colonisation and the move towards and beyond Federation become the key themes of Chapter Five. The largest group of immigrants to Australia leading up to Federation had been the English. They came to a society that was dominated by English views, 'English language, English law, English constitutional systems, English élites and rulers, and the need to answer to London and be loyal to ... the Empire' (p.110). It is not surprising, then, that the immigrants felt they were coming to an England abroad, but with more opportunities and greater wealth. However, by now not only were there growing

numbers of Australians who had been born here and who hoped for an end of the colonial system, but also society had now developed a distinctive character of its own and critical attitudes towards the 'old country' gained ground. This chapter describes the last waves of Empire-building immigrants to come to the colony and child and youth migration in this period, as well as Britain's motivation for encouraging emigration. It also addresses the growing debate at the time about the nature of the Australian character as well as the shift to Commonwealth control.

Federation did not, however, herald the end of organised encouragement of British migration to Australia. Chapter 6, 'Bringing out Britons', follows up with post-war migration, focusing on the continuing importance of assisted passages, which was finally ended for all in 1983. Initially, certain occupational groups were encouraged to migrate, but by the 60's particular skills were no longer required. Most United Kingdom immigrants were urban, and an overwhelming proportion were English. The chapter describes the assistance schemes, looking at the rhetoric of the pamphlets, the costs of passage, visa requirements (for the British, there were none until 1975) and the hostel conditions the new arrivals met with. It also examines the difficulties and disillusionment the immigrants faced, prompting high return rates and tension between the new arrivals, who felt they were doing Australia a favour in coming, and the Australians, who felt they were doing the British a favour in allowing them to come.

Chapter Seven deals with the influences and practices the English brought with them and the shape they gave our institutions and habits. It focuses on politics and key figures in Australia's history who contributed to its development. It also looks at food, drink and sport, posing the question of 'How English is Australia?' The book then concludes with Chapter Eight, 'The English as Foreigners', summarising the statistics of English migration through the years and picking up the theme of shifting policies and priorities, concluding that the English, as an ethnic group, have to a great extent remained invisible, perhaps largely due to the ambivalence of the historical tension between the English as 'them' and the English as 'us', naturally also coloured by the contribution of other ethnic groups to the shaping of Australia. It points out that the economic reasons that motivated the greater part of English migration to Australia no longer hold, and that it is unlikely that the English will ever again have the same impact on Australian society as in the past.

*The English in Australia* offers fascinating insights into the motivation for the various waves of English migration, the phenomenon of assisted passage, and the attitudes that accompanied the new arrivals, not to mention the changing tone of their reception in Australia by those established or born here and, seeing themselves as Australians, who eyed the "new chums" defensively. It points out the role of the English in shaping our national institutions and in contributing to our language, mores and social attitudes. The English stocked all professions and all levels of society from miners to ministers, from working class to well-to-do and they influenced our settlement patterns, bringing with them their preference for suburban

living. They came for the most part as economic migrants searching for a better life in a place that seemed to share a common heritage. James Jupp has presented his overview of this fascinating topic in an accessible, scholarly style, which is also suitable for those with no prior extensive knowledge of Australia or its historical background. He provides statistics, maps, photos and other illustrations to enhance his discussion, as well as a comprehensive list of further reading for those who wish to follow up the topic. Finally, the subject matter is somehow appropriate as a 'coming-of-age' reflection for a more self-confident Australia, in a sense the child seeing the parent through adult eyes. *The English in Australia* is an illuminating and scholarly read.