

CHAPTER 3 - ASSIMILATION

The G7 came to Tasmania intent on integrating, if not in assimilating, with the local population. Their English language skills were sufficient to negotiate with credit providers and government officials at all three levels and with locals. Contact with fellow Dutchmen who had preceded them was limited. Sponsoring other Dutchmen to emigrate here was necessary to assist their fellows to escape a possible war and start a new life. Sponsoring was biased towards those with the same religious beliefs because of the ethnic pillar construction of Dutch society, not to build an enclave. There are instances of G7 behaviour in which it seems they are members of a new ethnic community, the Tasmanian community. The two ethnic groups to which they had previously conformed, as Dutch nationals and as Calvinists, were not, however, so easily discarded.¹

Beginning a new life, assimilating as if they had always lived here, was what the G7 attempted to do from the moment they arrived. In this they had been encouraged by their Prime Minister before they left. Monistic assimilation was also the policy of the Australian government.² This was the aim for cultural unity, for homogeneity, because it was thought that social and cultural differences caused conflict.³ In practice this meant, as far as the government was concerned, that the migrants have work and learn English.⁴ Assimilation policy dominated resettlement policy until the mid-1960s.⁵

In the fifties and early sixties it was thought by government that migrants were assimilable without undue strain on themselves or undue change on the part of the Australian community.⁶ The migrant would have to realign his identity by making changes in his relationship networks. These would be increasingly located within his

¹ Hungarian Calvinists also found it difficult to abandon their religious ethnicity. M. Gilson, and J. Zubrzycki, *The Foreign Language Press in Australia, 1848 - 1964*. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1967, p.31.

² A.L. Van Wamel, 'Nederland mijn moeder, Australië mijn bruid', Doctoral Thesis, Catholic University, Nijmegen, 1993. p.9.

³ M.L.Kovaacs, and Copley, A.J., *Immigrants and Society: Alienation and Assimilation*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney, 1975. p.10.

⁴ J.I. Martin, *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978. p.28.

⁵ N. Peters, *Milk and Honey, but no Gold: post-war migration to Western Australia, 1945-1964*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 2001., p.23.

⁶ Martin, *op.cit.*, p.78.

host society.⁷ The steps to assimilation involved gaining cultural knowledge and skills, gaining group membership, and conforming to group norms, leading to a preference for new habits.⁸ An examination of the first four months of the G7 in Tasmania clearly shows these steps were taken.

From the very start of their arrival in Tasmania, the G7 scouts were involved in implementing the intentions of the group, and reporting their findings to them. Within days of arriving they had established that there was a market for housing, prefab or normal, and that there was a shortage of building materials.⁹ They had also arranged credit to finance the importation of prefabs with Mr J. McCusker at the Commonwealth Bank, and been enlightened concerning local building specifications.¹⁰ They decided that importing prefabs would allow them to avoid material shortages. In the first report they confessed to their friends that they were overstating their potential abilities a little, but had thereby gained very good connections¹¹ including Dutch government support for the export of prefabs.¹²

The G7 scouts arrived on or after ten June 1950 and before the fourteenth, but most

⁷ R. Julian, 'The Dutch in Tasmania: An Exploration of Ethnicity and Immigrant Adaptation', University of Tasmania, 1989., p.75.

⁸ Kovacs and Cropley, *op.cit.*, p.14.

⁹ Roofing iron, nails and galvanised water pipe, plus bricks and weatherboards, were all in short supply. The problem was noted by *The Mercury* on 1 Apr 1950, p.1, 28 June 1950, p. 4 and 12 Aug 1950, p.12. To alleviate the shortage, the Tasmanian government placed an order overseas for 1 million super feet of Baltic Pine weatherboards. *The Mercury* 21 July 1950, p.3. This disgusted the G7 scouts because they classed this timber as firewood. They asked their colleagues still in Holland if they could use their contacts and organise something better from Borneo? Either way, they thought it odd that this was all necessary considering that Tasmania had beautiful native timbers. ABC letters, 24 July 1950, p.28. The Master Builders Association of Tasmania wrote to Mr Fagan, Attorney General and Minister in charge of price control, that the problem was caused by the low price paid to sawmillers for weatherboards, it was below the cutting cost. Ref. 182/6/80, 24 July 1950. File ref. PCS 1/100, 182/1-20, 1950. Archives of Tasmania. Mr Fagan agreed to a price increase two days later. Ref 182/6/1950, 26 July 1950. File ref. *ibid.* In September, the government placed an order for iron and steel products, because there were no businesses with the capacity to place an order worth £200,000. This was the minimum order size that could be placed because of an international shortage of these products. *The Mercury* 13 Sep 1950, p.4. This was in response to a Minute Paper dated 22 May 1950 from the Controller of Building Materials noting delays of 18 months in the delivery of Australian iron products. File ref. PCS 1/100, 182/1-20, 1950. Tasmanian State Archives.

¹⁰ They emphatically reminded their colleagues that all measurements had to be imperial, not metric, and specifications had to be in English. A detailed, approximately 1200 word, specification of the proposed prefabs followed. ABC letters, 14 June 1950, pp. 1-2.

¹¹ The Commonwealth Bank proposed to finance a subdivision for the ABC to develop, but the idea was too novel for the men to deal with. ABC letters, 14 June 1950, p.2.

¹² An Australian Government delegation travelled through Europe in 1950 to investigate the importation of prefab housing to Australia. "De Heer Louw van Economische zaken heeft destijds de Australische Commissie ontvangen en rondgeleid en deze ongetwijfeld medewerking verlenen voor het verkrijgen van de nodige uitvoer vergunningen." ABC letters, 14 June 1950, p.3.

probably on the 12th.¹³ On 22 June they made an offer to purchase land to build 2 houses on, gave instructions for the balance of their funds to be transferred from the Netherlands and opened an account with the Commonwealth Bank.¹⁴ They were beginning to put down roots. It would be almost a month before their jeep arrived, despite their efforts to hasten the process and improve their mobility,¹⁵ but Pinkster got a driving licence in anticipation.¹⁶

Finding accommodation became a priority, as for reasons unknown they no longer wanted to or could not stay with Rhee.¹⁷ The use of the facilities of the company office of Dr Boot¹⁸ lasted a little longer.¹⁹ He had suggested Tasmania as their migration destination, but now the ethnic bond was insufficiently strong to keep them together. Finding accommodation was difficult, even with the aid of the Consul,²⁰ because there was a shortage of housing,²¹ public transport was infrequent and telephones were few. Eventually they took a room at the Australasian Hotel in Kingston Beach at £4 per person per week. They begrudged the cost, although the easy access to the bar was appreciated,²² then consoled themselves with a brandy and

¹³ On Friday 9 June they visited the family of Mr Higgle, the Australian immigration official in The Hague, in McCleod, a suburb approximately ten kilometres NE of Melbourne. The first letter from Tasmania was written on 14 June and contains information that would have taken several days to obtain. In the letter dated Saturday 17 June they mention the church service of that morning, which suggests that letter was written over two days. There is no mention in their letters of their activities of Sunday 11 June (nor of any other activity after their landing in Sydney on date unknown and proceeding to Melbourne on 6 June). If they were then already in Hobart, they would have made contact with Dr Boot and Rhee, and gone to church with them, and not spoken about the service of 18 June as if it were the first time. As Calvinists they would have preferred not to travel on Sundays, so they most probably arrived on Monday the 12th. The first and only Sunday they ever worked was 12 February 1967, after the bush fires, to help provide emergency housing in Snug. See also S. Bunning, *Purpaleanie and other permutations*, The Middleburg Press, Orange City, Iowa, 1978, pp.51-54.

¹⁴ The land was numbers 26 and 28 Hutchins St, Kingston. ABC letter 22 June 1950, p.11.

¹⁵ ABC letter 14 July 1950, p.25.

¹⁶ There was no test involved, only the payment of a ten shilling fee. ABC letter 22 June 1950, p.12.

¹⁷ Then living at 'Meyendell', Browns River Road, Taroona, according to his Application for Naturalisation, Archives. Dr Boot was a Netherlander - his name translates into English as 'boat'.

¹⁸ CCC, 18 Elizabeth St. Hobart

¹⁹ As a postal address until 20 July. p.30. For the typewriter until 24 July. p.27.

²⁰ Mr G.R. Swanton was consul from 1948-1960. He was the organist at St. Johns, also director of a shipping line, and dealt in building materials and insurances, but he was not Dutch. ABC letter, 22 June 1950. p.12. *De Geschiedenis van een Aantal Nederlandse Consulaten in Australië*, Dienst Documentaire Informatievoorziening (DDI), H. Steenhard Sluyter, DDI/ON, July 1998.

²¹ Offerings in the 'To Let' column of *The Mercury* in this period confirm very little availability. A typical column offered cottages at various seaside resorts plus Fern Tree, a small room and a gentleman's residence in Hobart, and a room in Moonah. *The Mercury*, 2 September 1950.

²² The Dutch enjoyed alcohol but differently from the way Australians did. Koos Schuur complained that 'there were no cafes, only beer abattoirs and wine houses, all standing only places, because they drink so hastily here, they don't need stools.' K. Schuur, *De Kookaburra lacht*, Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 1966., p.91. Not drinking in the Australian manner is probably the root of the claim 'The Dutch Reformed did not drink alcohol' in R. Julian, 'The Dutch in Tasmania: An Exploration of Ethnicity and Immigrant Adaptation', University of Tasmania, 1989. p.127.

the thought that soon their gear would arrive and they could move into their tent on the block they were buying.²³

The following days the scouts were busy organising and meeting and arranging. They saw Mr Watchorn at the HEC regarding licence requirements for migrant electricians, and the Education Department to enquire about teacher qualifications on behalf of friends still in the Netherlands. They met with Mr Mellor²⁴ in the Immigration Office to expedite, if possible, the outward passage of some tradesmen. They made arrangements with Miss Freeman to rent her house,²⁵ and walked many a country mile to find Mrs Geard. Their first evening in Kingston was given to walking on the beach and watching the moonlight on the water while contentedly smoking. Although they had so much still to do, they relaxed and enjoyed the beauty of their new home.²⁶

On Monday 26 June, the scouts met with the Kingborough Council about splitting their land for two houses,²⁷ then with the RSL about becoming members,²⁸ and in the afternoon with the Premier, Mr Cosgrove. By their own account they did as if they were big businessmen and so gained the front page of *The Mercury* the following day, an introduction to government officials concerned with housing and finance, a tour of Hobart, Moonah and Glenorchy to see houses being built by the Agricultural Bank, and an invitation to be interviewed on ABC radio.²⁹

During July the two men kept themselves busy with negotiations concerning the

²³ ABC letter, 22 June 1950, p.14. Whilst staying there, they taught the barkeeper how to make a proper *rumgroc*, a mixed drink peculiar to their tastes and unknown to the dictionary. ABC letters, 14 July 1950, p.25. The crate containing their effects arrived in Hobart on Friday 14 July, so they moved into the tent the following day. ABC letter, 14 July 1950, p.27. The tent possibly stuck a romantic cord in the journalist who wrote for the *Australian Women's Weekly* of 11 Feb 1959, p.12 - 'The two Dutchmen had some money but few prospects when they landed in Devonport, Tasmania, and set off by jeep to seek land to settle. The back of the jeep was stacked with blankets, tents and cooking utensils. At night, the men camped by the roadside ...'

²⁴ The G7 scouts never refer to anybody by their Christian names, or indicate the initials, except for Fred Mitchell and Archibald H Smith.

²⁵ This was the house they were helping A.H. Smith to build, and she did not need it until the following January.

²⁶ Within three weeks of arriving they began using this term. ABC letter 27 June 1950, p.18.

²⁷ The land for which they had made an offer.

²⁸ To their amazement their application was rejected, although the Federal government had accepted them as ex-servicemen in a migration subsidy scheme

²⁹ ABC letter 27 June 1950, pp. 18 & 19. Memo from Director of Housing to Premier Cosgrove - 'met and discussed prefabs with vdLaan and Pinkster. Arranged meetings for them with Senior Architect, tour of Goodwood Housing Estate.' Ref 182/35/50 - 7 Jul 1950. File ref. PCS 1/101, 182/21 - 183/40, 1950. Archives Office of Tasmania

prefabs and organising official paperwork to properly register their business. On Sunday 8 July they had a 2 pm meeting with the acting-Premier, Mr Fagan³⁰ and AH Smith. They discussed the housing situation in general and prefabs in particular. They also discussed the need to bring some unskilled labourers besides the tradesmen that Tasmania so desperately wanted, and told Fagan that hostel accommodation for migrants needed to be suitable for families because it was families that wanted to come to Tasmania. Mr Fagan promised to write a letter to the Immigration Office in The Hague and do what he could to give full support to the migrants.³¹ He also wrote a letter to hasten the production and export from the Netherlands of ten prefabs.³² Use of the temporary office facilities at CCC in Elizabeth St, Hobart, was discontinued as they were now established in Hutchins St, Kingston. In addition to the 3 blocks they bought from Fred Mitchell,³³ their offer of £360 was accepted by Miss Liptrot for her 2 blocks. A local architect, Wilson, was engaged to see these and sketch some plans for 'on spec' houses.³⁴ All of this activity was consistent with their stated intent of establishing a building business and assimilating here, but all of a sudden a new plan was put forward.³⁵

On 2 August the scouts bought about five acres, on the northwest side of Kingston, about one and a quarter miles from the main road, in the hills, for £500.³⁶ The immediate object was to subdivide this into 20 blocks.³⁷ There would be some costs³⁸ but the arithmetic appealed - a net cost of £40 per block compared to £200 per block on the main road. The description of the land and the possibilities was very optimistic, and apart from the 20 proposed houses, they also expected to build a large joinery, a workshop and a concrete block making factory. Apart from the

³⁰ Mr Fagan normally held the posts of Treasurer and Attorney General.

³¹ ABC letter 14 July 1950, p.25.

³² ABC letter 14 July 1950, p.26.

³³ ABC letter 20 July 1950, p.30.

³⁴ ABC letter 2 August 1950, p.34. Wilson was chosen because they had seen his work in the house of Rhee. There is no other reference to his Christian name or the name of his practice in the letters.

³⁵ The plan was hinted at in the letter of 14 July, p.30.

³⁶ "Aan de andere zyde van Kingston ongeveer 1 1/4 Myl van de hoofdweg op de heuvels hebben we ca. 5 acres gekocht voor £500." ABC letters 2 Aug 1950, p.32.

³⁷ This was the fourth subdivision proposal put to them and the first time it appealed. It seems that this was not what they were initially looking for. Eric Johnston, a lawyer and director of the largest cement factory here, showed them a 20 acre lot in Blackmans Bay, but at this stage the idea either did not appeal or was beyond their current thinking and did not gel. ABC letter 5 July 1950, p.22. In Burnie they had visited a Jennings subdivision, the Commonwealth Bank had offered them finance for a subdivision in mid-July, and Archie Smith had shown them a subdivision being prepared in Kingston.

³⁸ Bulldozer hire £50, water pump to bring water up from Browns River £200, electricity transformer £20 ABC letters 2 Aug 1950, p.35.

finances, this would also allow workers to work close to home and so obviate the need for transport, as southern Tasmania was not suitable for bicycles and cars were expensive.³⁹ Most importantly, it would solve the accommodation problems. The tent had not been a good idea in the middle of winter, and the scouts were now living in the building shed of AH Smith. This could only be temporary until houses were built, and many houses needed to be built because many families were already on the way or planning on coming.⁴⁰ The scouts were but two of 67 Dutch migrants who arrived in Tasmania in the year ended 30 June 1950. The following year another 600 came, and in the year ended 30 June 1954, 960 arrived⁴¹

Geard nominated the name Little Groningen for the proposed settlement,⁴² and the scouts speak of building a wonderful community here, possibly thinking that all the Dutchmen to come would buy a block here at one-fifth of the price of anywhere else, as if price was the only consideration. We do not need to imagine the conception of a Dutch enclave at this point. The shortage of housing and the urgent need for more in large quantities, and the shortage of and cost of building blocks, are vital to understanding the situation. The purchase and subdivision of a five acre lot was an attractive solution to the difficulties they faced.

The creation of a Dutch community was a by-product of the subdivision proposal, and seen as a springboard to other possibilities. At this stage, the scouts were beginning to see Tasmania as a more or less uncultivated land in which, with all their strength, they planned to conquer a spot for themselves, and to use that as a base to create a new culture if not to add new elements to the existing order. The aim was

³⁹ Motorised bicycles were thought to have insufficient power to deal with the hills here. A car was so rare, the jeep they had would need to take the children to school from Howden, where they had the use of a property belonging to A.H. Smith, and take the men to work each day. ABC letter, 20 Jul 1950, p.30. In his memoirs, P Laning tells of taking up to 29 children from the Reformed Church building on the Channel Highway in Kingston to Little Groningen, a distance of about three kilometres, in a standard Holden sedan in 1959. The scouts were confident Kingston would soon receive a trolley - line service to solve the transport problem. Letters, 20 Jul 1950, p.30. They may have confused this with the proposed Southern Outlet. In the minutes of the Council meeting of 13 Jun 1950, Cr Pryde is on record asking 'when will the Southern Outlet be started?' Kingborough Council Minutes, ref MCC 19/19, Archives Office of Tasmania. p.422.

⁴⁰ ABC letter, 2 August 1950, pp. 35, 36. To encourage more potential migrants they sent a copy of the speech given by the Minister for Immigration, Mr Harold Holt, to the Immigration Planning Council, which predicted that up to 15,000 building workers were needed to join the industry in 1950 of which 14,000 had to come from migration. This speech was reported in *The Mercury* on Saturday 9 Sep 1950.

⁴¹ R.S.J. Farmer, 'The Geography of Migration in Tasmania, 1921 - 1961', Uni Tas 1968, pp.220. and 540.

⁴² ABC letter, 2 August 1950, p.35.

not simply to create a new existence for themselves and their children, nor to become wealthy, but to make a small contribution to developing what God had created, which in Australia was fallow land. Van der Laan thought that as a ‘Dutch colony’ they could be the salt that restores,⁴³ a thought that filled him with joy. He was beginning to have a vision of the wonderful task that lay before them, a task he wanted to begin work on as soon as possible, a task he needed his colleagues for. They were necessary, firstly to arrange for material needs and then to graft the riches of Western Europe onto the new growth here. ‘Australia is an infant needing us urgently,’⁴⁴ he wrote.

Some reactions from locals confirmed their impression that Tasmania was a little backward. The solicitor Fred Mitchell, who had helped them with the paperwork for establishing their business and in purchasing land, admired the coats the scouts wore, so they arranged to have one in his size sent from Holland and gave it to him, a small price for the goodwill it generated.⁴⁵ Dutch souvenirs and Dutch and European stamps were valued gifts.⁴⁶ Many locally available items, such as gin, were

⁴³ His reference is to Matthew 5:13. What he meant with the term ‘Dutch Colony’ is not absolutely clear, because when Little Groningen became a reality full of Dutch families, vd Laan claimed the purpose of the settlement was not to be a Dutch colony. *De Spiegel*, No. 7, 14 Nov. 1953. pp. 28-31. In an earlier interview he noted “there was no desire to become an exclusive Dutch community. Our wives meet weekly with Australian women, one week here, the other week in their homes. This promotes mutual understanding and friendship. We now have a very mixed social club, the Dutch-Australian Glee Club, that has brought more unity.’ Dutch newspaper, 18 June 1953, JM Wierenga collection. An accompanying photo confirms his testimony. Van der Mast claimed in 1960 that there was no desire to establish a Dutch colony. van de Mast p.81. In fact, he said, no Dutch enclave existed in Kingston, citing the high intermarriage rate (1 in 3) as partial evidence. Van der Mast p.83.

⁴⁴ ABC letter, 14 August 1950, p.45. “wy zyn liever aan het timmeren dan dat we ons met administratief rompslomp bezig houden. Wat is dat nu. Een soort reactie op de over-organisatie van het geciviliseerde Nederland, een zekere cultuurmoehed of is het cultuur-bezetendheid d.w.z. dat je met al je kracht bezig bent je een plaats te veroveren in dit min of meer ongecultiveerde land om dan van uit die veroverde plaats weer een nieuw cultuur te scheppen of beter gezegd aan het hier bestaande elementen nieuw toe te voegen. Als ik deze zin overlees vraag ik me zelf af zit je nu niet te hoog in de boom, maar als ik er goed over nadenk geloof ik toch dat dit er achter zit. Het is zo doodgewoon als je zegt, we willen ons hier een nieuw bestaan scheppen voor ons en onze kinderen, maar dat is mij inderdaad te gewoon, er zit altijd iets in me van de “Streber” - niet in zin van veel geld verdienen ect. (sic)- maar het bydragen van dat hele kleine steentje aan de verdere ontwikkeling van wat God geschapen heeft en in dat opzicht ligt er hier in Australië een terrein voor ons braak, dat niet te overzien is. Wij kunnen hier als Hollandse kolonie een zoutend zout zijn en daarom jongens ben ik zo blij, dat ik hier ben (spreek een beetje persoonlijk, maar Ep is hier vast met mij eens - hij zit nog steeds te vossen wat we vergeten hebben en dat komt dan straks weer). Ik zie hier een geweldige taak voor ons liggen en daarom jongens kom hier zo gauw mogelijk toe. Tracht je zaken zo goed mogelijk af te wikkelen en aarzel niet de eerste de beste boot te nemen. We heben jullie nodig, eerst om on onze materiele behoeften te voorzien en voorts de rijkdom van West-Europa te enten op het nieuwe hier. Australië staat nog in de kinderschoenen en heeft ons broodnodig.”

⁴⁵ ABC letter, 14 August 1950, p.46.

⁴⁶ ABC letters, 19 and 14 August 1950, pp. 54 and 46.

considered by the G7 to be of poor quality⁴⁷ or, such as blankets, extremely scarce.⁴⁸ Some items simply did not exist on the Tasmanian market, such as various types of bean seed and a long list of household articles.⁴⁹ Beside all that, the first carpenters to arrive in early August were very unhappy with the low standards of the local builders.⁵⁰ Thus the work of the first six men,⁵¹ the completion of the first cottage at the end of August, was considered a great advertisement for their reputation.

The migrants came here with a reasonable command of English and were happy to use it. Their skill with the language can be seen in the translation of the legal agreement they made between themselves, in the letter they wrote to Mr Higgie, in their dealings with Customs, in their discussions with state and local government officials, in their negotiations with credit providers and freight companies, and in their social intercourse. There was in fact little need or opportunity to converse in their mother tongue except in the daily letter home. A week or so after arriving in Hobart, the scouts wrote a letter to Mr Higgie, the Australian immigration official based in The Hague, who had obviously interviewed them prior to departure. In a mixture of personal and business matters, in sentences sometimes betraying Dutch word order, they flattered this official a little and encouraged him to expedite the passage of their families and friends to this new land for the benefit of Australia. This was the justification for his work.⁵²

On Friday 30 June the scouts went to Customs to enquire about import duties on the machinery they planned to bring from Holland for their construction business. The quoted amount of 47.5% was far more than they could pay, so they negotiated an

⁴⁷ ABC letter, 3 August 1950, p.39.

⁴⁸ ABC letter, 14 August 1950, p.46.

⁴⁹ ABC letter, 25 September 1950, p.61.

⁵⁰ ABC letters, 14 and 16 August 1950, pp. 45 and 48. Over the following years the exceptional carpenter was placed in the joinery, and Australian building methods adopted, except for brickwork. W. Van der Mast, *Praktijk en patroon van recente Nederlandse groepsmigraties. Met een suggestie voor een gewijzigde vorm van groepsmigreren: Interlinked migratie*. Noordhoff NV, Groningen, 1963. p.92. 'The houses in Australia are all built 'unhappily' and mostly as cheap as possible, such that would send a shiver up the spine of a Dutchman.' Schuur, *op.cit.*, p.34.

⁵¹ Reg Doedens was brother-in-law to Jetze Schuth through his sister, and to the brothers Wim and Henk Sikkema through his wife. The four men arrived on 10 August, and Eerke and Eb were preferring hands on work to administration. ABC letters 14/08/1950, p.42. The four men were tradesmen who had been engaged to work for the ABC while still in the Netherlands. Van der Mast, *op.cit.*, p.78.

⁵² ABC letter, 19 June 1950, p.10. They told him there was also a bonus - he would be making government officials, and the individuals involved, happy. The language and content are so familiar, there must have been a healthy and friendly relationship between these men.

alternative solution.⁵³ The next day they watched the Kingston Football Club thrash the visitors 61-10, after which jubilant fans shouted them three beers in the Kingston Beach Hotel. During these midwinter days they worked almost daily with A.H. Smith, who always cooked a barbecue lunch for them, to their delight.⁵⁴ Through him they gained introductions to Mr Fagan, influential Cabinet member, and through Geard to Rex Townley, leader of the Opposition, and used these contacts to promote their plan of building prefabs.⁵⁵

By early September it looked as if everything was falling into place. They had just moved into the first cottage they had built in Hutchins St, when Councillor Shoobridge, from the Kingborough Council, dropped in to discuss their plans for Little Groningen. The scouts were invited to present their plans to the Council meeting of 11 September. They were made welcome⁵⁶ and then advised that the Council needed a £3000 bank guarantee for the road that needed to be built as part of their subdivision.⁵⁷ The scouts had not factored a cost of that nature in their plans, a cost that would add £150 to the cost of each block. It was resolved that ten houses could be built on the road, with a road reserve to the back of the block where the settlers planned to build their workshops. A reporter from *The Mercury*, present for the meeting, took the opportunity to interview the men.⁵⁸

When the scouts first arrived in Tasmania it was incumbent on them to explore possibilities before making commitments. This meant a trip to Launceston⁵⁹ and the northwest coast, during which they met various Dutchmen already established in there.⁶⁰ This mobilisation of ethnicity was fruitless except that it eliminated some possibilities. Excepting for the baker van Pernis in Launceston the scouts agreed

⁵³ ABC letter, 5 July 1950, p.21.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.22.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* The Minister of Justice was the son-in-law of A. H. Smith. The G7 scouts met with Mr Fagan several times about the prefabs. ABC Letters, 2 Aug 1950, p.33.

⁵⁶ "De Heren waren allen zeer vriendelyk en we moesten verschillende moedgevende speeches aanhoren. ABC Letters, 18 Sep 1950, p.57.

⁵⁷ Although he could see that he guarantee would be a big obstacle, Cr Shoobridge was keen to see the subdivision proceed. Cr Bylett said he appreciated the class of migrants that were coming - it was hoped to keep Australia white and we should do all we can to encourage the Dutch. Cr Crane said the Dutch had a good name as workers. Kingborough Council Minutes ref MCC 19/19, Archives of Tasmania. p.443.

⁵⁸ *The Mercury* Tuesday 12 Sep 1950, p.4. The report mentioned Little Groningen in passing.

⁵⁹ This part of the trip was with Rhee, the brother-in-law of Dr Boot, with whom they were staying. It was primarily an acceptance of hospitality, not a mobilization of ethnicity. Besides, as they themselves noted, it saved them several pounds in bus fares. ABC letters, 14 Jun 1950, p.3.

⁶⁰ They either did not know of, or deemed it fruitless to visit, the group of Dutch migrants that arrived in Georgetown at the beginning of April. *The Mercury*, 4 April 1950, p.5.

together that these Dutchmen were poor imitations of real Dutchmen, although they probably meant that these men were not favourably disposed to their Calvinistic pillar. They concluded that there were better opportunities for them in Hobart where influential people were willing to help them, without mobilising any ethnic elements.⁶¹

Telephone contact with family and friends still in Holland was difficult. There was a promise of a phone call via London on Saturday 24 June, advised by telegram through Rhee. The family Lucas made their phone available, and the men waited until 11 pm before waiting some more all day Sunday. On Monday morning they were advised that the call was cancelled, there would be no chat with loved ones yet to leave for the new land. They had to settle for a chat with their hosts and their new neighbours, because all of Kingston wanted to know 'had they had their call yet'.⁶²

It was necessary for the G7 to sponsor other Dutchmen to migrate to Tasmania for several reasons. In the first place the Dutch government wanted people to leave the Netherlands, partly because there was a shortage of housing. These 'surplus' people needed somewhere to go, and Australia had decided it desperately needed more people to justify occupation of this continent and keep it white.⁶³ Emigrants sponsored by somebody already here, somebody to arrange employment and housing for the immigrant, were preferred. There were not enough British candidates, so Dutch migrants were keenly sought as the next best choice.⁶⁴ There was a shortage of housing throughout Australia, so tradesmen were desperately needed to build to eliminate the backlog, and to build for themselves, in addition to schools and other infrastructure. ⁶⁵

⁶¹ ABC letter, 17 June 1950, pp. 4 - 7.

⁶² ABC letter, 5 July 1950, p.21. The ABC Letters do not mention that the telephone, Kingston number 3, was in the hotel. The note about the community query and the note from Cr Pearsall suggest this was in fact the case. Cr Pearsall referred to the pending departure of the Lucas family from the Australasian Hotel, Kingston Beach. Kingborough Council Minutes ref MCC 19/19, Archives of Tasmania p.433.

⁶³ A. Lodewyckx, *People for Australia*, Angus and Robertson, London, 1956. p.164. W.D. Borrie *The Peopling of Australia*, University of Sydney, 1958. p.10.

⁶⁴ Peters, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁶⁵ Because of a lack of workers, 'the beautiful Tasmanian timber was barely harvested' and poorly handled and the Tasmanian Government bought 1 million super feet of Baltic Pine for housing construction. The G7 scouts considered this to be firewood and urged their colleagues to enquire through their connections if it was possible to obtain better quality timber in Borneo. ABC letter, 24 July 1950, p.28. Tasmania needed 4000 new houses. *ibid.*, p.27.

The G7 were in a position to sponsor migrants, initially tradesmen, with housing and employment. There was thus some logic to sponsoring Dutch migrants, men who would have known skills in both trade and language. This is not to say they were aiming at establishing a Dutch enclave. This would not be possible because, apart from themselves, they could only accommodate another thirteen families in Little Groningen, and more than thirteen workers are needed to support a building company with seven directors.⁶⁶ They were happy, however, to make arrangements with authorities here to ease the way for any old countrymen who asked. There would be no room in Little Groningen for them, but this did not matter. The aim was to bring them out.⁶⁷ Mr Geard asked the scouts to find a farmhand, preferably married.⁶⁸ Mr Mellor, the immigration officer, asked the scouts to bring workers and establish industries here. If they could deliver the “brains and the labour” he would arrange the finance.⁶⁹ Thus they advised an agency which advised prospective migrants, ‘we have established a business here, we have lots of support from the authorities and business.’⁷⁰ To their colleagues they noted ‘thanks for all the questions, it allows us to ‘spray’ about our new fatherland.’⁷¹

The G7 were Christian men with a Calvinistic leaning, and this reflected in their attitude to daily life. Their view of Christianity was of a relationship with God rather than a religion committed to specific rituals at specific times in specific places. As far as they were concerned there were no sacred places because all places were sacred. Christianity was an all of life business that influenced everyday relationships, speech and actions. It was one of the reasons they did not like any of the Dutchmen they had met in the north of Tasmania in their first weeks here, because these men all swore terribly.⁷² They thought the Methodist Church might have something to offer, but the congregation in Windsor Street, Kingston Beach, disappointed them. The priest of the Kingston Church of England was judged to be a

⁶⁶ The first major job they took on was the Dover School, worth £54,000. *The Mercury*, 6 Sep 1950, p.5. Not a job for a little company of thirteen workers supporting seven directors. Van der Mast, *op.cit.*, p.78.

⁶⁷ ABC letters, 22 and 27 June, 14 July 1950, pp. 13 (teachers), 17 and 26.

⁶⁸ ABC Letter, 5 Jul 1950, p.23.

⁶⁹ ABC letter 24 July 1950, p.28.

⁷⁰ Advice to the Stichting Landverhuizing. ABC Letters, 3 Aug 1950, p.41.

⁷¹ ABC letter, 19 Aug 1950, p.53.

⁷² ABC letter, 17 June 1950, p.7.

better painter than a priest.⁷³

The Presbyterian Church, on the other hand, impressed them. The low numbers in the Taroom daughter church of St John's Presbyterian did not bother them, but they were impressed that there was first a talk for the children, that the melodies of the hymns were mostly familiar, and that the sermon was simple and orthodox. Here they felt comfortable, and they looked forward to a meeting with the Rev. Reid.⁷⁴ It was on his recommendation that they went to look for the residence of Mrs Geard on their first Sunday in Kingston.⁷⁵ After an hour of walking they finally asked for directions at the home, unbeknownst to them, of the Kingborough Municipal building inspector. A cup of tea and an hour conversation cemented another relationship.⁷⁶ Once found, Mrs Geard proved to be a real blessing to the lives of the two scouts - she provided them with regular transport to church services at St. Johns, and several meals. The scouts later counted it as a miracle that they met this woman and her husband,⁷⁷ despite the fact that he was a Freemason.⁷⁸ Although not agreeing with the beliefs of the Freemasons, the G7 enjoyed a friendship with them and worked well with them, to each others mutual advantage. Geard is mentioned nine times in the letters, and A.H. Smith, also a Freemason, twelve times.⁷⁹

⁷³ ABC letter, dated 29 June but should be 25 June 1950, p.17. The Methodists behaved like a closed circle, not advising any passers by with a notice board noting worship service times. The Anglican priest gave less of a sermon, more of a homily, to a congregation consisting of five women and six girls, and was busy painting his front gate an hour after the service.

⁷⁴ ABC letters 18 June 1950, p.8. All seven of the original group were content in the Australian Presbyterian Church because the local preacher was orthodox. Van der Mast, *op.cit.*, p.84. The Presbyterians proposed that when more Dutch migrants arrived, they could hold a service in Kingston, in the C of E building. ABC Letters 14 Aug 1950 p.42.

⁷⁵ ABC Letter 27 June 1950, p.17

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p.18.

⁷⁷ ABC letter, 2 August 1950, p.36.

⁷⁸ ABC letter, 5 July 1950, p.22.

⁷⁹ The first mention of Geard, no additional name information is ever given, is the observation that he is not a Presbyterian like his wife, but a Freemason. Geard then showed the scouts a farmhouse they might be able to rent, introduced them to his father-in-law Mr Rex Townley (the leader of the Opposition), and requested the help of the scouts in finding a Dutch farmhand. All these references in the letter of 22 June. In the letter of 14 July it was noted that the rental proposition fell through. In the letter of 20 July Geard made hop-pickers huts available for temporary accommodation. On 2 August Geard is attributed with nominating the name Little Groningen for the proposed subdivision, and the scouts reflect that it was a miracle they met the Geards. On 13 August they spent an evening with the Geards and the four newcomers. In the letter of 16 August, they mention that the 5 acres they purchased were from Geard. Archibald H Smith is first mentioned on 22 June, when he gave the hitchhiking scouts a lift to Kingston, the first time he had ever done such a thing, and then showed them his shack in Howden, and the block of land in Hutchins St where he was building a cottage. He purchased meat from the local butcher and cooked a BBQ lunch for the scouts, and came to an arrangement with them regarding the construction and use of this cottage on the basis of a handshake. On 5 July he was noted as working daily with the scouts, cooking their BBQ lunch and introducing them to his son-in-law Mr Fagan, a key member of the government. Smith arranged a meeting with Mr Fagan, noted on 14 July, and eventually allowed the scouts to live in his shed on the Hutchins St site, noted on 20 July.

The G7 scouts were worried about the international situation with respect to the possibility of war.⁸⁰ War and rumours of war featured in every edition of *The Mercury*, so confirming their suppositions. It was with these thoughts in mind that they advised a migration agency in Holland that they could employ lots of Netherlands if the international situation allowed.⁸¹ Several weeks later they again urged their colleagues to leave quickly, because they perceived the chance of another world conflagration to be high.⁸² Here, on the other side of the world, they could be safe, and live.⁸³

The scouts were convinced in their first few weeks in Tasmania that there was plenty of work for those who wished to live here, whether to escape possible war or to escape the Netherlands as their government encouraged. They also thought that Kingston was a beautiful place with plenty of suitable land available. Life in the first days would be pioneering, if not camping, but Kingston was growing, they claimed.⁸⁴ For those interested they reported on the availability of tobacco products, about local prices, money, wages, chickens,⁸⁵ and on the availability of oil, paint, school, washing machines, heaters, hot water heaters, and about transport between Hobart and Kingston and work for aircraft maintenance.⁸⁶ For those who were to follow they laid the groundwork for taking on big contracts, and bought blocks of land, and arranged accommodation, and dealt with the paperwork required by the immigration department for prospective migrants so well that Mellor entrusted them with issuing employment and housing declarations.⁸⁷ He gave them authority to act as if they belonged in Tasmania, and they behaved as if they did.

⁸⁰ ABC letters, 5 and 14 July 1950, and 19 August 1950, pp. 23, 26, 52.

⁸¹ ABC letter, 3 August 1950, p.41.

⁸² ABC letter, 14 August 1950, p.42.

⁸³ ABC letter, 14 July 1950, p.26.

⁸⁴ ABC letter, 20 July 1950, p.30.

⁸⁵ We recommend you all bring the allowed 200 cigarettes / person in. Not many pipe smokers here, no cigars, no shag of good quality. ABC letter, 24 July 1950, p.29.

⁸⁶ ABC letter, 20 July 1950, p.30.

⁸⁷ ABC letter, 18 September 1950, p.60.