GEORGE AUGUSTUS MIDDLETON – A PRODIGAL PRIEST?

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university.

Signed………………………………….
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Research cannot be undertaken without the support of many people. I am particularly grateful to, first of all, Professor Peter Hempenstall, formerly of the University of Newcastle, and now of Canterbury University, New Zealand. He sought me out and encouraged me to begin this study and then encouraged me further. As work progressed, Dr Barry Cairns of Melbourne, a Middleton descendant, co-operated in disseminating information and shared a number of excursions to locations in which Middleton lived and worked. Mr Kit Middleton of Sydney, along with numerous Middleton descendants, also must be acknowledged. Their support and interest was a great encouragement. So, too, were my conversations with Canon Paul Robertson. In the process of writing and supervision I am indebted to Dr Claire Walker for insightful contributions and direction as well as for patience. Also must I acknowledge the perceptive supervision of Dr Erik Eklund under whose hand the thesis was submitted. Thanks go also to the Library staff of the University and especially those in the University Archives. And not least among those deserving of recognition are my fellow post-graduate students whose conversations and encouragement filled many pleasant hours. Last of all, and most importantly, I offer sincere and loving appreciation to my wife Robyn, and my daughter Rebecca, for time I was given to work when they would have preferred other things to happen.
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Synopsis.

Born in London in 1791, George Augustus Middleton attended Cambridge University but failed to graduate. Ordained priest for the Colonies in 1819, he arrived in Sydney, New South Wales, in January 1820 and shortly after commenced work as Assistant Chaplain at Parramatta in the role of *locum tenens* for the Reverend Samuel Marsden. In 1821 he was appointed to the convict settlement of Newcastle, where, over the ensuing five and a half years he found himself in constant conflict with both the military and ecclesiastical authorities because of his perceived absenteeism and his agricultural dealings.

His conflict with the Commandant of Newcastle, Major James Morisset, originated from his perceived interference in, and condemnation of, Morisset’s disregard for the Sabbath and Christian morality. Relations between the two men broke down completely and Middleton found himself criticised from the Governor down and very much isolated.

In 1825, Archdeacon Thomas Hobbes Scott, a former secretary to Sir Thomas Bigge during Bigge’s enquiry into the state of New South Wales, arrived in Sydney and commenced the first structural organisation of the antipodean Anglican Church. Almost immediately relations between Scott and Middleton deteriorated to the point where, in 1827, Middleton resigned and moved to his land grant at Paterson, about 70 kilometres from Newcastle. Scholars since then have incorrectly seen the main cause of their conflict as Middleton’s perceived absenteeism, unaware that far greater differences existed. To Scott, Middleton was an incompetent administrator, a lax pastor and unfit for ministry.

After resigning, Middleton acted as a pastor, farmer, Justice of the Peace and community member until 1832, when, forced by drought, he moved to Sydney where
he established a school by which to support himself and his family.

In 1836, William Grant Broughton, formerly the Archdeacon of Australia, and later the first and only Bishop of Australia, returned from England, and in 1837, licensed Middleton to the parish of Butterwick and Seaham. There Middleton served as pastor until his early death in 1848.
A Note On Conversions.

Imperial measurements of weight, distance, area and currency are used throughout the text as these appear in quoted original documents. Pounds weight, miles, feet and inches, acres and pounds (£), shillings (s.) and pence (d.) equivalents (at 1966) are given to the nearest decimal place and are set out below:

- One Pound weight (lb) 0.45 kilograms
- One ounce 28.35 grams
- One Mile (statute) 1.60 kilometres
- One Rod 5.3 metres
- One acre 0.40 hectares
- One Pound (£) 2 dollars
- One shilling (s.) 10 cents
- One pence (d.) 1 cent
GEORGE AUGUSTUS MIDDLETON:

A PRODIGAL PRIEST?

Introduction.

Between 1788 and 1836, eighteen Anglican priests arrived in New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land. Within the church and across the settlement they became men of influence but as Graeme Griffin commented, few of their names have stayed in the public consciousness.¹ Brian Fletcher made a most apposite point when he stated that ‘Australian historiography has been assiduous in ignoring religion, and Anglicanism in particular, as a recurrent factor in Australian life’.² He might also have added that even more so, Anglicanism’s colonial clergy have been almost entirely ignored. Quite literally, they were the founding ‘fathers’ of the antipodean church and yet most have been overlooked by professional historians.³ Perhaps, as Griffin also postulates, it is partly their own fault in that they left little in writing because of the distances they travelled and the time these travels consumed.⁴ The Reverends Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, because of their unique roles, have been analysed in depth but concerning the others, research is, for the most part, ad hoc. Yet, it was these men, who as parish clergy, shouldered the burden of establishing and expanding the neophyte Australian church. Marcus Loane, a former

¹ Graeme Griffin, They Came to Care: Pastoral Men in Colonial Australia, Melbourne, Joint Board of Christian Education, 1993, 7.


⁴ Graeme Griffin, They Came to Care: Pastoral Men in Colonial Australia, 9.
Archbishop of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, described their unique position and the conditions under which they operated. In England endowments, parishioners and government provided support. In Australia, very different conditions prevailed. With no endowments, mostly disinterested parishioners and a government working to a different agenda, they lacked a firm basis of support. In an emerging society, as they faced new challenges, they relied on initiative and imagination. With no central ecclesiastical authority and, by today’s standards, very primitive communication, answers to the challenges they faced derived from personal ingenuity and the realities of their environment. Often, when pressed with urgent decisions, they found it easier to obtain forgiveness rather than permission if a determination went awry.

By persevering as they did, they made a unique contribution to the Anglican Church and their stories need to be told. Induced to come to the Great South Land by promises of sustenance and other support, they traversed the globe and on arriving found a church and society unlike anything ‘back home’. Confronted by a harsh climate, the unique Australian landscape, vast distances between settlements and the religious indifference of the majority of the population, they persevered, and in most instances, triumphed. The majority travelled over extensive and harsh terrain under trying conditions covering enormous distances to administer the sacraments and to preach the gospel. Most were greatly loved and sincerely admired by their congregations and generally respected across their parish communities. At life’s end they either died as did Richard Hill, while still serving, or else retired, having ‘borne

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the heat and burden of the day’. Alan Grocott was correct to point out that John Barrett in *That Better Country*, when analysing the work of the Roman Catholic clergy, omitted ‘the toiling pioneering work of George Middleton and many other of the clergy’. Perhaps William Charles Wentworth best summed up the community attitude when he wrote:

> The ecclesiastical community…the members of which, consisting altogether of nine in number, of course belong to the Church of England and are perhaps, with a single exception, pious and exemplary ministers of the gospel, zealous and indefatigable in the discharge of their spiritual duties, in some instances to the neglect of their temporal concerns.  

First and foremost these clergy faced a conflict between their spiritual function and secular demands. To survive they were forced to support themselves through glebes or landed estates with very poor soil and which were often covered in scrub and so were almost useless. Clearing them added further to their financial burden, as did employing the convicts assigned to their charge for this purpose. Further complicating their position was their legal status. They were free men living under the strictures of military rule, the Governors being all-powerful. From time to time disputes arose with the ruling elite, especially after Governor Phillip returned to England. Richard Johnson, for example, found the time he was allocated for church services was cut back and despite his pleas, he had no church from which to minister.

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7 The Gospel of St. Matthew 20:12. Richard Hill died suddenly in 1836 in the vestry of his parish church of St James, Sydney, shortly after conducting a service.


until he erected his own. As well, restrictions could be imposed on their ministry. Lieutenant Governor Grose refused to allow both Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, the second chaplain, to speak with John Fleming and Archibald McDonald, two men condemned to be hanged. Marsden, in later years, endured further clashes with the authorities. After Johnson returned to England, Marsden carried on a unique, lone and difficult ministry until 1809. Under very trying circumstances and impelled by his strong Evangelical convictions, he did all that he could to plant the gospel firmly in the community. Both Johnson and Marsden have had their stories told. Of the other clergy, those who arrived between 1809 and 1831, most also have interesting tales to tell which have yet to be recounted. Henry Fulton’s fame derives from his preparedness to work for justice. Ordained in Ireland, he arrived in New South Wales in 1799 as a convict, his punishment for allegedly supporting a rebellion in Ireland. Conditionally pardoned in 1800, he was appointed to the Hawkesbury River district. He later served on Norfolk Island, stood in for Samuel Marsden when Marsden went back to England in 1807, and then later still, served in

14 The early Anglican clergy in N.S.W., in order of arrival were Richard Johnson, Samuel Marsden, William Cowper, Robert Cartwright, John Youll, Benjamin Vale, Richard Hill, George Middleton, Thomas Reddall, Thomas Hobbes-Scott, Thomas Hassall, F.M.Wilkinson, Matthew Devenish-Mears, J.E.Keane, John Vincent, Elijah Smith, C.P.N.Wilton and William Grant Broughton. There were also a number of army chaplains who gave assistance such as James Bain, Chaplain to the N.S.W. Corps 1792-1794.
the Castlereagh and Richmond districts.\textsuperscript{15} He sided with Governor Bligh at the time of Bligh’s overthrow and subsequently returned to England to give evidence in respect of that affair. In part, his life has been covered by C.E. Lugard in \textit{Family of Fulton} but there is a great deal more which could be written.\textsuperscript{16} Two others, the Reverends William Cowper and especially Robert Cartwright, in their stories display the difficulties faced by the clergy as the colony expanded. They best represent those who fell on hard times because of official policy and indifferent parishioners. The Reverend Frederick Wilkinson arrived in 1825.\textsuperscript{17} He gained notoriety when Archdeacon Broughton dismissed him in 1831 because of his debts, his refusal to perform baptisms, his absenteeism and his indulgence in land and livestock.\textsuperscript{18} Wilkinson best portrays how clergy could lose sight of their high calling and be seduced by ‘this naughty world’.\textsuperscript{19} Other enticements seduced Robert Knopwood of Hobart. The \textit{Australian Encyclopaedia} says of him that ‘he gained the reputation of being an unconventional ‘good fellow, full of sympathy and fond of wine’.\textsuperscript{20} Under Governor Macquarie, Lieutenant Governor Davey of Hobart was instructed to

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} C.E. Lugard, ‘Family of Fulton’ in \textit{The Family of MacHenry in New South Wales, etc.}
\item \textsuperscript{17} Marsden to Pratt, 7 February 1825, ML, \textit{Bonwick Transcripts Box 53}, 1464.
\item \textsuperscript{19} \textsuperscript{16} ‘The Ordering of Priests’, \textit{The Book of Common Prayer, 1662}, Cambridge University Press, Undated, 320.
\item \textsuperscript{20} ‘Robert Knopwood’ (Editor not stated), \textit{The Australian Encyclopedia, Vol. 5}, 6\textsuperscript{th} Edition, Terrey Hills, N.S.W., Australian Geographical Society, 1996, 1834.
\end{itemize}
admonish him for any ‘reprehensible’ conduct.21 Mary Nicholls has produced interesting material on him, but it lacks depth and analysis.22 Rather than locate his life and service in the context of the colonial church and society, she lets her readers draw their own conclusions from Knopwood’s diary entries.23 Mabel Hookey in her work, *Bobby Knopwood and His Times* whets the appetite for a greater work to be undertaken. She commented that Knopwood was ‘this most unclerical of chaplains’, a hard-riding, sports loving parson of the eighteenth century, and illustrates her thesis with a wonderful anecdote of Knopwood startling his congregation when, in the middle of a sermon he roared ‘Damn that pony of mine! He’s loose again!24 Another writer, Geoffrey Stephens, has attempted to redeem Knopwood’s reputation from that of a guzzler and a gourmand.25 Of John Youl, Knopwood’s colleague in Tasmania, Phillip Blake has written *The Forgotten Chaplain, A Biography of the Reverend John Youl, 1773 – 1827, First Chaplain to Northern Tasmania*. In it he states that Youl was ‘not outstanding but he ministered faithfully’.26 It is a small volume which again, whets the appetite for a much larger and more detailed work.


Another priest, Thomas Hobbes Scott, Australia’s first and very controversial Archdeacon, reveals another facet of colonial religion and life - the potential for the use and abuse of ecclesiastical power. Ransome Wyatt, whose work is discussed later, related part of Scott’s story in *A Wine Merchant In Gaiters.* Kelvin Grose also wrote on Scott but only in respect of his coming to the colony. There is a great deal more about him that could be revealed.

Generally, arising from their pivotal role in policy formation, it has been the bishops who have attracted most historical interest. William Grant Broughton and Augustus Short are two of the earliest. F.T. Whitingt on analysed Broughton’s life and times in his work, *William Grant Broughton, Bishop of Australia.* More recently, G.P. Shaw, in 1978, published his work, *Patriarch and Patriot, William Grant Broughton 1788-1853: Colonial Statesman and Ecclesiastic.* Whitington also wrote on Augustus Short. Another work on Short by Judith Brown was completed in 1974. William Tyrrell, the first Bishop of Newcastle, attracted firstly,

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31 Frederick T. Whitington (ed.), *Augustus Short, First Bishop of Adelaide, A Chapter of Colonial Church History,* Adelaide, S.A., E.S. Wigg, 1887.

the attention of R.G. Boodle. Tyrrell’s incessant travels originating from his missionary zeal and his laying of a solid financial foundation for the Diocese of Newcastle, made him prominent as one of the greatest of the early episcopal leaders. Much later, Professor Elkin dealt with Tyrrell’s life and times but his work was by no means a comprehensive study. Time and space forbid a full discussion of other works depicting later men but a recent example shows what can be, and needs to be achieved. Peter Hempenstall’s masterful assessment of Ernest Burgmann, a former Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra-Goulburn, sets the benchmark for modern biographical scholarship.

George Middleton, the subject of this thesis, is attractive because he sat uneasily under authority and exercised an independent spirit. He, like his English counterparts, had a strong notion of autonomy. In consequence he found himself censured and in conflict with Governor Darling, the Commandant at Newcastle and his Archdeacon. In their turn, these conflicts brought him under the censure of the Evangelical movement of the church by whom he was savagely attacked through the pages of *The Sydney Gazette* in 1826. More than anything, he is remembered for his absenteeism, an unjust charge which has long overshadowed his contribution to the development of the church in the Hunter Valley.

Only after leaving Parramatta did Middleton develop his ‘prodigal’ conduct. It is easy to understand why. He was a widower separated from his young son,

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George. Newcastle was remote from Sydney and Parramatta and lacked the social structure to which he was accustomed. He was, as were most clergy, ignored, if not rejected by the convicts. That he absented himself and returned to the Sydney district or to his glebe and land grant is, in the light of these realities, understandable. This thesis will establish an appropriate historical understanding of Middleton the man and priest and his role in the ecclesiastical and social history of New South Wales, of Newcastle and of the Hunter Valley.

Much concerning Middleton can never be known. According to his descendants, his private letters, diaries, sermons and other written material, along with photographs, were destroyed during the nineteenth century in one of the notorious Hunter River floods. Consequently, among the primary sources available, those found predominantly in the Archives Authority of New South Wales and the State Library of New South Wales rank highly. They are comprised of correspondence with the Colonial Secretaries, the Governors in the period 1820 to 1832 and with Archdeacon Scott. Further important sources are the parish registers for Christ Church, Newcastle, St James Church, Morpeth, St Marys Church, Maitland and St Peters Church, East Maitland. While supplying no insight into Middleton’s personality or his thinking, these service records tell where and when he performed his ministry. Particularly useful are the entries made after June 1827. They furnish insights into a period when other documentary evidence is sparse.

As the sole pastor in the Lower Hunter district from mid-1821 till mid-1827 one might expect that Middleton would feature in the diaries and letters of the early

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38 Only Middleton’s signet ring and a silver soup spoon from the cutlery given to he and his wife, Sarah, at his second marriage are extant These items are in the possession of two of his descendants.
settlers. If he did, few references survive. Such as can be found are casual and meagre in number, providing only a glimmer of insight. They reveal only that he was, from time to time, involved pastorally in the life of certain families.

Of the other primary sources available, the Sydney newspapers hold high place. The Australian, The Sydney Monitor and especially The Sydney Gazette provide records of some of Middleton’s activities and of the attitudes existing towards the church and the clergy generally in the early 1800s. During the period 1820–1827 they noted contributions Middleton made to welfare organisations as well as some of his ministerial activities. Of particular value is The Sydney Gazette in its editions for 1826. The momentous detail published there proved invaluable. It unlocked virtually all the issues and controversies involving Middleton until 1827 and formed a solid foundation on which this thesis is grounded. In the light of the Gazette’s pages, the letters written to and from Middleton became highly significant, providing insights and opening up lines of research which otherwise might not have been identified. The newspapers also showed a social side to his activities. He was a member of at least one agricultural society and took part in political discussions, local activities and ecclesiastical functions.39 During the time he lived in Phoenix Park near the village of Morpeth in the lower Hunter Valley, and before his return to ministry in 1837, there are, in the Maitland Mercury, a number of references to his community involvement. Interestingly, apart from a death notice, neither this paper nor the Sydney newspapers mentioned him at the time of his death or afterwards.40

Additional primary material was the correspondence found in the files of the

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39 The Monitor, 2 March 1827.
40 See The Sydney Gazette, 19 May 1848 and the Maitland Mercury, 17 May 1848.
Clergy and School Lands Corporation. In an attempt to find a more adequate means of financing the stipends of clergy and of opening schools, the home government set up the Clergy and School Lands Corporation in 1825. Its correspondence, particularly as it related to Middleton’s glebe at Paterson proved very useful. Middleton’s overall financial position and pastoral interests became quite evident.

Sources from England provided only minimal information. Middleton landed in Sydney aged twenty nine years. The story of those years is sketchy. Through the writer’s inability to travel to Britain, circumstances dictated that only information from Cambridge University, from the Australian Joint Copying Project and from Middleton’s descendants has come to light. Particularly helpful was a paper written by the late Dr Geoffrey Middleton who engaged English researchers to try to uncover his ancestor’s background.41

Among the secondary sources, a variety of genres cover the history of the early colony, one of which is the family reminiscence. Dean William Macquarie Cowper’s book on the life of his father, the Reverend William Cowper, of St Phillips Church, Sydney is one.42 Another, which purports to be a biography, is anything but. It lacks any resemblance to a true biography. Essentially it is an incomplete series of reminiscences, mostly centred on Governor Hunter. Of its sixty two pages, only the last ten have anything to do with Cowper.43

The Reverend Robert Cartwright, the second of Marsden’s recruits, arrived in 1810 and served in an illustrious career in the Sydney area until he undertook an

41 Private Papers of Dr Geoffrey Middleton, unpublished. A copy is in the files of the writer.
itinerant ministry to the southern districts of New South Wales. Although not a controversial man, his story reveals his personal zeal and diligence and tells much about European penetration into new districts. Descendants of Cartwright include him as the subject of a very short chapter in a family history but the material is almost entirely drawn from official correspondence found in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.44

Another of the genres is the ‘mini-biography’ dealing with selected aspects of a person’s life. Previously mentioned is the work of Ransome Wyatt on Thomas Hobbes Scott. Wyatt’s work covers Scott’s Australian experience but omitted much of his life before 1819 and after 1831 when he returned to his parish of Whitfield in Yorkshire. That such a prominent figure has been overlooked is indeed curious.45

Secondary sources involving Middleton are very scarce. Few family reminiscences have been written and authors contemporary with Middleton or who wrote soon after his time, deal mostly with broad issues. When the church is mentioned it is in respect of policy and development. Few, if any individuals are treated in any depth. John Dunmore Lang mentions some, but mostly with reference to his personal relations or opinions and not on a wider basis. I.O. Balfour, Sir William Burton, Peter Cunningham, Robert Dawson, F. Eldershaw, W.C. Wentworth and H.W. Haygarth all present fascinating insights into the state of the colony, the church and people but rarely touch on ecclesiastical personalities.46

44 For Robert Cartwright see Edward W. Northwood, Defend the Fold: Cartwright Family History, Star Printery, Erskinville, N.S.W., 1984, 21-36. Much of the material on Cartwright is sourced from documents in the State Library of New South Wales. Little is original.


46 John Dunmore Lang, An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, Both as a Penal Settlement and as a British Colony, London, Cochrane and M'Crone, 1834, J.O Balfour, A Sketch of
In the later and broader histories of Australia one would not expect to find mention of clergy unless they made significant inputs into the national development. C.M.H. Clark and Ken Inglis are two writers representative of this genre. Clarke’s work is interested in the broad sweep of Australian history and its major themes and so writes little on the individual clergy. They are outside its scope. Inglis mentions Scott and Broughton but says nothing of Cowper or Cartwright or any of their colleagues. Another who covers the broad sweep of Australian history is Robert Hughes and he, too, fails to mention any clergy other than those whose reputations loom large and who are pertinent to his thesis.

Among authors with particular ecclesiastical interests are writers such as E.C. Rowland who mentions Middleton only in the context of Newcastle and his resignation but says little else. Jean Woolmington in her book, Religion in Early Australia. The Problem of Church and State, might have been expected to include

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50 E.C. Rowland, A Century of the English Church in N.S.W., Macarthur Press, Parramatta, 1948, 78.
work on the relations between the individual clergy and those in the government but little is revealed.\textsuperscript{51} J.D. Bollen is another in whose work there is little of Middleton.\textsuperscript{52} Tricia Blombery in her opus, \textit{The Anglicans In Australia}, writing some twenty three years later, fails to analyse in greater detail as well. While mentioning Johnson and Marsden as being mostly concerned, in the early days of settlement, with the status of the church, she makes no mention of later clergy.\textsuperscript{53} Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable might have been expected to treat Middleton with at least the same detail as is given to his contemporaries but they fail to mention him in the body of their work. In \textit{Sydney Anglicans} he is relegated to their footnotes and to their Appendix.\textsuperscript{54} Marcus Loane in his work on the colonial church comments on him in a disapproving manner, mentioning specifically his interest in agriculture.\textsuperscript{55}

In 1962 Ross Border presented a detailed analysis of the constitution of the church but wrote nothing of Middleton nor any of his contemporaries with the exception of Scott.\textsuperscript{56} As Middleton had little, if anything, to do with the specifics of Border’s analysis, his omission is easily explained. Alan Grocott presents by far the

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\textsuperscript{51} Jean Woolmington, \textit{Religion In Early Australia. The Problem of Church and State}, Stanmore, N.S.W., Cassell, Australia, 1976.


\textsuperscript{54} Stephen Judd, & Kenneth Cable, \textit{Sydney Anglicans}, Anglican Information Office, Sydney, N.S.W., 1987, 17, 351.


most detailed assessment of the colonial church and individual clergy. Insofar as Middleton is concerned, Grocott is highly condemnatory. His judgement is based on Middleton’s actions, actions which, like others of Middleton’s time and ever since, he made no effort to understand.

Quite surprisingly, historians and others writing specifically on the Hunter Valley also make little mention of Middleton or the clergy who followed him. Middleton in particular, played a significant role in the lives of the very early settlers, not only by his pastoral ministry, but also through his knowledge of the district, yet he rates little mention except in the works of Professor Elkin. Even there, the accuracy of some statements has to be tested against the historical records. Elkin tends to be more hagiographical than historical. Dulcie Hartley, a keen student of Hunter Valley history, might be expected to cover Middleton in some depth. Regrettably, in her work, *Men of Their Time: Pioneers of the Hunter River*, she makes no mention of him. In another work, *Settlers of the Big Swamps* he rates but a few lines concerning his ministerial function involving a convict, Barbara Styles. Judy White in *Tocal*, says only of him that he was a member of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales and the Paterson Farmers’ Club. In *Dawn In The Valley*, a work purporting to be a detailed insight into the early history of the Hunter Valley, Walter Allan Wood also makes only passing reference. A.C. Archer’s *The

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Settlement of the Paterson District also makes only casual reference yet, Middleton was one of the very first to take up land in the Paterson district, firstly in his glebe and later in his land grant.  

For those writing specifically of Newcastle, the story is no different. Dan O’Donnell mentions Middleton only incidentally. Paul Robertson in his work on the Evangelical clergy of early Newcastle and the Hunter Valley mentions Middleton but falls into at least two traps. He has Middleton returning to England in 1822 and then meeting his future wife on the return trip. Middleton never returned to England even though he applied to do so. Secondly, he conjectures as to Bishop Broughton’s allowing Middleton to operate from his home at Phoenix Park. There is no evidence to support his premise. Of all the authors, James Waddell in his book, A History of St Peters Church, East Maitland, is the only one who attempts to discuss Middleton in the context of all his activities and not just those which drew the criticism of his contemporaries. His thumb-nail sketch of Middleton is the only comprehensive and most accurate outline of his activities so far written.

The question arising out of this analysis is, ‘Why then is so little written about the clergy generally in the general and ecclesiastical histories and about Middleton in the local histories’? A number of suggestions spring to mind. He was subjected to trenchant criticism and in the mind of many, unworthy of the position he

64 Paul Robertson, Proclaiming Unsearchable Riches, Hertfordshire, Gracewing Fowler Wright Books, 1996.
65 This issue is dealt with in a later chapter.
66 James Waddell, A History of St Peters Church, East Maitland, Townsville, Qld, Image Print, 1996.
held. Consequently he is better relegated to obscurity rather than to, in their terms, be
allowed to besmirch the story of the church. He does not easily fit into their theses.
For others, knowing only of his alleged absenteeism, there is nothing else to add.

Essential to an understanding of Middleton is his background within the
English scene and later within the Australian context. These areas are the subject of
Chapter One. In Chapter Two Middleton is discussed in relation to his early life, his
decision to emigrate, his journey and arrival, his time in Parramatta and his
appointment to Newcastle. Chapter Three then examines Middleton in the context of
his ministry in the Hunter Valley and his relationships with the people he
encountered, namely Brevet Major Morisset, Archdeacon Scott and the convicts
assigned to him. Also included here is an analysis of his relationship with the
Aboriginal people. Because Middleton’s dealings with the establishment gave rise to
all the controversy surrounding him, Chapter Four examines in detail his falling out
with Major Morisset and with Thomas Scott, his Archdeacon. The latter conflict
resulted in his resignation. Also analysed is his relationship with the Evangelical
wing of the church as expressed through the pages of the *The Sydney Gazette*. In
Chapter Five there is an analysis of clergy finances in which Middleton’s finances
are investigated and compared with those of his clergy colleagues. Chapter Six
examines Middleton’s life after he resigned from the ministry in 1827 and his
subsequent return to ministry until the time of his early death in 1848.