

Hail and Farewell

Gippsland is an area unique in Australia; backed by mountains, bounded by the sea, cut off from the main Sydney-Melbourne axis of Australian history, it lacks those starker elements of the Australian mainland which have captivated our artists and the eyes of visitors. Yet, in many ways, Gippsland still embodies the nineteenth-century Australia celebrated by those who search our past and present for a national ethos. It seems to have a rare capacity to absorb change without altering its basic nature.

In 1956, Chester Eagle was sent to Gippsland, to Bairnsdale—a town the existence of which he was only dimly aware—as a Victorian Education Department appointee to the local technical school. On arrival, following initial dislike, he felt challenged, stayed twelve years, and 'fell in love' with the place'.

In *Hail and Farewell! An Evocation of Gippsland* he has brought to life Gippsland and its people. History, main-street gossip, bar talk and daily incident are combined with affectionate portrayals of local identities and reverential descriptions of the divine landscape. The place and its people live and breathe in its pages—the lean-to scoreboards, stump carvings, salmon trawlers and towering trees; the post-pioneering villages and their inhabitants—earthy, insular, and all acutely aware of each other. All are set down by an author who is deeply committed to his subject, yet has the necessary detachment to see it clearly and portray it with a sympathetic but wholly objective eye.

CHESTER EAGLE

HAIL AND FAREWELL

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An Evocation of Gippsland

Chester Eagle

