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The Editor welcomes for review scholarly, non-fiction publications in Australian and Pacific history and politics. These should be addressed to the Book Review Editor at the above address.

Cover Illustrations

Front cover: Metal trades workers played an important role in the economic development of 19th-century Sydney: certificate of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Machinists, Millwrights, Smiths, and Pattern Makers, c.1880s. (ANU Archives as part of the ASE Geelong records T61-6.)

Back cover: The Police Magistrate at Dungog in the 1830s was responsible for the districts of Dungog and Port Stephens and surrounding areas: Port Stephens looking East, Tahlee in foreground, c.1827, watercolour, Augustus Earle. (Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, PXD 265/f7.)

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A Sojourn at Port Arthur in 1839: the eyewitness account of French explorer Captain Cyrille Laplace

COLIN DYER

Introduction

The penal colony at Port Arthur had been in existence for less than a decade when Captain Cyrille Laplace paid his visit in February 1839, and it was its first director, Charles O'Hara Booth[1] and his wife Elizabeth who welcomed him into their home.

Laplace was then a very experienced traveller. He was in fact now making his second round-the-world voyage, and his second visit to Tasmania. He was 45 years of age.

He had joined the French Navy under Napoleon, and had served in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and in the West Indies. In 1823 he had been promoted to *lieutenant de vaisseau* and then in 1828 to *capitaine de frégate*. The following year he was appointed to command the corvette *La Favorite* on a commercial and scientific voyage round the world.

He left Toulon in December 1829 and rounded the Cape of Good Hope before visiting *l'Ile Bourbon* (today's La Réunion) then Pondichéry, Singapore, Manila and Macao where he arrived in November 1830. From here he sailed to Canton and then to Surabaya before reaching Hobart on 11 July 1831.

By nightfall that same day *La Favorite* was at anchor in front of 'Hobart-Town', where the inhabitants, 'on their pleasure-boats decorated with tricoloured flags and pennants', came out to greet the French. 'Such a welcome,' wrote Laplace, 'showed we were among friends and allies.[2]

During their stay the French were very well received in Hobart and, upon departure on 7 August, after a visit of nearly a month, they 'gave the English flag a twenty-one gun salute, which the fort returned immediately'.[3] From here they sailed on to Sydney, and then on to New Zealand and Chile. They finally arrived back in France on 21 April 1832, after an absence of two years and four months.

Four years later Laplace was to leave France again with one ship, the frigate *L'Artémise*, and essentially one aim. 'The mission you are going to carry out,' wrote his Minister for Navy, 'has as its basic purpose to render to French trade every service in your power.' He set out from Toulon on 20 January 1837, and once again rounded the Cape of Good Hope to enter the Indian Ocean, where he dropped anchor at Bourbon on 26 May. His itinerary then became circumambulatory and included Mauritius, the Seychelles, Ceylon, Pondichéry, Sumatra and then back to India. In February 1838 he sailed west to Muscat, Socotra and Bander Abbas before returning to India in early June. Then he set out eastward to Malacca, Manila, Macao and Batavia (today's Jakarta), and finally arrived in front of Hobart again (this time in mid-summer) on 26 January 1839.

Governor Sir John Franklin made the French visitors welcome. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

He immediately noticed 'the improvements accomplished' since his first visit. 'The number of houses spread out on the sides of the neighbouring high lands or grouped on the shore, had grown considerably,' he wrote. 'Where solitude had reigned eight years before, now there were beautiful farms surrounded by cultivated fields.[4]

Laplace's interest in correctional institutions was not to be limited to Port Arthur. Soon after his arrival he was invited by Governor Sir John Franklin to visit the '*prison de femmes convicts*'[5] at the foot of Mount Wellington.

Here he found the inmates of this community to be 'in a very satisfactory state, both morally and physically', and believed that 'this bears witness in favour of the philanthropical cares of which these women are the object'. They slept 'in beds with good blankets' and received 'three substantial meals in day in return for almost no work at all!' Laplace, therefore, may have not been surprised to learn that 'they prefer to remain under lock and key rather than to lead a peaceful, decent, orderly life working as domestics in private houses!'[6]

A few days later, accompanied this time by Lady (Jane) Franklin, he visited the Orphans' School of New-Town. At first, he went to the boy's section. 'What jolly little faces these children had,' he wrote. 'All the boys were neatly and uniformly dressed in olive-coloured cotton velvet and wore a cap.' When the school's director asked the boys questions about their studies, Laplace was 'delighted no less by the ease and propriety' of their answers 'than by the simplicity of the knowledge they had been given'.[7]

He then visited the girls' section where he saw 'little girls looking sweet and modest, with happy lively faces and rosy cheeks'.[8] He then went on to a 'separate building where the poor little beings taken from their mothers at the end of the breast-feeding are cared for'. Each baby, he noted, 'was in a little hammock, suspended from the four corners by two wooden rods just above the ground'. And the babies' 'clothing was as white as snow'. Their mothers, he observed, had returned 'to the penitentiary to expiate their culpable fecundity with six months of hard labour'.[9] His visits completed, he and Lady Franklin drove back to Hobart.

After visiting these two institutions Laplace described in detail the changes he observed in Hobart since his first visit. He described the 'high society' he met, and discussed the problems of the free emigrants compared to the life of the convicts he saw. He spoke with magistrates and called at homesteads. And then, shortly before his departure, he set out to visit Port Arthur.

My translation of Laplace's text begins here at volume V, chapter I, of his *Campagne de circumnavigation*, p 134.

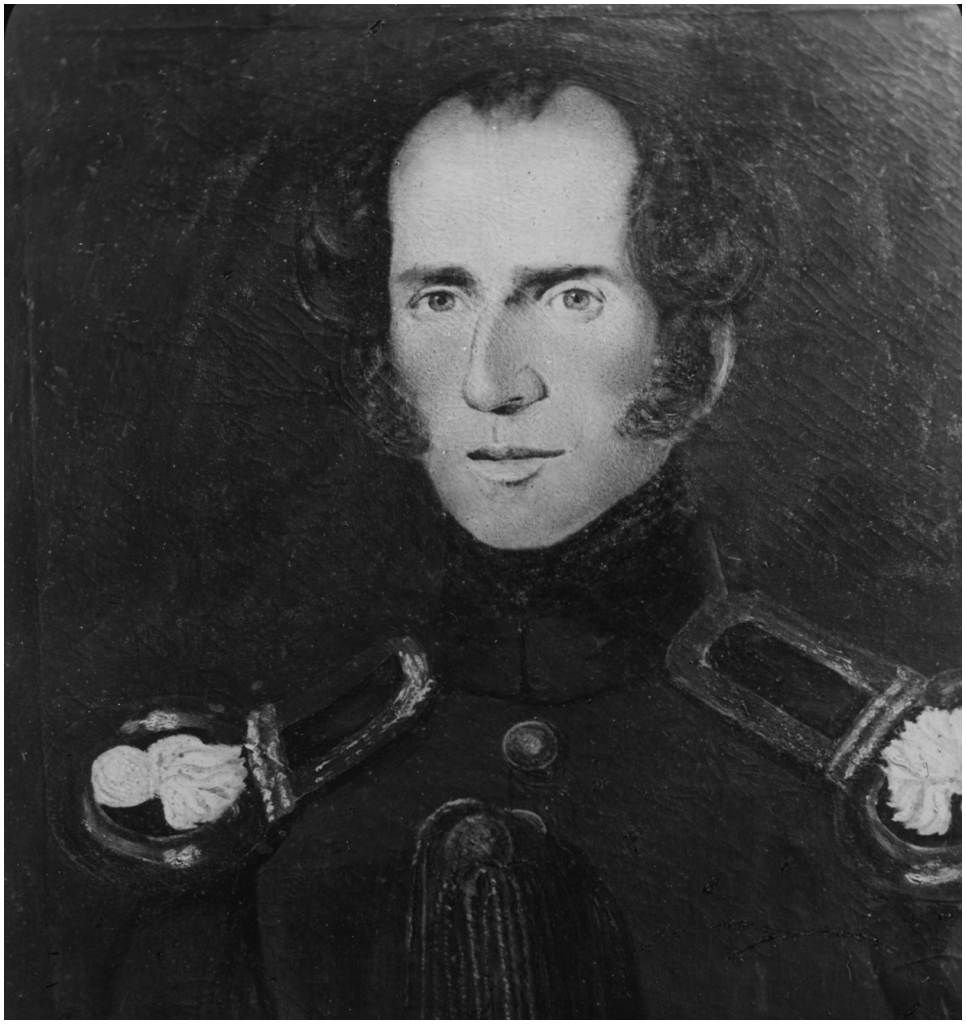
Translation

(The sub-headings are those of the translator.)

I decided to visit Port-Arthur, the Tasmanian penal colony of which I had heard such great praise and which, so to speak, was the cornerstone of most of the systems of deportation proposed at this time to the government.

So one morning, with letters of introduction given to me by Sir John Franklin for the prison's Director, I boarded a State schooner put at my disposition and, before nightfall and after having very peacefully crossed the terrible Storm Bay, I was received most cordially by Captain O'Hara-Booth [sic]. The Captain was from the 62nd Regiment of Fusiliers, a military man distinguished in every way, whose reflective spirit, rare energy and administrative talents had enabled him to be chosen to fulfil the difficult functions of superintendent of the Port-Arthur penitentiary. The manner of his welcome completely justified the idea that had been given to me about his character and distinction.

His combination of these precious qualities, to which must be added his kindness (which, it is true, was veiled a little by a cold and impassive appearance) had caught the attention of the first authorities in the colony a long time ago. So when, after a few mutations in the prison's personnel, the position of superintendent of Port-Arthur became vacant, it was immediately offered to him. His position with the Fusiliers was to remain his, according to the custom in the British Army, unless he relinquished his military career completely.



'A military man distinguished in every way': Captain Charles O'Hara Booth, Commandant of Port Arthur. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

What talents and qualities are required of a director of a penitentiary if he is to fulfil his difficult task correctly? Prudence, energy, morality, untiring perseverance, moderation, a perfect knowledge of the human heart, a keen observation, a love of what is good, a profound education in administration and even in the various branches of industry. And finally an eloquent means of expression, and manners which inspire both respect and affection. Well, I ask, what more could one require from the Prime Minister of a grand monarchy?

I wondered if I was going to find in Port-Arthur one of those penitentiary systems used for some years now in France or England? But no. I found quite simply a hard-labour penal-colony where about seven hundred of Van-Diemen's most incorrigible deportees were locked up. I saw a prison where the prisoners are employed by day on hard labour, and sleep at night in communal rooms. They wear a uniform, and are subject to being struck with a bâton or a whip, or being put into solitary confinement.

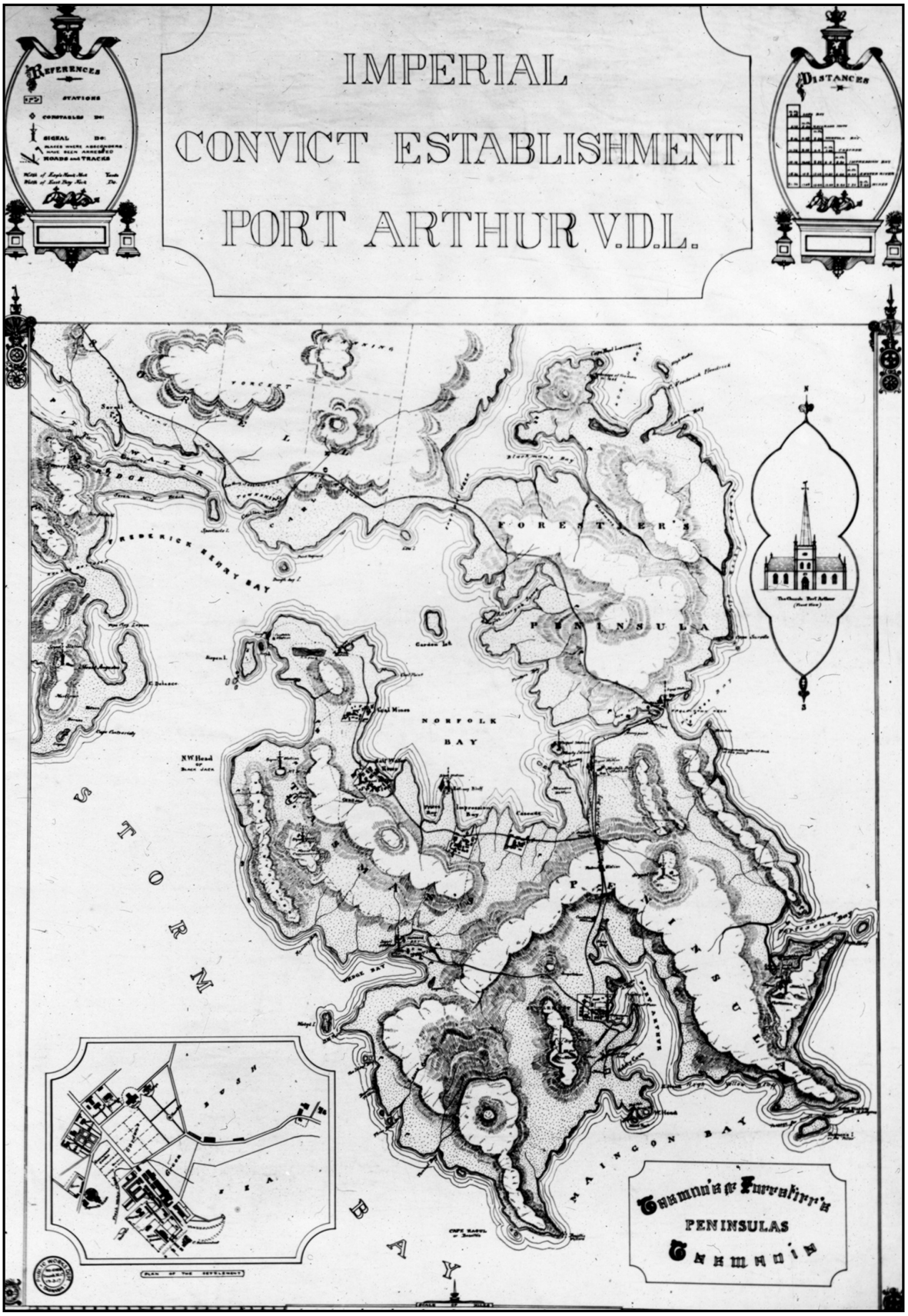
I confess that, unlike our [French] prisons, the convicts are not chained together two to two, and their food is healthy and abundant. They are well dressed according the season, and are kept very clean. An abusive or rough word is never said to them, and no corporal punishment is inflicted without an order from the first authority.

They were, however, the object of a constant surveillance. The smallest misdeed was punished on the spot with pitiless justice. Everyone knew his rights and duties perfectly. Consequently, a garrison of sixty soldiers at most, and a small quantity of guards taken from among the convicts themselves (along with the fear of corporal punishment or a stay in the cells) were sufficient to maintain the most perfect order and work activity among this horrible crowd of brigands and assassins.

In a very short time Captain Booth had accomplished truly extraordinary works of excavation, construction and land clearing. He had managed (at the expense of the masses of rocks that the mine had destroyed in order to make room by the edge of the sea) to provide the prison with most of the buildings it needed. He had also managed, by cultivating the land, to provide subsistence for his people and, by selling the products of their work, to defray Port Arthur's expenses. But what moral and physical vigour he had! What perseverance in his projects! And what devotion at every moment he had displayed in his difficult functions! What knowledge of men he had needed to obtain such results!

Nevertheless, however great the merit of the superintendent of Port-Arthur was in my eyes, I am still convinced that he would not have obtained such success if he had not been favoured by local circumstances.

Just imagine, if you will, a small mountainous piece of land projecting itself into the sea, covered in thick wild woods and forming several deep bays and an excellent port. This piece of land is part of the Tasman Peninsula, with its sombre, stormy and solitary aspect, and which navigators pass on their right when they seek the entrance



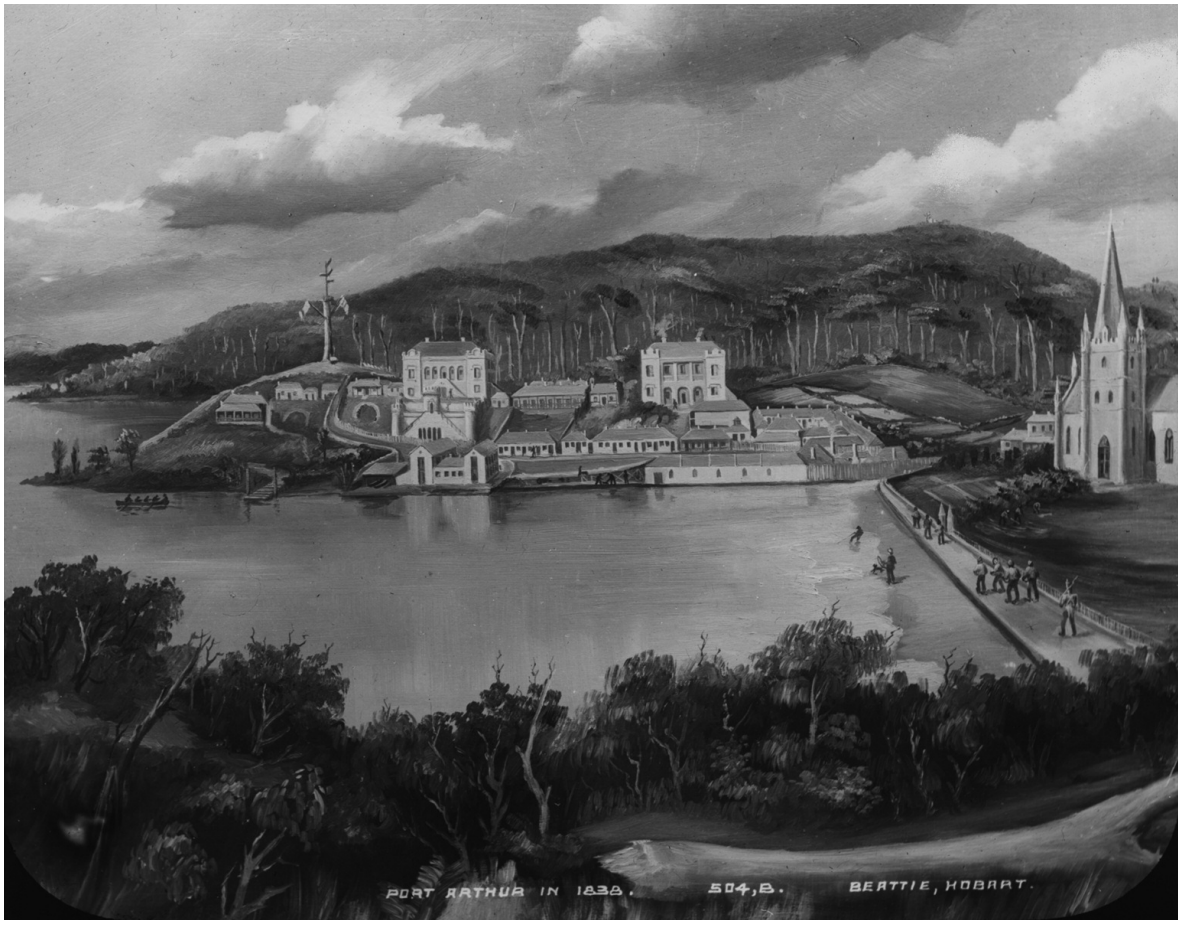
'Map of Tasman's and Forestiere's Peninsulas', entitled: 'Imperial Convict Establishment Port Arthur V.D.L.' n.d. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

to the Derwent. It is joined to the Van-Diemen by a strip of sand scarcely twenty metres wide,[10] which is easy to block off in order to prevent deserters from Port-Arthur going across.

No hope at all of regaining their freedom is left to the convicts. The profound solitude which reigns here, the defences which keep the fishing-boats away, the numerous guard-posts along the coast, and the look-outs on the hilltops who immediately announce (by means of telegraphs as far as Hobart-Town) everything that seems worthy of attention. All these represent insurmountable obstacles to the convicts.

Thus a column of smoke rising from a fire that some poor escapee from his irons has lit in the depths of the forest to try to warm up his frozen arms and legs is promptly signalled, and becomes the object of an active and intelligent search which is almost always crowned with success.

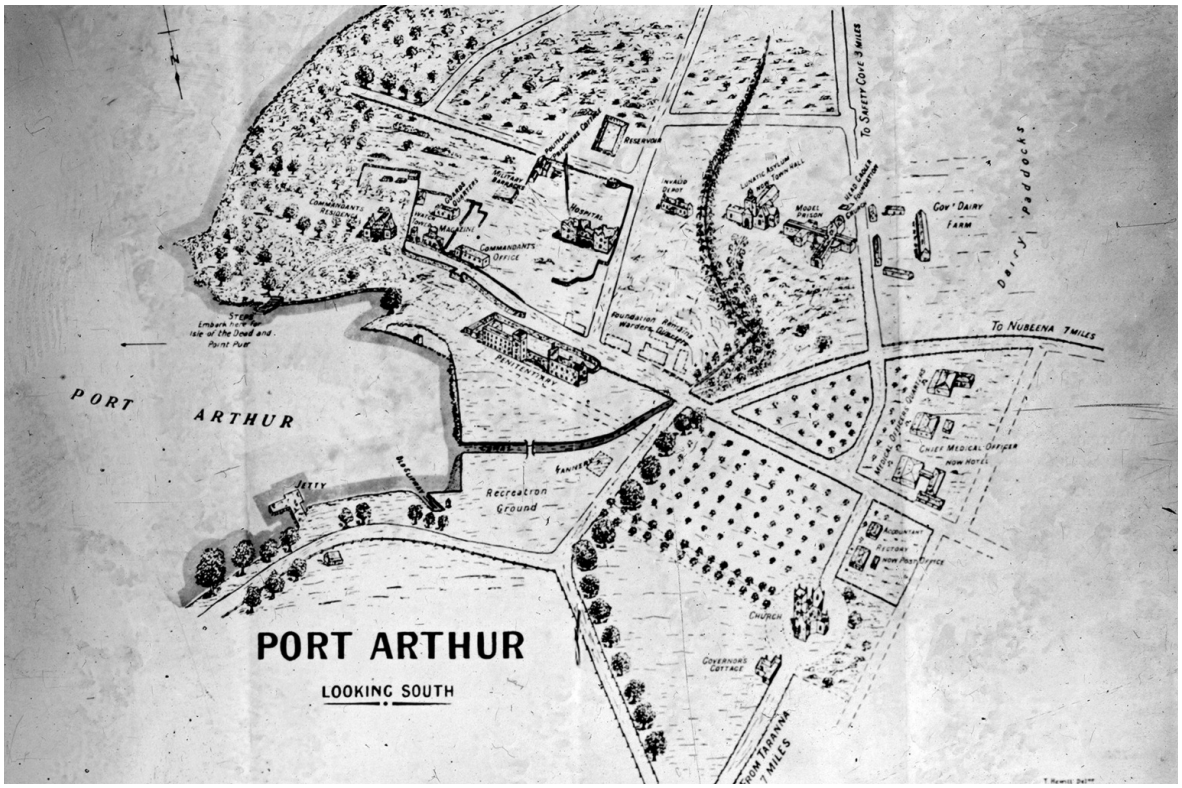
It was on these inhospitable shores that Governor Arthur, displeased with the few advantages he obtained from the penitentiary at Macquarie-Harbour, decided to found another similar one on the small peninsula I have described above, and to which his name was given.[11]



'The well-chosen site and its good maintenance excited my surprise': Port Arthur in 1838, from drawing by a prisoner at the settlement. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

The well-chosen site and its good maintenance excited my surprise when our schooner dropped anchor in the pretty bay where the settlement is established.

There is now an esplanade covered in workshops or warehouses and bordered by a little strand of white sand. On the other three sides the dark greenery comes down into the neighbouring valleys where the cultivated fields seem to be in dispute with the remnants of the forest. In the midst of this scene there are several rows of very pretty wooden or stone houses, all of which are charmingly clean and fresh. Among these is the superintendent's house, which can be distinguished by its green façade, its flowerbeds and its elegantly trellised main entrance. It is surrounded by a few old trees, which the isolated position of the building (at the left extremity of the constructions) has enabled to be spared.



Map of Port Arthur. (RAHS Walker Glass Slide Collection)

A little to the right of this house there are the troops' barracks, in front of which there is a kind of tower built in the style of the Middle Ages. From here the soldier on duty can see everything, and can watch over the safety of the houses of the principal authorities. This precaution seemed to me to be all the more necessary because these houses are very near the convicts' prison which, to my amazement, had no high walls and no heavy fences. I asked my captain, who was chatting with me (while his ship advanced slowly towards the anchorage), if this was indeed the prison where the worst criminals in Van-Diemen were kept. 'Yes', he replied, 'and, as you can see, none of the precautions taken everywhere else against convicts'

insubordination are known here in Port-Arthur. These wooden huts, so well-painted and so clean, suffice for their purpose. Indeed, what would be the use of precautions since, if any prisoner tries to escape into the woods, he is soon caught (if he doesn't given himself up, half-dead, with misery and hunger).

'If you keep looking along to your right,' continued my sailor guide, 'you will see a newly-built church near the sea, and then a valley where there are vast fields of vegetables. Then your eyes will come up against the sombre curtain of the forest with its gigantic old trees going up to the sky. It is these trees that the convicts must fell, at the price of immense fatigues and all year round.

'If we were less far from the shore,' said my obliging captain, 'you would hear the sound of the temporary workshops installed at the edge of the forest to square off the largest beams. And you can in fact already see the convicts dragging them, first to the sawmills down near the beach, and then along to that masonry platform over there, which is both a quay and an entrepôt where the various goods made by the convicts are waiting to be embarked.'

I could indeed just make out thousands of planks of all lengths and thicknesses, and hundreds of wooden beams of all sizes stacked up alongside heaps of tiles, bricks and lime for which, because of their good quality, the builders in Hobart-Town pay a high price. Further along there were piles of grey freestones set out for immediate use. Further on again, and parallel to the shore, there were vast stone warehouses with white façades and green shutters which offered a graceful sight.

'It is there,' said my guide, 'that almost all the penitentiary's maritime movement is concentrated. It is also there that, at night, all the boats belonging to the penitentiary are chained up in a pretty little dock, dug out by the convicts themselves. And finally it is there, in those vast buildings, that the penitentiary's provisions are kept, and where groups of convict cobblers or tailors work endlessly for the needs of their comrades in the colony's gaols.'

While we were talking, our schooner had dropped anchor near the quay and, a few moments later I found myself under the hospitable roof of commissioner Lamperière [Lempriere] and his charming family, where I immediately felt at my ease. Soon afterwards I found the same charms in the Governor's [sic] house, where I was greeted with perfect kindness by a pretty and graceful young lady whose marriage to Captain Booth had just recently taken her away from Hobart-Town's society, where she was one of the principal beauties.[12]

It was thus with pleasure that I shared my time in Port-Arthur between these two interesting families. Several other families of chief administrators came to join us when there were friendly gatherings given in my honour. Because here, in these isolated parts (where there are several hundred of the worst blackguards, with scarcely any troops to contain them) people have fun, and dance as if nothing mattered. The Government employees take turns for parties, and thus spend their days (and often their nights) quite cheerfully.

It is in this manner that I spent the first evening of my stay with the Superintendent at the penitentiary. At the dinner and at the improvised ball afterwards, everything was for me a subject for observation. The domestic servants, so clean, so submissive and so attentive to our every wish, were thieves and murderers whose names perhaps still made their compatriots tremble in England.

And yet, here in Van-Diemen, they were all around us, and circulated day and night in our apartments without causing the least disquiet – even among the young ladies and the girls (each of them prettier the one than the other) upon whom the gaze of these dangerous servants must have lingered often enough. But no. Subjugated no doubt by the energy and iron will of the first authority, and disciplined with severity and watched over at all times, these poor souls committed no petty thefts nor any crimes at all. They were peaceful and obedient. Except for a few attempts to regain their freedom, one never heard of serious crimes at Port-Arthur.

However, I must confess that I did not share completely the feeling of security in the people around me. Nevertheless I did not let this show, and not even at eleven o'clock when (with all his guests departed) Captain Booth invited me to accompany him on the round he was going to make inside the prison as he usually did before retiring for the night.

We went along the house towards the prison, unarmed in the dark night where, to my great astonishment, I found the gate guarded by just one orderly and closed with just an old padlock. We went into a yard surrounded by huts all ten metres long, and all lit inside by a lamp suspended from the roof. We visited several of these. Inside each one there were twelve convicts plus a guard, all of them in cabins furnished with a mattress and covers, and all of them fast asleep.

Not the slightest sound could be heard as we walked along peacefully, without seeing a single soul. In vain did I seek those innumerable warders, those guns loaded with grapeshot and those barred gates with their heavy bolts which make the visitors to a prison feel so sad. There was no noise of chains, no horrible nauseating smell which lets you know from afar that the there are convicts somewhere. The air here was pure, and the greatest silence reigned around us. My guide himself seemed to fear disturbing the peace and quiet by speaking too loudly. After we had left the prison (with as little ceremony as when we had gone in) our conversation took up again. I asked my guide how he had managed to make such remarkable progress so quickly, and how he had managed to build so many houses, a gaol and quays, and to transform masses of granite rocks into roads and terraces. I then asked him how he had obtained order, discipline and hard work from his turbulent subordinates.

'By severe punishment,' he replied. 'And by equal justice, by untiring vigilance, by requiring an absolute silence from the condemned men, and finally by making sure that insulting or humiliating remarks are never addressed to them. Only rarely (and then regretfully) do I use corporal punishment. Such punishment only demeans

the guilty people even more, and often exasperates them and pushes them into crime instead of correcting them. On the contrary, however, I obtain the best results from solitary confinement, which is greatly feared by even the worst convicts. This compels them, through boredom, to make salutary reflections on the past and on the future. Thus they generally come out better than when they went in.

'Unfortunately, however, this improvement does not last long. Their comrades' derisive comments and bad examples soon make them forget their good resolutions, and they become just as dangerous as before. This is so true,' continued the superintendent, 'that, until now, I have seen only very few of these unfortunate people persevere in the path of righteousness. And I do not think this will be possible as long as the prisoners are kept together – or, indeed, are not kept separately without seeing one another or knowing one another. In this manner they would be able to feel much more easily the benign influence of remorse, supported by religious counsel.

'But we must help this transformation of the criminal in solitary confinement by submitting him to a way of life from which harsh punishment is banished, and from which physical punishment does not prevent the healing of his soul. But these methods should not be abused, as they have been until now in the name of an exaggerated philanthropy. Concessions, instead of serving society's cause, will only cause increased demoralisation of the lowest classes of population (which are already so depraved) and will discourage good people.'[13]

While talking, we had arrived back at the house. It was midnight, and a great silence reigned in the streets. The moon cast a melancholy light on the various buildings and on the elevated tower where the vigilant sentry sang out his watchful cries which echoed repeatedly away in the mountains and surrounding woods.

I would have prolonged my walk even further if my host had not reminded me that the next day was to be a hardworking one for me, and that I should go to bed in order to be well rested. We thus retired to our respective apartments. On a comfortable bed I slept soundly until daybreak, despite the rather gloomy emotions I had just experienced.

This day was a Sunday. All work was suspended, and the convicts were busy inside the prison looking after their personal cleanliness and the cleanliness of their cells. At ten o'clock there was to be an inspection by the first authority of the equipment and personnel of the penitentiary. And indeed, at about that time, my host, whom I accompanied once again (after I had enjoyed a very good breakfast), made his way towards the huts we had visited the night before. We went all around, and everywhere I saw the greatest cleanliness, and principally in the hospital where I was struck by the comfortable way in which the sick were housed and treated. In the kitchens I found the same good order. The convicts' broth and bread, which I tasted, both seemed to me to be excellent. And beef, fresh vegetables, cabbages, potatoes and turnips had not been spared.

How many poor and good people in Europe would be happy to have as much, perhaps not seven times a week like the convicts of Port-Arthur, but just on Sundays in return for the hard work they have put in to provide for their family's daily subsistence.

This contrast seemed even more deplorable when, having returned to the wharf, we found ourselves in the presence of all the prisoners, lined up in three rows while awaiting their inspector's review. In front of us there were six or seven hundred of the most formidable rogues from Great-Britain. These were men for whom, for the most part, the most horrible crimes held nothing strange. They were in fact the scum [*écume*] of the criminals deported from Europe to Van-Diemen. And it was for the well-being of such people that so much solicitude was shown, so much money was spent when, all the while, the towns and countrysides of the three kingdoms were overflowing with good people being a prey to all the horrors of poverty and hunger!

However, I must concede that, while I was standing side-by-side with the Superintendent and in the midst of the convicts, the horror that I had first felt for them gradually gave way to a sort of commiseration.

I had expected to see villains looking basely fearful or perhaps cynical and insolent. But I saw none of that. On the contrary, I found prisoners suitably dressed in woollen clothes in good condition, white shirts and carefully blackened shoes. They all looked decent and submissive, and lowered their eyes as soon as we approached. They gave appropriate answers to the questions asked by their chief who, I noticed, spoke to the most fearsome and ferocious criminals among them and thus attracted my attention to these in particular. Their eyes had something sombre and sinister about them, and their bearing and appearance were marked with a sort of determination. But never, beneath these white and rosy British faces adorned for the most part with fair hair, would I have guessed that these were abominable villains.

As a consequence, it was almost with no feeling of anxiety at all that, looking around me, I noticed the complete isolation that my host and I shared with just two superior employees. Everywhere I looked I saw nothing but convicts. And even the guards were convicts (for, as I have said, all surveillance functions here – except those of a certain importance – are fulfilled uniquely by individuals recruited from among the well-behaved convicts).

These guards enjoy a few small material advantages, to which they hold dearly. And, as the least mistake would make them fall back into the crowd, they rarely give cause for complaint. Sometimes even, they show devotion to their chiefs. Consequently, Captain Booth told me, as it was difficult, if not impossible, to find (among the colony's free population) enough men offering moral guarantees to fill such work, he preferred this mode of surveillance to all others.

What was happening before my very eyes sufficed to justify this assertion. Captain Booth, almost on his own and with the greatest tranquillity, was inspecting

his fierce and dangerous prisoners. The only protection he had against their wicked plans and their vengeance was a dozen soldiers that I noticed on the top of the barracks tower. They were about a rifle-shot away from us, where we stood amidst six or seven hundred determined rascals.

This handful of armed men would certainly not have prevented these prisoners from revolting unless there had been other reasons preventing them from doing so. These reasons were the fear, the profound respect and even, for many of them, the veneration inspired in them by the fair yet severe and impassable character of their chief. His soul seemed as inaccessible to fear as to anger, and he had often been seen going through the woods unguarded with wretched men who, he knew perfectly, planned to kill him but did not do so because they were intimidated by his self-assurance.

With the inspection over, and while the convicts were making their way in good order towards the church to attend Sunday's divine service, the Captain took me to visit the store-houses he had built. He then explained to me his plans for future expansion. When the materials would be ready, he was going to build a new prison (which was to be near the church, where the ground goes gently down to the sea). This was needed because of the number of criminals increasing each day. He was also going to create spacious wharves, and a dock which was wider than the one already in existence and in which the coastal boats and those belonging to the penitentiary could be locked up day and night. And lastly, several other public buildings, destined to accommodate the first administrative authorities, were shortly to enlarge considerably the little town of Port-Arthur.

It was towards this new quarter, near the church, that we made our way, taking with us the pretty and graceful Mrs Booth, who had come to join us for divine service.

Divine service at Port Arthur

When I entered the church a new example of the order which reigned in the penitentiary increased yet again my admiration for everything I had seen.

The convicts are divided (as in the prison) into three categories. These are, firstly, the prisoners on *probation* (among whom the guards and junior employees are chosen), secondly the criminals whose conduct is neither good nor bad, and lastly the incorrigibles. They were all arranged on three levels superposed in front of the altar and pulpit. The most profound silence (and even a sort of meditation) reigned throughout the long speech that the minister delivered before everybody began to sing the hymns.

During all this, I ran my eyes over the various parts of this saintly edifice. Everything was simple, and completely bereft of ornamentation to the point where in many places the walls and the high vaults were missing their coating of white plaster. And in some parts the stones [in the walls] were completely bare, either because the masonry work had not been finished, or because the woodwork to cover them had not yet arrived. And yet I was not at all shocked by this excessive

simplicity. I found it to be in harmony with the emotions I was experiencing and the spectacle I was watching.

What, indeed, could be more serious and more imposing than this peaceful and silent gathering of hundreds of malefactors sullied with all sorts of crimes. What calmness reigned under the high vaults of this temple in the midst of the forests on an isolated and wild headland at the stormy end of these southern lands, and built by the same criminals that I saw assembled here to offer their prayers to the Eternal.

Captain Booth, however, had no illusions as to the solidity of this edifice he had built with so much trouble and care. He had obtained material results, but no moral results whatsoever. Order, discipline and activity reigned in the establishment. But when the convicts left to re-join their comrades in the capital, they were neither less villainous nor less demoralised than before.

'To what must one attribute,' I often asked my host, 'this incorrigible penchant for evil among men whose wicked passions are not moved by any corporal chastisement whatsoever, and who receive good and plentiful food and do not accomplish any more daily work than European workers have to do in order to stay alive?'

'This must be attributed,' he invariably replied, 'to the continual relations that exist between the prisoners, despite the silence which is imposed upon them. However, I believe there are some among these unfortunate individuals who, when taken away from this fatal influence, could perhaps still return to the good way of living. Because sometimes I see, in the depths of these gangrened souls, a glow of good sentiment that can be revived in several ways. And, among these, the memory of their family and religion are in the front rank.'

It was indeed principally to religion that the superintendent of Port-Arthur turned in the hope of softening the ferocious character of his terrible prisoners. I must confess that the severe aspect of this saintly place and the small impression that the minister's sermon seemed to produce among his listeners (of whom, I must say, a good number were snoozing) made me doubt at first about the efficacy of this means of conversion. But I promptly changed my mind when I heard a choir of voices singing the hymns of the Anglican religion. I cannot express what I felt upon hearing these sacred chords that the building's high vaults echoed back to us. Not being at all prepared for such impressions I felt so moved that my eyes filled with tears. I tried to hide this perhaps ridiculous excess, but I was reassured when I raised my eyes upon the assembly and notice the extraordinary change which had come about upon all these rough faces. The indifference and even boredom that nearly all of them had expressed was replaced by an expression of pleasure which illuminated the faces of these convicts. Their furrowed frowns had brightened with the first few chords of the sacred music, and their eyes had showed the most lively and sympathetic attention.

I could have believed that these hardened souls, softened by the charms of the music, would have opened up to the consoling and salutary influence of religion,

and that they would forget their horrible situation and become more disposed to repentance. But no. The memory of what Captain Booth had told me disenchanted me. This gleam of amendment was going to disappear along with its cause. 'Nevertheless,' the Superintendent assured me, 'this influence of Church ceremonies on our convicts, fleeting as it may be, has been very useful to establish the order and tranquillity which reigns in the penitentiary.'

The children's penitentiary

I had heard much talk in Hobart-Town about the penitentiary established not long ago at Port-Arthur for children[14] condemned in England to deportation, and among whom several hundred had already been sent. My kind host offered to take me there himself, and that Sunday afternoon saw us on horseback making our way along the sea for about three miles on a beautiful new road to the extreme point [of the headland] where I found, in the midst of a rather spacious plain, the establishment which was the aim of my peregrination.

This was composed of several vast buildings, in a not very advanced state of construction. There were also huts, no doubt built to receive the young convicts provisionally while they themselves (for they were almost the only workers here) finished constructing the stone buildings. Only one was occupied at the moment, and served as a prison for children whose bad instincts and turbulence had caused them to be banished momentarily from the community.

I found most of these assembled in a sort of closed hangar listening to a sermon pronounced by the same minister I had heard that morning. Most of them were asleep when we entered but, as they were required to stand in the Superintendent's presence, they were obliged to wake up. However, in view of the profound silence which accompanied the end of the sermon, I suspected that the audience had fallen asleep again. I took advantage of this peaceful moment to study the people and things around me.

This hangar, which was a dormitory as well as a refectory and study room, was naturally rather untidy. The children (among whom the eldest could be seventeen, and the youngest twelve) seemed to me generally dirty, and their clothing was falling in tatters. On these young faces I found nothing child-like but rather hard, pronounced and rough features. In their eyes there were the effrontery of crime mingled with the carefree nature of youth. There was nothing, in a word, which could arouse pity in my soul for these victims of the severity of the British laws.

My guide himself seemed troubled when he spoke to me about this. I understood clearly that this manner of getting rid of adolescent criminals, adopted recently by Great-Britain, did not have his sympathy. He complained bitterly because no precautions had been taken, regarding housing and providing for the young convicts, before casting them on Tasmanian soil. No funds had been allocated for their

expenses, and most requests for articles of clothing and other indispensable requirements had remained without response. Nothing, in fact, had been decreed concerning the future of these children.

It thus seemed to be accepted that, after having lived in a sort of deprivation of everything needed for their material welfare of their moral education, they could be sent out at the age of eighteen to the colony's gaols. There they would be mixed with the other deportees until they had finished their sentence. However, they are well fed and gently treated. But unfortunately, because of a lack of money to pay the free people to fulfil the functions of supervisors, these delicate functions are confided to convicts chosen from among the least bad in Port-Arthur. Consequently, I really wonder what lessons and what examples of morality these pupils receive from such guards?

However, in everything depending on the Superintendent, I found the same spirit of order and the same principle of activity which presided in the neighbouring penitentiary. These young convicts were learning to read, to write and to calculate during some hours of the day, and the rest of the day was dedicated to learning trades or carrying out public works needed for the establishment's progress. Some provided the workshops with tailors and cobblers, while others made lime and bricks or cut stones. A good number were employed as carpenters or masons, or as labourers making the building destined to replace the temporary wooden huts or else making roads to communicate with the neighbouring localities. The others were busy doing agricultural work growing vegetables and cereals in the nearby fields for the community's subsistence.

The results of these small workshops took on a greater importance every day, and diminished the considerable expenses that this new penitentiary caused to the colony. The metropolis [London], although always increasing the number of young prisoners, seemed to want (to the dismay of the inhabitants) to leave them entirely at the expense of the local treasury. These successes at Point Puer, in the eyes of the authorities in Hobart-Town, were much to the credit of Captain Booth.

The Captain, however, never ceased complaining about his lack of facilities for preparing the future of his charges, and for their moral and industrial education. Among these unfortunate children, however, there were a good number who were to undergo a long detention and several of them, scarcely fourteen years of age and condemned for breaking and entering at night, had been sentenced to hard labour for their entire life. At first I doubted if this were really true but, after making enquiries, I was convinced of the truth of this fact.

[On his way back to Hobart, Laplace visited the 'dog-line'].

The 'dog-line'

The most curious thing here, and which soon attracted my complete attention, was the company of dogs recruited from the nastiest animals of this kind in Hobart-Town, where there are many of them. These dogs are placed in a single line from

one side of the isthmus to the other. Each animal is attached to a stake at the sufficient distance from its neighbours to prevent them eating each other. Their purpose is warn the sentries, by their barking, of the approach of any convicts who may try to cross this redoubtable barrier. Several of these ferocious animals are placed on platforms above the waters which bathe these shores. From here they look out over the sea, and not a single deserter from Port-Arthur has yet been able to escape. And, during the dark and stormy nights (when an attempt at escape could be successful) a light is kept shining at each stake where there is a dog.

The furious barking of these horrible creatures (whose chains alone prevent them from tearing us to pieces) and the solitary and wild aspect of this place soon satisfied all my curiosity, and I was very pleased to return to the whaler.

Soon, however, a much more serious subject arose to occupy my thoughts. We had just begun crossing a vast bay when Captain Booth asked the skipper steering the boat why he had not sent a letter he had given him the day before. The convict replied that he had forgotten it in his pocket. As I didn't understand what was going on, I attached no importance to this, and all the less so because my companion looked perfectly indifferent.

After a few moments of silence, he told me in French (and just as if he were talking about the weather) that the people around us were probably up to no good and intended to get rid of us and to take off with the whaler. He told me not to worry because these rogues thought he was armed, but in fact he had forgotten to take his pistols. However, this situation would change when we got around the next peninsula when we would be out of sight of the mountain look-outs, and they could execute their plan more easily.

Then, continuing our conversation (in a quite natural way, so as not to arouse our dangerous companions' suspicion), he explained that the letter in question had been addressed to the chief of the guard-post to which we were now heading in order to ask him to prepare a whaler armed with sailors to take me to Hobart-Town. The convict skipper hoped that, by keeping the letter, we would stay on the present whaler (for lack of another having been prepared) and he would then be able to desert with his accomplices after having stripped us of everything they needed.

These convicts were certainly capable of anything. At first I was a little nervous but then, not noticing on these people's faces any sign that could make me fear a tragic end, I took on my role again as observer. I asked my guide for the information I needed to establish my opinion on the present and future state of the penitentiary at Port-Arthur.

'Everything,' I said to Captain Booth, 'seems to have been brought together by chance here to make the southern end of the Tasman Peninsula a place of punishment for criminals. Here, at the most stormy extremity of these southern lands, far from any other human beings, all means of escape have easily been taken away from them. And around them they find fertile lands where they can easily grow all the vegetables they

need. There are also pastures for cattle, and wood and other materials for constructions. Not one European power possesses (or can even hope to possess) anything at all near here. If England should wish to make a vast convict centre here to lock up her criminals (as, people say, is intended) then this penitentiary could easily contain them.

'But will such a state of affairs last long? Will Van-Diemen's population, which is already so unhappy with the metropolis, tolerate this patiently, and especially while the flow of free emigration (which, for a while had turned away from Tasmania to the other side of the Bass Strait) seems to want to come back to Hobart-Town? And will this population,' I say again, 'tolerate that the English government establish here an impure cloaca[15] of everything that the three Kingdoms [England, Scotland and Ireland] possess in the way of villainy or depravation, and from which all the miseries of our poor humanity will constantly flow?'

And, furthermore, will this population tolerate that the government sequesters, so to speak, one of the most beautiful parts of Van Diemen? Certainly not. Such a situation will not be tolerated, and before long we shall see the Chamber of Commons assailed with complaints, and the British cabinet constrained to yield the penal colonies in these distant lands to the demands of emigration[16].

The hours had gone by while I conversed with my travelling companion. The whaler had crossed the bay and we now arrived safe and sound at our destination, which was a kind of sub-branch of Port-Arthur where two hundred and fifty convicts are employed working a coal mine and stone quarries down by the sea. We went ashore on a very fine landing-stage and a few minutes later, thanks to the hospitality of the head of the small garrison at Coal's-Mines [sic], we were partaking of some very nice improvised light refreshment in a pretty house next to the troops' quarters. The house was very well appointed, and made me think once again that, if Great-Britain gives its colonies to be guarded by its troops, then nothing is spared to make them as comfortable as possible.

Our improvised refreshments were scarcely finished when Captain Booth (after having said goodbye to me and received my thanks for all his kindness) re-embarked in his whaler in order to return to Dog's Harbour [*Port des Chiens*]. This time, however, he provided himself with a pair of pistols, despite his conviction that he had nothing to fear from the crew. I later learned that in this circumstance (as in a thousand others no less perilous) that he had owed his salvation – and mine as well – to his *sang-froid* [sic], to his determination and especially to the ascendancy that his firm character asserted over these ferocious people.

Goodbye to Tasmania, via Port Arthur

The next morning *L'Artémise* weighed anchor and, after a twenty-one gun salute to the town, which was returned immediately by the fort, set out full-sail ahead for Port-Arthur. My intention there was to show this harbour to my officers, and to

obtain cheap supplies of wood, vegetables and especially potatoes, which were very important for the health of the crew.

Before nightfall the frigate, steered by a skilful pilot, dropped anchor in front of the penitentiary. The unusual presence of such a large warship, and flying a foreign flag, could not fail to produce a very lively sensation in the town, and especially among my kind acquaintances, from whom I had been separated for a week at the most.

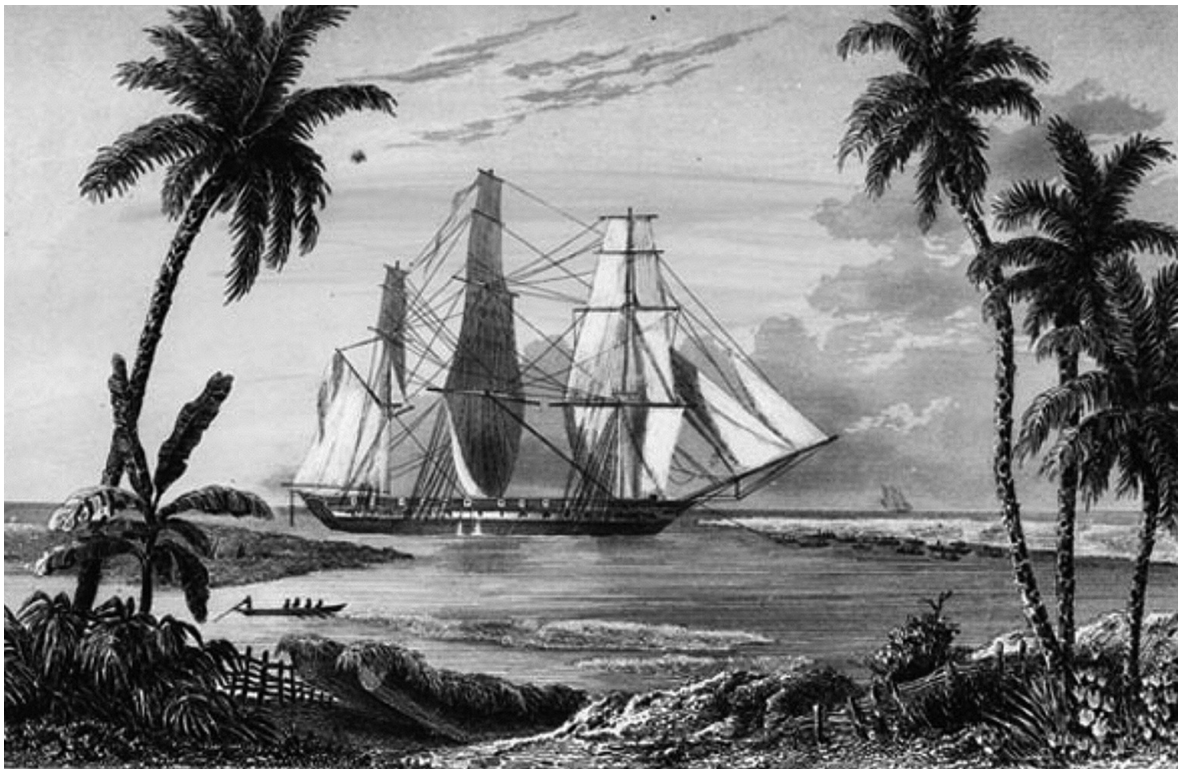
From the moment of our arrival Port Arthur took on a different appearance. From silence and uniformity it became a place of parties and entertainments. Dances, refreshments and grand dinners, (either on *L'Artémise* or at the homes of the Superintendent or the principal administrators) followed one another and occupied everyone in a very happy manner for the three days I had set aside of this visit. Everyone had a wonderful time. Nevertheless, while still enjoying myself, I did not abdicate my role as an observer and, thanks to the indefatigable kindness of Captain Booth, I gathered a new harvest of information. Among this was the story of the theft, by its crew, of that same whaler in which I had travelled with the Captain from Dogs' Harbour [*Port des Chiens*] to Coals'-Mines.

Captain Booth had indeed managed to get back home peacefully. But the next morning, at Coals'-Mines, by cleverly tricking the sergeant responsible for locking up the boats, the convict skipper and several of his comrades had got hold of the whaler and had quickly rowed it away to the high seas. Captain Booth was soon advised of this escape, and leapt into another whaler to give chase.

For a long time he kept within a mile of them (which was credit to his rowers who, although convicts themselves, showed great dedication), but those he was chasing were driven by despair and had a faster boat. Night came in and they were soon lost to sight. Captain Booth was then 30 miles from Port-Arthur with no food supplies and in heavy seas and deep darkness, so he decided to turn back to Port-Arthur where he arrived after having faced a thousand dangers. He learned that, after many a depredation on the southern coasts of Van-Diemen, these former convicts had stolen a coastal boat and had probably reached New Zealand where, already, several hundred escaped convicts like themselves from Van-Diemen had established themselves.

In the midst of so many distractions the time for departure had come along quickly for everyone both on land and on board. But more serious occupations awaited us, and we still had a great number of countries to visit.

We set sail on 24 February 1839 a little after midday in fine weather and with a favourable breeze which, pushing our beautiful frigate along out of the harbour, took us in a few hours as far as Cape Pellar [sic][17]. It was then that those almost limitless seas opened up before us that we had to cross from one end to the other. This was the immense Pacific Ocean, with its archipelagos surrounded by thousands of reefs, most of them unknown to navigators, and with which *L'Artémise* was unfortunately all too soon to experience the terrible contact.



An 'annoying setback': the frigate L'Artémise entering Tanoa in 1839, after running aground. (Painting by François-Edmond Pâris, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

But, for me as for my companions, the future was still coloured by the gentle shades of hope. Should we not see France again in the first months of the following year? And did not each crossing bring us closer to that time, which we hoped to reach without experiencing any annoying setbacks.

Our eyes turned eagerly towards Port-Jackson, where I planned to take the frigate before sailing out amidst the perilous waters of Polynesia.

End of translation

Epilogue

These 'perilous waters' indeed covered half the globe and, while he was in Hobart, Laplace and his companions could scarcely have been further from home. They had now to sail half way around the planet.

Laplace arrived in Port Jackson on 2 March 1839 and stayed until the 18th when he set sail across the northern point of New Zealand and on to Tahiti. Before arriving there, however, *L'Artémise* encountered the feared 'annoying setback' when it hit a reef and was seriously damaged. It took two months to repair the frigate before it could sail on to Honolulu, which it reached on 9 July.

From here Laplace sailed directly across to the Russian settlement of Bodega in California, before going on to nearby San Francisco and then to Peru and Chile.

L'Artémise went safely around Cape Horn on 12 January 1840 and reached Rio de Janeiro on 4 February. The way was now clear to sail for France, and they finally cast anchor in Lorient (on the Breton coast) ten weeks later on 14 April 1840. They had been away for a total of two years and three months. *L'Artémise* had deteriorated beyond repair, and would never sail again.

Laplace was now forty-six years of age, and had successfully completed two circumglobal navigations. He too would not sail again. He turned his attention to preparing the publication of his journal, and his first volume appeared in 1840. In 1853 he became vice-admiral. He died at Brest (just 100km north of Lorient) in 1875.

l'Universite de Caen, France; University of Queensland

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C. Laplace, *Voyage Autour du Monde par Les Mers de l'Inde et de Chine Exécuté sur La Corvette de l'Etat 'La Favorite'*, Paris, 1833-1839, 5 vols.

C. Laplace, *Campagne de Circumnavigation de La Frégate 'L'Artémise' Pendant Les Années 1837-1840*, Paris, 1841-1854, 6 vols.

Notes

1 Charles O'Hara Booth had been appointed in 1833.
2 C. Laplace, *Voyage Autour du Monde*, vol 3, p 143.
3 Laplace, *Voyage*, p 241.
4 C. Laplace, *Campagne de Circumnavigation de La Frégate, 'L'Artémise' …*
5 Laplace, *Campagne*, p 9.
6 Laplace, *Campagne*, p 10. The remains of this prison can still be seen today, some 3km south-west of the Hobart GPO, in its rather damp (there are rivulets nearby) and rather sunless (the sun sets early behind Mt Wellington) location.
7 Laplace, *Campagne*, pp 27-8.
8 Laplace, *Campagne*, p 30.
9 Laplace, *Campagne*, p 32.
10 Today's Eaglehawk Neck.
11 This was in 1833 (just two years after Laplace's first visit).
12 Booth had married Elizabeth Eagle in Hobart on 20 November 1838.
13 This quote of Booth's is taken from Laplace, *Campagne*, pp 152-3.
14 The penitentiary was in fact for boys only and is today's 'Point Puer ('puer being Latin for 'boy or child'). In December 1833 Governor Arthur had dispatched the first group of 65 boys. A second group of 68 arrived on 10 January 1834.
15 The Cloaca Maxima was the largest sewer under Rome, going from the Forum to the Tiber.
16 The penitentiary at Port Arthur closed in 1877.
17 Cape Pillar (correct spelling), is about 20km south-east of Port Arthur.

Canberra and the Frontier Wars

JAMES McDONALD

The district between Lakes George and Bathurst was on the brink of open conflict in autumn 1826. Several hundred Aboriginal people had gathered after two stockmen had been killed. Magistrate David Reid warned Governor Ralph Darling that further bloodshed was imminent. The rapid deployment of 30 mounted troopers under Captain Peter Bishop and an unknown number of hastily recruited militia quashed the unrest. Some key arrests were made and Aboriginal bands were pursued through the Canberra district, almost as far south as Cooma, where the British apprehended one of the leaders, described as the 'Chief of the Snowy Mountains'.

These events have been largely neglected in the histories of Canberra. This article hopes to bring them to attention and considers the nature of the first ethnohistoric contacts and accounts of Aboriginal resistance in the Canberra region from 1820 to 1840.[1]

Impact of European arrival in the Canberra district

It is not until the early 1890s – two generations after these events – that the first direct Aboriginal voice is heard about the dispossession, albeit in English. It is the blunt testimony of Nellie Hamilton.

> I no think much of your law. You come here and take my land, kill my possum, my kangaroo, leave me starve. Only give me rotten blanket. Me take calf or sheep, you shoot me or put me in jail. You bring bad sickness among us.[2]

Less than two decades later, most of the remaining Aboriginal people living independently in the Canberra district had been forcibly removed.[3]

Yet many pundits conclude that Canberra's colonial history was benign.[4] Canberra certainly does not appear on the *Colonial Frontier Massacres Map*, but while it seems to be the case that Canberra avoided significant bloodshed, the impact of the invasion was just as severe along the Molonglo as anywhere else.

Cultural Warning: Please note that this article contains information concerning atrocities committed against Aboriginal people and may be distressing.

Of course, we also have to ask whether there were atrocities committed that the perpetrators managed to conceal. According to oral tradition, a massacre occurred near Goulburn in the 1820s at Narambulla Creek.[5] If it were not for the knowledge preserved by local Aboriginal families, news of this incident may have remained suppressed. Local pastoralist, Farquhar Ross, said that relations with Aboriginal people were peaceful except 'when enraged by some action of the whites they were to be dreaded by lonely people'.[6] Perhaps he was referring to the aftermath of a Goulburn conflict.

It is significant to note that there are no stories of massacres preserved by the descendants of Canberra's bands. Nevertheless, it does not take a documented massacre to demonstrate that matters were less severe in a particular area. As Bryce Barker, observed, 'The emphasis on "massacre" reduces decades of all kinds of human suffering (from sexual slavery, beatings, forced labour, rape and forcible removals) to the semantics of numbers and terminology, thus masking the real long-term exploitation and misery of the Aboriginal frontier experience.'[7]

To explain the less volatile relations on the Molonglo, some have pointed to its geography and demography. There are claims that the Europeans concentrated in poorer areas and the physical impact was minimal; hence, conflict minimal. Others argue that relations were non-eventful because 'settlement' was sparse and the Europeans avoidable.[8] Neither view is convincing. The best land was certainly quickly seized and the two of the first pastoral stations were ambitious operations located directly on sites with significant intensity in the archaeological record: Canberry and Pialligo.[9] By the 1830s some of the largest flocks of sheep in New South Wales were grazing in the Canberra district. Bill Gammage and Bruce Pascoe have made emphatic cases for the rapid impact and dire consequences of the appropriation of grasslands and yam fields.[10]

It also might be argued that the location of the Molonglo River along what some people see as the intersection of Ngunawal and Ngarigo/Walgalu language groups meant that Canberra was, in a sense, liminal, and was not, therefore, a place where resistance might naturally anchor. This is a simplistic interpretation of borders and runs counter to the surviving demographic information and arguments presented by people identifying today as Ngambri (that is, as a distinct Canberra-based nation) and/or Ngunawal (a nation claiming most of the Australian Capital Territory).

More compelling factors explaining the nature of the resistance in Canberra are that:

1. The European arrival followed influenza in 1820 and the small local Aboriginal population had already been decimated;
2. Bishop's 1826 expedition demonstrated the superior firepower of the British and crushed thoughts of open resistance;
3. Governor Darling, at this time, was more intent than his predecessors on bringing the rule of law to the frontier and controlling the stockmen; and
4. Relations with workers appear to have been less hostile than elsewhere from the outset.

These four factors will be discussed in turn, below.

1. Disease, dispossession and decimation

Even before the Europeans first visited in 1820, their maladies had already penetrated the frontier. Nevertheless, the loss of life from the main non-influenza afflictions (smallpox, tuberculosis, syphilis, etc) certainly increased dramatically as transmission opportunities escalated.[11] When the Protector of Aborigines, George Robinson, visited the district in 1844 he said, 'Syphilitic and other European Disease among the Natives is prevalent, and their numbers are rapidly decreasing.'[12] But it was an influenza outbreak in 1820 that had the most profound impact. As a self-congratulatory aside in a letter to Governor Lachlan Macquarie, landowner and explorer Charles Throsby wrote:

> An unfortunate little native orphan about four years old, the only one of a family of six, including father, and mother, that has not paid the great debt of nature during the present winter, being with the road party, and protected by [Joseph] Wild, I have desired him to be sent in, as a fit object for application to be received into the native asylum, I therefore, on his behalf respectfully request your Excellency's order for him to be received there.[13]

Portrait of Charles Throsby from miniature on ivory by an unknown artist. (Courtesy of the Berrima and District Historical and Family History Society)

In the same letter he refers to his own 'prevailing catarrh', which would suggest that he too was suffering from the virus and may have actually spread the infection himself.[14]

The key here is the tragic confluence of two events; that is, the first European expeditions to Canberra and this major influenza outbreak in the colony. In the timing, we may have an element vital to the explanation of the nature of the invasion of the Canberra district. The Bathurst bands may also have been affected by this influenza outbreak, but the Wiradjuri population was large and their territory vast, hence their ability to contract and recover was stronger. It is possible that the smaller Aboriginal bands of the Canberra area, however, had been so severely depleted that they were unable to rebound quickly and were too disrupted in the 1820s to mount the sort of resistance that their neighbours had been able to manage.

Relatively bloodless perhaps, but the European arrival along the Molonglo was just as catastrophic. According to pastoralists' population estimates, only 70 to 200 Aboriginal people had survived in the district by 1856.[15] Even in the most conservative of calculations, the population decline is startling. If we accept the higher survival figure (200) as our numerator, along with the lowest of population estimates shortly after the Europeans arrived (which range from 400 to 1000) as our denominator, then, the most cautious estimate equates to a 50 per cent decline in the 32 years from 1824 to 1856.[16]

This calculation produces a genocidal-like result in a single generation.[17] This is even ignoring the certain decline in populations due to the various waves of transmitted European diseases prior to 1820 as well as the 1860 measles epidemic after our period. If we look at it this way, the myth that the European arrival in Canberra was of low impact, disintegrates.[18]

Let us now look at the earliest ethnohistoric accounts to see what they tell us about relations in the mid-1820s.

It was not until the expedition of Captain Mark Currie and Major John Ovens that 'first contact' in the region is recorded. Key to the success of their expedition was the utilisation of veteran expeditioner, Joseph Wild, not just because of his experience in Canberra during the Throsby family expeditions, but as he was familiar with a number of Gundungurra and Tharawal guides and interpreters.[19]

Currie's journal says that they first encountered a group on 4 June 1823, probably at Ingalara. The episode was relatively uncontroversial and 'by tokens of kindness, offering them biscuits, etc, together with the assistance of a domesticated native of our party, induced them to come nearer and nearer, till by degrees we ultimately became very good friends'.[20] But an entry four days later describes a less amicable contact near the London Bridge rock formation. Currie describes capturing two men.

> We were fortunate enough to fall in with two natives, who, like the others we had met, were very much frightened – indeed, more so than those, for they fled like deer the instant they saw us; and being pursued by us on horseback, ran with great agility to the tops of trees, whence it required no small degree of persuasion to remove them. But succeeding at last in getting them down, we compelled one of them to go with us to show us the way to Lake Bathurst, they being invariably well acquainted with the best passes in the hills. The other returned to his tribe not far off in the bush.

So it is that in Currie's journal are found the first surviving descriptions of ethnohistoric contact for the Canberra district. In these passages the Aboriginal people that Currie and Ovens 'pressed' were unwilling and fearful. This, along with the lack of contact during the earlier peregrinations of the Europeans in the district, suggests that the local people had little wish to interact with them. At this stage, they may have hoped that the strangers were just passing through.[21]

In 1824, Owen Bowen and Joshua John Moore set about establishing the first two pastoral enterprises on the Molonglo. With the arrival of the Europeans, the mid-1820s would have seen countless ethnohistoric contacts. Yet virtually nothing is recorded about how the strangers interacted with Aboriginal peoples until the local blanket issue of 1834 and the diaries and transmitted recollections of the settlers from the 1840s.

2. The Frontier Wars arrive in the Canberra district

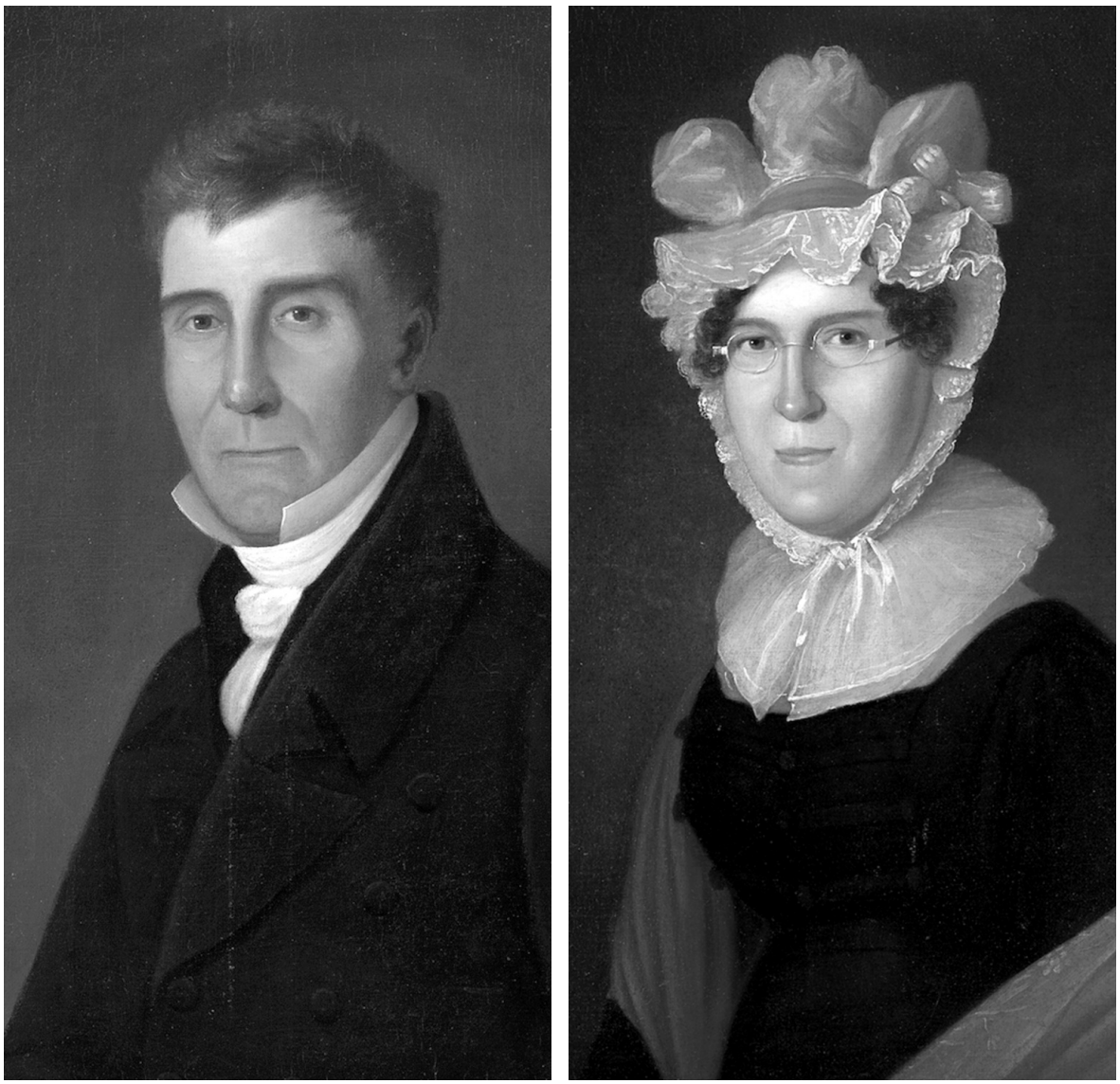
In April 1820, a report from the 'new country' reached Charles Throsby, claiming that an Aboriginal attack led by the otherwise unknown, Murrah-Murrah, was looming.[22] Upon closer investigation the trouble was sourced to the unprovoked murder of an Aboriginal man and no action was taken.[23] Murrah-Murrah was well known to Throsby, who paints him as being 'hostile' in his nature. This familiarity, the early timing and the reference to the 'new country' suggests that he was much more likely to have been western Gundungurra than from a Canberra-based band. Identity aside, the main point to note here is that conflict was becoming more common in the south-west as the pastoralists spread inland from Cowpastures.

The news of massacres at Appin in 1816 and Minnamurra in 1818 would have resonated across the Canberra district well before the European arrival in 1820.[24] But it was probably the Bathurst Plains atrocity of 1824 that was most alarming. This occurred at the very time that the first pastoralists began arriving in Canberra. Five stockmen killed six Wiradjuri men and women in retaliation for the spearing of a colleague. The men were tried for manslaughter but acquitted.[25]

At this time, Throsby was a rare colonial voice attempting to explain that Aboriginal people were rightfully defending themselves.[26] In particular, he was appalled by the actions on the Argyle frontier. As a magistrate in 1824 he took up the case of two girls who had been raped by stockmen from Richard Brooks' newest property at Turalla, just outside the present ACT border.

> I regret very much to be obliged to report that the hitherto peacable [sic] and very friendly disposition of the natives in Argyleshire, is likely to be provoked into hostility by the infamous conduct of some of the stockmen at the outstations, more especially some of those in the employ of Richard Brooks Esqr.[27]

Throsby goes on to report that relatives of the abducted Aboriginal girls set off to rescue them. There was a stand-off, but the stockmen refused to hand them over and the families were forced to back away when muskets were drawn. It is possible that the families were from a Canberra band, particularly, if the girls had been abducted near Turalla. By the time of the 1828 Census, this station was a large operation, employing 16 people. It is unclear what occurred, but the matter appears to have been subsequently resolved either by force of arms or the conciliation of the authorities in response to Throsby's entreaty.



Portraits in oils on canvas of Richard Brooks and Christiana Brooks by Augustus Earle, c.1826. (Courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria, [A33-1977; A34-1977])

Relations deteriorated again in early 1826. A band of Wiradjuri, led by Windradyne (or 'Saturday'), were fired upon by settlers when taking corn, north of Bathurst. Women and children were shot.[28] One of the stockmen was arrested, but tensions with Windradyne's people remained high.

Much further south, near Lake George, a man named Lynch was overcome by an Aboriginal warrior and killed for abducting a woman.[29] As it happened there were also large numbers of Aboriginal people travelling to Bong Bong (almost certainly including families from Canberra and the Monaro) for cultural business at this time.[30] After another stockman, Thomas Taylor, tried to abduct a woman, the situation worsened.

In her diary, Richard Brooks' wife Christiana Brooks specifically denounced the behaviour of the stockmen.

> May 12th 1826: … This hostility on the part of the Natives will I have no doubt be found, as it ever has been, to originate in outrages committed on them by the stock keepers, an ignorant and brutal race, who by their interference with the females of the aborigines provoke them to revenge.[31]

No doubt, other sympathetic Europeans, like Throsby and John Kennedy, had been conveying an honest account of what was happening on the ground to the new governor.[32]

At Sherwin's on the northern edge of Lake Bathurst in the last week of April, three men (two of whom were known as Raggytyhead and Cooma) exacted a brutal revenge on Taylor. He was speared as he fled, then killed close to the lake's edge.[33] The Sydney press speculated that mutilation and cannibalism was involved.[34] When the news of Taylor's death reached neighbouring stations, a party of 12 vigilantes was formed which pursued a band beyond Lake George probably into, or through, either Queanbeyan, or Pialligo, assuming that they travelled via Turalla.[35]

On 2 May 1826, David Reid reported that a large Aboriginal group had gathered between his home at Inverary Park and Lake George and that their intentions were hostile.[36] The government believed that the behaviour of the stockmen was behind the unrest. Governor Darling accepted Reid's advice that the situation was so tense that the inhabitants were coordinating a defence in large numbers which had the potential, if unchecked, to overwhelm Argyle. Darling's reaction in Argyle is a preface to his reaction later that year to the violence in the Hunter Valley.[37]

The governor acted swiftly. He ordered a detachment of 30 mounted troops under the command of Captain Peter Bishop at Five Islands (Illawarra) to ride to Bong Bong (Moss Vale) and Inverary Park and to liaise with the magistrates, then to pursue and apprehend the killers and negotiate with Aboriginal leaders. Through such actions, he hoped to compel the bands to disperse.[38]

At the same time, Darling issued a public statement deploring the violence and

Swift action to head off unrest: Governor Ralph Darling (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

warning the pastoralists that, if they did not bring their stockmen to heel, prosecutions would follow and their licences to operate beyond the limit of the existing land grants would be revoked. He also asked that 'respectable' settlers communicate with local Aboriginal leaders and provide assurances that they would be afforded protection under the law.[39]

Although the information on the resulting expedition of Bishop is piecemeal and we cannot be certain of the precise sequence of events, there is enough extant material to reconstruct a basic summary and route (see map). As instructed, Bishop first seems to have consulted with magistrates Throsby and Reid. The former may have been instrumental in recruiting the guide, Bowyea.[40] If so, he was most likely one of the many Gundungurra speakers known to Throsby. He also appears to have armed local stockmen, thereby supplementing his numbers with hastily conscripted militia; perhaps the 12 vigilantes, already mentioned.

The Sydney press first incorrectly assumed that the troubles were being stirred up by Windradyne at Bathurst and assumed a more northerly route for the expedition. But Bishop was advised by Reid, who told him that the peoples assembling were bands predominantly from Lake George itself, the Canberra district, and beyond.[41]

Magistrate David Reid: 'The wild tribes … are all peacefully disposed towards us.' (Courtesy of David R. Reid; www.davesact.com/p/reid-crypt.html)

First, Bishop hunted down the three killers of Taylor and arrested them, perhaps no further than Lake George itself, as the men were locals and quickly apprehended. With the three alleged killers secured at Inverary (although two soon escaped), Bishop was then able to focus on the second part of his mission: pacification.[42] His force travelled beyond Lake George into the interior, pursuing a number of bands, apparently, across the Canberra district and down towards the Monaro, almost as far as Cooma, given that he reported being 'close upon 300 miles from Sydney'.[43]

Bishop was able to catch one of the leaders, who is described in one report as 'Chief of the Snowy Mountains'. He demonstrated his weaponry (muskets and sabres) and warned him that, if he did not agree to submit, the British would annihilate his people.[44] Apparently, the leader with whom he was communicating was so worried that he capitulated:

> By means of an interpreter, Captain BISHOP made him acquainted with His EXCELLENCY's instructions in reference to the determination of the Government to afford the aborigines every protection and encouragement, in the event of their allowing the stock-keepers, and other defenceless Europeans, to remain in safety; while, on the other hand, this sable chieftain was given to understand, that the troops would be despatched in pursuit, with orders to destroy every native, should the stockmen, or any other unoffending European, be molested after that interview. The chief was much alarmed, and promised the most implicit obedience to all that the Captain had to advance.[45]

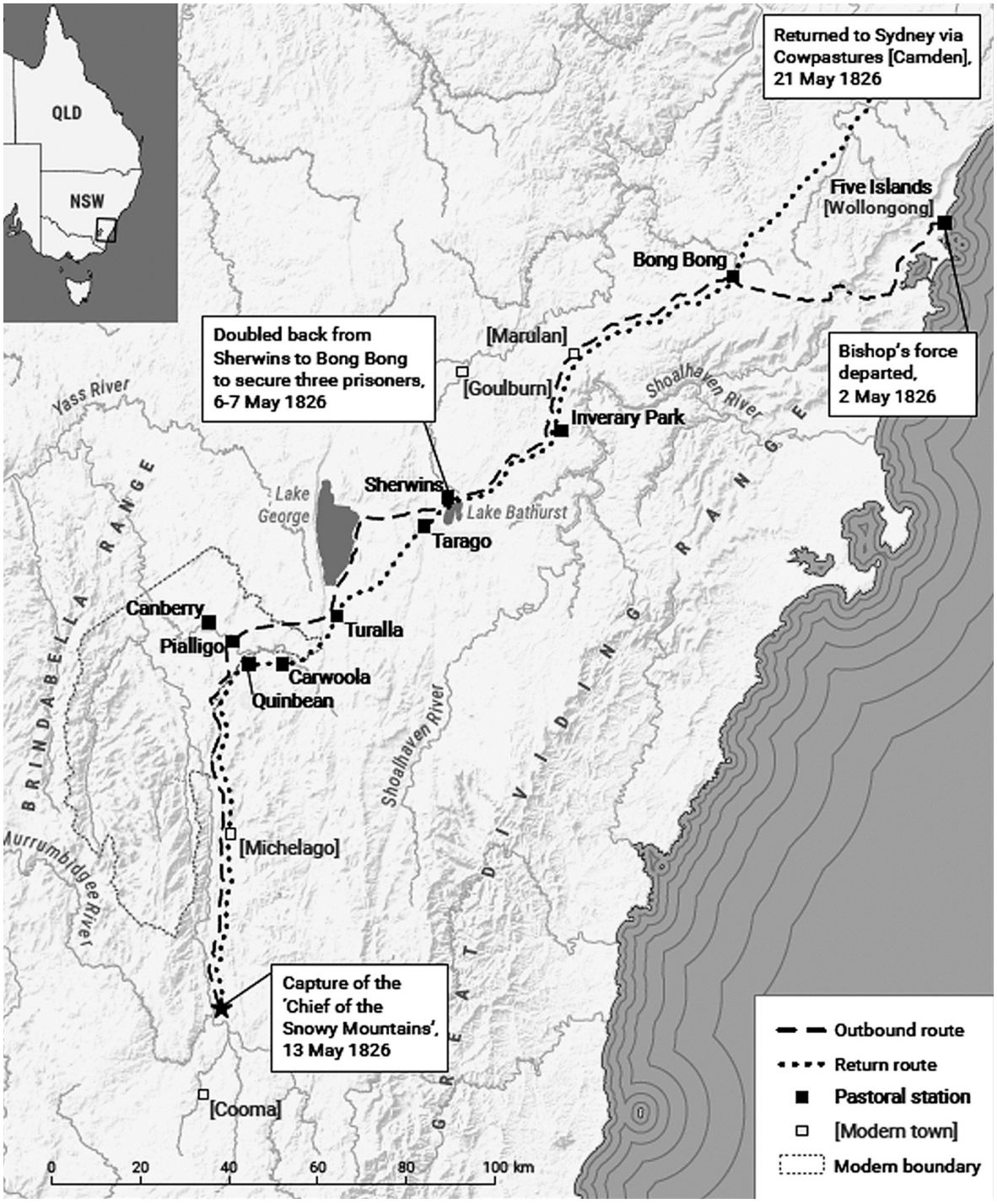
We should consider the possibility that this southern leader with whom Bishop was 'negotiating' had ventured north only to participate in cultural business and had found himself caught up more-or-less accidentally in events. Certainly, on balance, it looks as if the threat may have been exaggerated by Reid, as was his tendency. But even if these Canberra people who assembled at Lake George were not hostile themselves, the Lake George locals certainly were – outraged by dispossession, abduction and rape.

3. Darling's view

Governor Darling's response to the Lake George crisis was important for race relations, as it also had the effect of reining in the stockmen. Some Aboriginal people were reported as referring to Darling as 'the Great Gentleman', which might suggest that they accepted in good faith his promises. In a letter to his English masters, Darling was pleased with the result.

> I have much satisfaction in stating that … the Natives who had assembled in the County of Argyle, have dispersed without committing any depredation or act of violence. It is supposed, that the prompt and unsuspected appearance of the Troops in that distant part of the Country, had some effect in producing this desirable end.[46]

The press also reported Bishop's expedition as a resounding success 'without shedding a drop of human blood' and claimed that it stood in contrast to an expedition 'some years ago, when, unfortunately, men, women, and children, were indiscriminately and we must acknowledge inhumanly destroyed, by those who were despatched to quell similar aboriginal disturbances'.[47]



Captain Peter Bishop's expedition, 1826. (Map prepared by Helen Walpole)

Four to five months later, Magistrate Reid, the man whose April letter triggered the Bishop expedition, took it upon himself to gauge the intentions of the 'wild tribes'. In a letter to Colonial Secretary Macleay (20 October 1826) Reid reports that he sent Marauenou, a Parramarago man, westwards, on what was effectively a mission to gather intelligence.[48] An extract of his letter is quoted below (with his corrections included).

> Marauenou was sent by me a long way to the Westward amongst the wild tribes, who visited the place in such numbers a few months back for the purpose of ascertaining if they still entertained ~~again~~ any hostile feeling against the Whites in Consequence of what happened at Lake Bathurst, ~~and~~ but I am happy in having to represent for His Excellency's Information that he has returned with ~~information~~ intelligence that they are all peacefully disposed towards us and ~~I am happy in having to state,~~ that the information of the said Marauenou is somewhat confirmed by my own personal observations in a late tour to Bateman's Bay, with the communication I held with the Natives there, who also declared themselves to be in perfect ~~peace~~ amity with us.

The letter also helps validate the claims that the 1826 assembly was large and predominantly comprised of bands from beyond Lake George. By February 1827 the *Sydney Gazette* claimed that the Argyle frontier had been pacified.

> The Mounted Police left Boong Boong [sic] on Monday last, to travel into the interior, by way of Dr Reid's, from thence to Lake George.[49] They will return to Mr Throsby's residence via Goulburn Plains. The natives have quite disappeared, and all is perfectly tranquil.[50]

In 1827 we also have the brief account of William Riley, who was working for the Brooks family and was travelling from Bungendore to the Monaro. He met a Namadgi group at Tuggeranong and wrote up the encounter in an article submitted to a London journal. It was rejected for publication, but the manuscript survived. The group was friendly and, at Riley's request, even performed a dance for him that included a comic rendition of Europeans milking cows.[51]

If these accounts are representative, then the new governor's warning, the calculated demonstration of military muscle and the arrest of Taylor's alleged killer seems to have served to dispel tensions on both sides. But the situation was more complex. Once it became apparent that Taylor's alleged killer was never going to be tried and would be released, the Sydney *Monitor* renewed its clamour for 'justice' and warned that, if the government did not act, the stockmen would do so themselves and, this time, would be more careful to hide the evidence.[52]

Aboriginal concerns also seemed to be increasing. In December 1826 Aboriginal sources reported their displeasure to a journalist.

> The Blacks of Argyle say that the Great Gentleman (meaning the Governor) is only gammoning with regard to the man imprisoned these six months for murdering

> Thomas Taylor, the stockkeeper [sic], and that they will shortly proceed in consequence to take the lives of three others, long since obnoxious to and denounced by them namely Blake, Jem Palmer and Dorothy Palmer, his wife.[53]

The claims demonstrate that Aboriginal anger was directed at specific individuals and was not community-wide. Blake was an overseer at a station near Lake George, while the Palmers (James and Dorothy) were workers at Sherwin's, near Lake Bathurst, the same station where Taylor had worked.

The year 1827 also marked the first record of inter-racial bloodshed in the Canberra district. This was the shooting of an Aboriginal man by the district's first bushranger, John Tennant, who had been one of the early convicts at Canberry from around early 1825 until September 1826, when he stole money from the pastoralist Joshua John Moore and 'bolted'.[54] Tennant is reported as being with Canberra's female bushranger, Mrs Winter, in late 1827 on the Yass River, where he was probably recuperating from buckshot wounds received near Murrumbateman in July.[55]

In the account, Tennant was said to have fought with an Aboriginal man and shot him in the groin. The victim successfully complained to the authorities, who sent Constable Jones and unnamed Aboriginal trackers in pursuit. Jones surprised Tennant and Winter fishing on the Yass River near Gundaroo but failed to subdue the bushranger couple and they escaped.

If it were not for the government's pronouncements at this time we might otherwise conclude that it was only the fact that Tennant was a felon that the authorities acted. Even so, we must ask whether the shooting was anything more than an isolated event. It would appear not, as action against Tennant was swift and he committed violent acts at this time against Europeans just as readily as he did against this unidentified Aboriginal man.

4. Race relations after dispossession

Cooperation between the races is evident from the early days. Aboriginal people were engaged as stockmen in many of the Molonglo's sheep stations and cattle runs (for example, Canberry and Ginninderra). Early on, there were also local people willing to serve as guides, interpreters and trackers. Of course, these may have been outsiders or considered to have been traitors to those actively resisting the invasion. In January 1828, Make-a-cake and three unnamed Aboriginal guides – apparently locals – helped track down and capture Tennant's gang.

There were also what might be consensual inter-racial relationships. James Ainslie had been living with an Aboriginal woman – probably the same guide who led him to Pialligo in 1825 – for some years; and there is the case of Canberry bullocky, McDonald Smith, who was cohabiting with an Aboriginal woman until sent before the magistrate to account on moral grounds in 1829.[56] Yet given the

power imbalance and context of invasion, it will never be clear that we have truly consensual relationships in these two examples.

When surveyor Robert Dixon passed through Canberra in May 1829, he said that he encountered 'several tribes of natives' in the region 'all of which were peaceable'.[57] Of course, a seemingly 'peaceful' demeanour may be the result of violent suppression. Nevertheless, in the pastoralists' stories about race relations of the 1830s, positive anecdotes dominate.

The best-known positive example is that of Onyong's friendship with banished convict Garrett Cotter in the early 1830s.[58] There is also a story related by James Wright to his son, William, of an incident that suggests collaboration between Aboriginal people and tenant farmers at Lanyon, c.1840. There are multiple versions of the story, which erodes confidence, but there is enough consistency to suggest a kernel of truth. Wright's father said that the otherwise unknown bushrangers, Watson and Green, robbed the Conlons' hut and bailed up Mrs Conlon. Two Aboriginal men, named as Jacky and Como, witnessed the event and, when the bushrangers left, checked in with Mrs Conlon and volunteered to help. When they were preparing a meal at their campfire, Jacky and Como apprehended the bushrangers for her.[59]

While there are plenty of stories like these of cooperation and amicability, there are also stories of tension. An anonymous Duntroon shepherd in 1841 said that Aboriginal people were 'frightened of the Europeans', which implies violence had taken place against them and that they had been forced into submission.[60] This general picture of tension is also supported by William Bluett, who concluded on the basis of his interviews with the old families of the district (primarily, the Blundells) that, while there were clashes in the remote areas between some Aboriginal bands and Europeans (especially 'bolters', early convicts and 'lags'), there had been no fatalities.[61] Hence, there is just as much evidence suggesting hostility as there is suggesting amicability.

One person in the district who is recorded as having claimed to have shot Aboriginal people is James Ainslie. But he was a deeply troubled man, known for exaggeration in the promotion of his own bravado (for example, his false claim about being a Waterloo veteran). In a sworn statement made on 23 July 1839 during one of the last of a series of trials for several violent assaults (after his return to his native Scotland) and a few years before his suicide in a cell in Jedburgh Castle, Ainslie contrasts the behaviour of his Kelso adversaries with the 'cannibals' of Australia, whom he 'often had occasion to shoot in Australia for murdering and eating the whites'.[62] He was saying that the people of Kelso were worse. Obviously, the cannibalism claim is dross, but it does show that he was embellishing and how contemptuous his views were of the local bands even though he seems to have had a long-term relationship with a local Aboriginal woman himself. His evidence must be treated cautiously.

Better evidence of tension comes from the stories of members of the McKeahnie family, who arrived at Canberry (Acton) in the last week of 1838. Elizabeth McKeahnie told her granddaughter, Edith Dulhunty, that whenever she was left alone with the children at Gudgenby – where they lived from 1845 – she was 'often frightened by hostile tribes of Aboriginals coming around demanding food and tobacco'.[63] There is nothing surprising here. Requests for food and tobacco were common enough, as were the unrealised fears of the isolated families and travellers.[64] But more specific McKeahnie stories, which primarily appear in four very late newspaper articles (1913-1920), might suggest that violent acts had only been narrowly avoided.

Two obituaries state that Elizabeth McKeahnie was warned by a friendly Aboriginal man that a hostile group was approaching her hut (presumably, Boboyan).[65] At first light, she fled with her child (most likely her second son, Alexander, born April 1840; although Tony Corp thinks it was a number of children, including the baby, Elizabeth junior, born 1844) and travelled 'some 8 or 9 miles through swamps and scrub to the next station' (presumably, Yaouk), from which two shepherds were recruited, one of whom was armed with a musket. Strangely, the musket was left somewhere and the two shepherds were surprised unarmed by the band.

> They ran wildly for the place where the musket was but the blacks overhauled them and one man was speared with barbed spears. Just as the other was near the musket a spear passed through his shirt and stuck in the ground in front of him. When he gained the musket the black fled.[66]

There is no reason to dismiss a family story per se, but in this instance, nothing corroborates it. A spearing of a shepherd would not have gone unnoticed in either the press reports or the colonial records of the early 1840s. Incidents of this nature at this time were documented, investigated and disproportionate punishment meted out.

Even more troubling is the second McKeahnie tale. This one was relayed to Canberra historian Lyall Gillespie 130 years after events via Jim Ginn, a McPherson descendant, who was also connected to the McKeahnies.[67] Gillespie's handwritten reference card reads as follows.

> Charles McKeachnie [sic] of Booroomba was doing some building work on one occasion when Jemmy the Rover and 2 or 3 other Aborigines came on the scene. Charles had a small tomahawk which was lying on the ground. Jemmy picked this up between his toes and passed it to his hand behind his back. However his action was seen by one of the children. Jemmy decided to have his revenge when Charles McKeachnie was away at one of his other properties. He planned to kill Mrs McKeachnie and the children. However an Aboriginal thought to be Nellie warned Mrs McKeachnie and she set out with the children for the place where her husband was working reaching there just in time as Jemmy the Rover had been following.

The setting of this tale is problematic. McKeahnie seems to have acquired landholdings at Congwarra, Orroral and Naas before Booroomba in 1858, yet Noolup ('Jemmy the Rover') was in his mid-50s.[68] Noolup was a powerful figure unlikely to resort to clumsy tricks. Samuel Shumack says that he had been a frequent visitor at the McKeahnie homestead in Gudgenby and saved an infant who had become lost and was in danger from dingoes.[69] It was even the McKeahnie family in 1863 which, when Noolup was being pursued by the police at Yass, kept him provisioned until his death in 1864. The McKeahnie sisters attended his burial. Moreover, the element of flight with a band of children resembles the first story a little too closely, which suggests that conflation is at play here. Little about this story rings true.

Now we come to the last of the McKeahnie tales. This is the critical one that needs to be tested very carefully, as it is the only story that has survived about a potential armed rising against a Canberra pastoral station. It is in the form of a letter from Elizabeth McKeahnie junior, which she penned for the press in 1913, several years after her parents' deaths. In it, she refers to an incident relayed to her by her mother which, in turn, had been relayed, apparently, by residents of Canberry around 1839, about an incident occurring a few years even earlier still.

McKeahnie said that her parents had told her that they had been warned by an Aboriginal woman that a war band was planning to attack.

> The blacks once planned to murder all the men on Acton. A kind-hearted black gin knew it, and gave warning to the whites and when the blacks came they met a warm reception. However, they found out who gave the warning, and they killed the gin, and threw her body among some rocks, where her bones lay bleaching when my parents first came to Acton on Christmas eve, 1838.[70]

In her letter, she also states that her mother bore the first 'white child' in the Queanbeyan district (that is, her brother Alexander). This is false. Dozens of babies preceded the McKeahnie birth.[71] Not only does she stumble here, but the context for her claims needs to be considered. Her letter is written in the light of ardent opposition to a suggestion that the name of the new capital in 1913 be something other than 'Canberra'. She has taken umbrage and wants to prove a number of points. To present her case, she lists Aboriginal people alongside dingoes and expounds upon the courage of the outnumbered Europeans.

McKeahnie's case rests on her ability to emphasise the 'savagery' of the Aboriginal people and the peril of the Europeans at Canberry in the mid-1830s. She has constructed a house of cards and what few details in her letter can be checked against known information, turn out to be erroneous. At best, it is a third-hand transmission of an alleged armed stand-off at Canberry Station some years before December 1838. If there were Aboriginal oral accounts, or other evidence to

corroborate the story – which there are not – it could be taken more seriously.

It is now time to consider the two accounts relating to Onyong at Yaouk c.1839. Here, we are on much firmer ground. According to Shumack's recollections, Henry Hall's treatment of Aboriginal people was 'vile'.[72] In the late 1830s, Onyong was shot by Hall, when he had found him spearing cattle. It is a story, surprisingly, derived from Hall himself, via his friend, Wright, who was penning childhood reminiscences of the Tharwa district in 1895.

> This old brute [that is, Onyong] carried a bullet in his thigh for many a year which he received from the gun of the late Henry Hall, who one day came across the old fellow killing his cattle. This Mr Hall himself told me.[73]

Wright has been heavily criticised as a source and must be approached with caution, but on this occasion he cites a source and there is corroborating evidence, which builds confidence. In October 1839, Henry Bingham, Commissioner for Crown Lands, visited Yaouk and 'met with a small party of the natives at this place and took some arms from them'.[74] Perhaps the shooting of Onyong and the disarming of the band at Yaouk were connected. However, the date of the shooting is non-specific and we can only surmise.

Nevertheless, the context of these events in the late 1830s is significant in that the 1838-40 period were years of severe drought, with sheep and cattle prices plummeting. Locally, the Molonglo and even the Murrumbidgee rivers were reduced to water holes and the impact in the district was substantial. Stock would have been allowed to graze more widely. It is only under these extreme circumstances that Onyong is reported as spearing cattle. He would have known that he was likely to be shot if caught, but it was a risk he may have been willing to take and the herd of the detested Hall would have been an appropriate target.

Conclusion

There was certainly no peaceful transfer of lands to the Europeans and the impact on the Aboriginal peoples of the Canberra district was catastrophic and resented, as Nellie Hamilton attests.

It would seem that Canberra's small Aboriginal bands had the misfortune to face invasion immediately after the 1820 influenza outbreak. The impact from disease and dispossession was profound and had left the small population vulnerable, which might explain the limited accounts of conflict, particularly after Captain Bishop's resounding military mission, which scattered the assembled bands across the district and forced the subjection of the 'Chief of the Snowy Mountains'.

Confrontations seem to have occurred, but we only have snippets of varying quality upon which to rely. Collectively, the evidence does not point to the sort of

larger armed conflict that occurred in neighbouring districts such as Bathurst and Goulburn. Other than the possible plan to attack Canberry in the 1830s (reported third-hand and more than 80 years after events), the overwhelming picture is of splintered conflicts related to individuals. Certainly, there are no firm records of anyone having been killed and the only two shootings – in which both victims survived – were the Tennant incident in 1827 and the wounding of Onyong by Hall, about 12 years later.

It is true that resistance was less bloody in the Canberra district than in neighbouring areas, but there were less resources with which to resist and different circumstances along the Molonglo River. If there had been no pandemic in 1820, no military suppression by Bishop in 1826, a different governor, and less willingness by the pastoralists to 'employ' Aboriginal stockmen and trackers, a much more violent outcome would most likely have eventuated along the Molonglo as had occurred elsewhere.

Member RAHS

Notes

1 This article has benefited from advice from Dawn Casey, Michelle McDonald, Kay Walsh, David Wardle, Alinta Williams and Robert Williams. I am also indebted to the anonymous referees and the editor, particularly in relation to the impact of the influenza pandemic of 1820. Also note that as the city of Canberra was not founded until 1913 the use of 'Canberra district' may seem to be an anachronism. But 'Canberra' is derived from an ancient toponym closely associated with the area and specific Walgalu-speaking bands. See Koch in H. Koch and L. Hercus (eds), *Aboriginal Placenames: naming and re-naming the Australian landscape*, ANU, Canberra, 2009, p 149. Its earliest appearance is in Thomas Harrington's 'ticket of occupation', December 1825 (NSW State Archives 4/3516, p 132). G. A. Mawer (*Canberry Tales: an informal history*, Arcadia, North Melbourne, 2012, p 19) was the first historian to notice this. Also note that Canberra's first pastoralist, Joshua John Moore, uses it in letters dated 16 December 1826 and 14 September 1831 (Colonial Secretary's Letters relating to Land, NSW State Archives 2/7931). Surveyors Robert Dixon and Robert Hoddle also recorded the name from a very early stage (NSW State Archives, Dixon Map 3643, 15 May 1829; R. Hoddle, Field Book 375) and Canberry became the district's parish name in the documentation concerning the consecration of St John the Baptist in 1845. The use of 'Limestone Plains' would have been appropriate, but it, in itself, is a misnomer: the predominant surface geology of the district is actually granite, sandstone and basalt. For the limestone myth, see B. O'Keefe, 'Limeburners of the Limestone Plains and Beyond, 1833-1943', *Canberra Historical Journal* (hereafter *CHJ*), vol 34, 1994, pp 16-26.

2 In R. A. Broinowski, 'The first inhabitants of Canberra' (address to the Illawarra Museum and Historical Society, 1950, pp 1-2). His source seems to be Samuel Shumack (*An Autobiography, or, Tales and Legends of Canberra Pioneers*, ANU, Canberra, 1967, pp 149-50).

3 See *Queanbeyan Age and Queanbeyan Observer* (hereafter *QAQO*), 8 March 1910, p 2. Most seem to have moved to Edgerton Reserve (Mundoonan) near Yass, the south coast and Brungle near Tumut, although families kept their connection to Canberra alive through camping trails and cultural visits.

4 For example, W. D. Wright, *Canberra*, John Andrew, Sydney, 1923, p 57 ('not a very troublesome crowd'); F. Watson, *A Brief History of Canberra, the Capital City of Australia*, Federal Capital Press, Canberra, 1927, pp 36-7 ('naturally peaceful'); L. L. Gillespie, 'If Ginninderra Creek Could Speak', *CHJ*, vol 2, 1978, p 20 ('a very friendly tribe').
5 See AMBS, 'Goulburn Mulwaree LGA Aboriginal Heritage Study' (consultancy report to Goulburn Mulwaree Council), 2011, p 14. Delise Freeman repeated the claim to me in 2019. Cf. C. McAlister, *Old Pioneering Days in the Sunny South*, self-published, Goulburn, 1907, pp 82-4.
6 *Queanbeyan Age*, 9 April 1920, p 2.
7 B. Barker, 'Massacre, Frontier Conflict and Australian Archaeology', *Australian Archaeology*, vol 64, 2007, p 13.
8 For example D. Bell, 'From Moth Hunters to Black Trackers', BA Hons thesis, Monash University, 1975, p 47.
9 See W. Bluett, 'The Aborigines of the Canberra District' (paper presented to the Canberra and District Historical Society, 29 May 1954, pp 2-3, 16); J. Flood, *The Moth Hunters: Aboriginal prehistory of the Australian Alps*, AIAS (now AIATSIS), Canberra, 1980, pp 36, 162-7, 207.
10 B. Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth: how Aborigines made Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2012, pp 22-3, 43-4, 275-6; B. Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the birth of agriculture*, Magabala, Broome, 2014, p 55. For the flocks, see J. McDonald, 'A Good Sheep Station Ruined', *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, vol 2, 2019, pp 35-47.
11 See Flood, *The Moth Hunters*, pp 25-6, 32, 37-9; H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006 reprint, pp 62-4.
12 G. Mackaness (ed), 'George Augustus Robinson's Journey into Southeastern Australia, 1844', *Journal of Royal Australian Historical Society* (hereafter *JRAHS*), vol 27, 1941, pp 318-49. Cf. G. Bennett, *Wanderings in New South Wales, Batavia, Pedir Coast, Singapore and China: being the journal of a naturalist in those countries, during 1832, 1833 and 1834*, Bentley, London, 1834, vol 1, pp 159-60.
13 Charles Throsby to Lachlan Macquarie, 4 September 1820, NSW State Archives, 9/2743.
14 See D. Gojak, 'The 1820 influenza outbreak in Sydney and its impact on Indigenous and settler populations', *JRAHS*, vol 105, pt 2, 2019, pp 180-206. However, Peter Dowling (*Fatal contact: how epidemics nearly wiped out Australia's First Peoples*, Monash University, Clayton Vic, 2021, p 158) is not convinced that influenza was not present until 1820. He thinks it possible that it was in the colony as early as 1788, but it is certainly true that the 1820 winter was the first time in Australia that it is recorded as having taken a heavy toll amongst the Aboriginal population. He estimates that up to 50 per cent could be lost in a 'virgin-soil population exposed to a pathogen for the first time'.
15 For the numerator note that Frederick Campbell reported a corroboree near Ginninderra in 1853 attended by 200 Aboriginal people (in C. Newman, *The Spirit of Wharf House*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1961, p 26), which may have included visitors. Shumack reported 70 remaining inhabitants in 1856 (*An Autobiography*, p 148).
16 At worst, it is a 93 per cent decline (that is, from 1000 to 70). The estimates for the denominator are based on Wright, who described the 'Kamberra tribe' as 400 to 500; the 'Lanyon Correspondent' reporting in the *Queanbeyan Age* (25 September 1873, p 2), who said that he/she remembered a population of 700 to 800; a controversial letter from Elizabeth McKeahnie junior (*Tumut and Adelong Times*, 28 March 1913, p 4), recalling 500 camped at Gudgenby; Bluett (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 May 1927, p 11) who says that the 'Kgamburry tribe' numbered about 500; and another 'old resident', who claimed that 500 to 1000 Aboriginal people used to

camp on Black Hill (now Black Mountain; *QAQO*, 28 March 1913, p 2).
17 For the use of the term 'genocide' and its application in the Australian context, see A. Curthoys and J. Docker, 'Introduction – genocide: definitions, questions, settler-colonies', *Aboriginal History*, vol 25, 2001, pp 1-15). Cf. B. Attwood, *Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2005, pp 87-105.
18 For national estimates, see J. Harris, 'Hiding the Bodies: the myth of the humane colonisation of Aboriginal Australia', *Aboriginal History*, vol 27, 2003, pp 81-5.
19 A. Jackson-Nakano, *The Kamberri: a history from the records of Aboriginal families in the Canberra-Queanbeyan district and surrounds*, ANU, Canberra, 2001, p 33.
20 M. J. Currie, *Journal of an Excursion to the South of Lake George, 1823*, typescript copy held by Canberra and District Historical Society; original journal held in Mitchell Library, SLNSW, ML A2888.
21 Cf. Bluett, 'The Aborigines of the Canberra District', p 16; Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, pp 37-42.
22 Throsby to Macquarie, 30 April 1820, NSW State Archives 9/2743.
23 Throsby to Macquarie, 3 May 1820, NSW State Archives 9/2743.
24 M. Bennett, *Pathfinders: a history of Aboriginal trackers in NSW*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2020, pp 10-11. For the assumption that news of the European invasion and atrocities did spread from band to band, see Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier,* pp 20-3.
25 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* (hereafter *SG*), 5 August 1824, p 2; cf. C. Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars, 1788-1838*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2002, pp 57-60.
26 His humanitarianism may have been a later development as Throsby had earlier been part of the brutal regime at Newcastle (1805-1806). See M. Dunn, *The Convict Valley: the bloody struggle on Australia's early frontier*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2020, p 45.
27 Throsby to the Colonial Secretary, 7 September 1824, NSW State Archives 9/2733.
28 It is one of the examples cited by the Colonial Government in the statement about the unrest (first published *SG*, 6 May 1826, p 1). For Windradyne's prominence, see *Australian*, 19 January 1826, p 3, 14 October 1826, p 3 and particularly *SG*, 1 July 1826, p 2 (in which he is mooted as a commander of a proposed 'regiment of Aborigines' to secure the frontier). Cf. R. Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: a history since 1788* (5th ed), Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2019, pp 42-3; Bennett, *Pathfinders*, pp 17-18.
29 Statement from Colonial Secretary Macleay, first published, *SG*, 6 May 1826, p 1. On the impact of rape, see Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p 77.
30 *Monitor*, 9 June 1826, p 3.
31 Christiana Eliza Brooks, *Diary*, Mitchell Library, SLNSW, MLMSS 4661 (reel 2985).
32 See S. Gapps, *The Sydney Wars: conflict in the early colony, 1788-1817*, Newsouth, Sydney, 2018, pp 227-8, 233-4.
33 *Monitor*, 29 December 1826, p 3, 13 January 1827, p 4.
34 *Monitor*, 7 June 1826, p 2, 9 June 1826, p 3, 29 December 1826, p 3, 13 January 1827, p 4, 29 November 1827 p 6.
35 *Monitor*, 29 December 1826, p 3.
36 Colonial Secretary to Reid, 2 May 1826, Mitchell Library, SLNSW, A664.
37 See Dunn, *The Convict Valley*, pp 172-7.
38 The date is derived from *SG*, 6 May 1826, p 3.
39 *SG*, 6 May 1826, p 1; cf. 2 December 1826, p 3.
40 *Australian*, 17 May 1826, p 2; cf. *Monitor*, 9 June 1826, p 3; *SG*, 2 December 1826, p 3. Bowyea has not been identified, but there is a slight possibility that he is Cookoogong's brother,

Bian, alternatively Bhoohan, who accompanied Throsby, Wild and others on an important 1819 expedition looping up from Bong Bong to Bathurst. See J. McDonald 'Aboriginal Expertise in the European Expeditions to Canberra', *CHJ*, vol 86, 2021, pp 6-8.
41 *Australian*, 17 May 1826, p 2. The correction is made by *SG*, 20 May 1826, p 2.
42 For the purpose, see *SG*, 6 May 1826, p 3.
43 *SG*, 7 June 1826, p 2.
44 *Monitor*, 9 June 1826, p 3, 29 November 1827, p 6. For the fear of European weapons, see Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, pp 23-4.
45 *SG*, 7 June 1826, p 2; cf. *Monitor*, 9 June 1826, p 3.
46 Despatch Darling to Earl Bathurst, 23 May 1826, Mitchell Library, SLNSW, A1196.
47 *SG,* 7 June 1826, p 2; cf. *Monitor*, 29 December 1826, p 3. The reference to an earlier military expedition may be connected to the Bathurst Plains massacre of May 1824. Connor (*The Australian Frontier Wars*, p 17), in an unusual lapse, holds Bishop up as an example of restraint and also misidentifies the people he was dealing with as being only Ngunawal. The gathering included Gundungurra, Walgalu and Ngarigo speakers and Bishop threatened them with annihilation. Elsewhere, Bishop was said to be severe, as attested in a bitter dispute with the residents of Five Islands. Cf. *Monitor*, 13 October 1826, p 4.
48 Included in Army, Regiment of Foot, 3rd East Kent Regiment papers, Mitchell Library, SLNSW, A 338. Marauenou appears in Robert Dixon's report of May 1829 in which he says that he met 'several tribes of Natives amongst which were the Notorious Montogo, Maravanue, Borabong, etc' when he was surveying the junction of the Murrumbidgee and Yass Rivers. He is otherwise unknown.
49 Reid's homestead was Inverary Park near Bungonia. This means that they were travelling south of Goulburn and in a more direct route to Lakes Bathurst and George.
50 *SG*, 10 February 1827, p 2. Of course, this was exaggeration, as we know from Reid's letter of 20 October 1826 (Mitchell Library, SLNSW, A338), 70 to 80 people remained of the Parramarago alone (that is, near Lake Bathurst).
51 For the episode, see P. Procter, 'Onyong and his Battle with Sources', *Quinbean*, vol 9, 2, 2016, pp 23-4. For the introduction of European elements into dance, see Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, pp 49-51.
52 *Monitor*, 29 December 1826, p 3, 13 January 1827, p 4, 29 November 1827, p 6.
53 *Monitor*, 1 December 1826, p 2.
54 *SG*, 24 September 1827, p 4; 7 October 1826, p 4.
55 J. McDonald, 'Winter in Argyle: unearthing Canberra's female bushranger', *CHJ*, vol 84, 2020, pp 11-16, concerning the *Monitor* report of 15 October 1827, p 8.
56 *Australian*, 25 January 1828, p 2. Cf. R. Henderson, 'James Ainslie: stranger than fiction', *JRAHS*, vol 98, pt 2, 2012, p 229.
57 Progress report, May 1829, NSW State Archives, 2/7842. Cf. L. L. Gillespie, *Aborigines of the Canberra Region*, Wizard, Campbell ACT, 1984, p 31.
58 See, for example, B. Moore. *Cotter Country*, privately published, Yamba NSW, 1999, pp 8-11, 22, 25.
59 W. D. Wright, in *QAQO*, 14 May 1895, p 4; *Canberra*, pp 28-31, 55. For the troubling anomalies see P. Procter, 'William Davis Wright: bushrangers, cattle duffers, wild colonial boys', *Quinbean*, vol 12, 3, 2019, pp 10-13.
60 *Inverness Courier* (Scotland), 22 December 1841, p 2. This evidence was first noted by Graham Hannaford ('Whom to believe: two opposing views of the colony of New South Wales printed in the *Inverness Courier*', *CHJ*, vol 86, 2021, pp 25-33). My guess is that the

correspondent was James McIntosh, who arrived in 1837.
61 Bluett, 'The Aborigines of the Canberra District', p 13.
62 National Archives of Scotland, JC26/1839/178 (9): second declaration of James Ainslie, 23 July 1839. Cf. Henderson, 'James Ainslie: stranger than fiction', pp 239-40.
63 In T. Corp, 'Gudgenby: the last 150 years', *CHJ*, vol 24, 1989, p 23.
64 Cf. Joseph Shumack in *QAQO*, 7 October 1913, p 2. For the use and significance of tobacco, see Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p 58.
65 *QAQO*, 8 February 1916, p 2, 9 April 1920, p 2.
66 *QAQO*, 8 February 1916, p 2. Note that in a later account (9 April 1920, p 2) the shepherd dies. Exaggeration tends to be compounded in the retelling.
67 Gillespie's source, Jim Ginn, was the great-grandson of Ewan and Isabella McPherson and the nephew of a third Elizabeth McKeahnie, granddaughter of Charles and Elizabeth McKeahnie.
68 For the dating, see Corp, 'Gudgenby', pp 24-5.
69 Shumack, *An Autobiography*, pp 148-9.
70 *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 28 March 1913, p 4.
71 Repeated in her brother's obituary, *QAQO*, 8 February 1916, p 2.
72 Shumack, *An Autobiography*, p 151.
73 *QAQO*, 29 March 1895, p 4. The Yaouk setting (rather than Charnwood) rests on the fact that the former was a cattle run while the latter property owned by Hall was a sheep station. See J. McDonald, 'A Note on the Shooting of Onyong: location and context', *CHJ*, vol 87, p 29. Yaouk and other areas close by were also said to be places of refuge for Aboriginal bands at this time, according to the Gilbert family.
74 Commissioners of Crown Lands: Itineraries, Henry Bingham, NSW State Archives X812 (reel 2748).

Colonial Pioneers: the early industrial metal trades of Sydney, 1825-1875

HARRY COLE and DREW COTTLE

Introduction

Little has been written of Sydney's early tradesmen, doubtless because they were relatively few and left scant record of their lives. Industrial and economic histories, while acknowledging the significance of their work, have only mentioned them in passing.[1] These studies tend to view the tradesmen as units of 'labour power' in the abstract and largely pass over their working lives.[2] Although numerically insignificant in early colonial Australia, by the end of the 19th century, the engineers and millwrights that formed the 'new' metal trades had become crucial to the local economy.

This article sets out to place the new metal trades in the city's early metalworking industrial landscape. However, it is hampered by the loss of census, public works, and other important government documents in the 1882 fire that destroyed the Garden Palace, where many such records were housed.[3] Such information provides the starting point for research and its absence makes it difficult to quantify activity, identify names, businesses, occupations and other information necessary to provide a comprehensive analysis of those involved. Nevertheless, despite this obvious shortcoming, it is felt that such a significant part of Sydney's early history should be written.[4]

Metalworking has existed in New South Wales since first settlement. The blacksmith John Lambeth arrived as a First Fleet convict, and blacksmiths remained important to the early settlement. Blacksmithing evolved ever since iron has been worked, but although important to the early penal settlement and rural economy of the colonial period, it did not form the basis of Australian industrial development.

This article does not set out to write a history of the colonial blacksmith, however, it is crucial to acknowledge that the line between the engineer and blacksmith was not distinct. The forging, shaping, and punching processes used by

the early engineers would all be familiar to the blacksmith, and some in the metal trades alternated between blacksmithing and modern industrial metalworking.

Francis Cox, transported as a convict from the early industrial British midlands, offers an example of this. Born and raised in the Broseley area of the rapidly industrialising English West Midlands, Cox had worked in the area's metal industry, but as a convict in New South Wales worked his government service as a blacksmith. Having completed his sentence, he drew upon the work skills developed in Broseley to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the young colony.[5]

In contrast to forge and foundry practice, the close-tolerance machine tool and fitting skills employed by the early industrial pioneers were not practices familiar to the blacksmith. They had their origin in clock and lock making. Drawing upon and synthesising these separate branches of metalworking gave the engineer and millwright a significantly broader range of skills than the common blacksmith. William Fairburn wrote of the contemporary British millwright, that '(he) could turn, bore or forge … was a fair arithmetician, knew something of geometry, levelling and mensuration, and in some cases possessed a very competent knowledge of practical mathematics'.[6]

The fundamental working material for the early engineers was iron. Iron, however, was not produced in any significant quantity in Australia until the Eskbank works at Lithgow first poured in 1901.[7] Until then, the iron needed by the early engineers was imported from Britain. There are several important studies on the development of the Australian iron and steel industry prior to Lithgow, notably Helen Hughes' 1964 contribution, and the later work of Ian Jack and Aedeen Cremin.[8] However, this article does not examine the development of Australian iron and steel making, nor indeed iron itself; it is about the early development of the industries that used iron and steel. It mentions the import of iron only as a barometer for industrial activity.

Outside of their industrial activities, it has also proven problematic to gauge the social and political outlook of these workers. In 1974, Michael Roe acknowledged that while doing much to set the tone of Australian life, their lives, work and opinions were largely unrecorded.[9] However, the existence of an extensive radical press aimed at the contemporary urban worker led Graeme Davison to recognise the role of the urban artisan in Australian radical culture. This challenged the Russel Ward thesis that attributed Australian radicalism to the early convicts, itinerant bush workers and miners. Davison argued that given their common origin, Sydney's early 19th century artisans existed within a wider, often fiercely radical, Anglo-American artisan culture. This would echo Henry Mayhew's contemporary observation that 'the artisans (of London) are almost to a man red-hot politicians … intelligent, and dissatisfied with their political position'.[10]

It was not until Terry Irving's *Southern Tree of Liberty* that a more sustained

analysis of mid-19th century colonial radicalism was offered.[11] As an examination of constitutional rather than economic radicalism, it brings the flavour of Part One of E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* to colonial New South Wales, giving an in-depth description of the key radicals, and working-class political culture of the time. However, with no colonial Henry Mayhew or Alexis de Tocqueville to draw upon, and perhaps a reluctance to divulge political opinion in public, there remains little direct personal record of early Australian urban worker opinion on social and political issues outside of the important figures discussed by Irving.

The 'new' trades

The metalworkers were one of the 'new' trades that had emerged with industrialisation. As Eric Hobsbawm has shown, they shared many traditions with such older counterparts as the shoemakers, carpenters and wheelwrights, but differed crucially by being tied to the liberal idea of progress.[12] Nonetheless, as with the older established trades – some of which had a very early presence in the colony, such as the stonemasons, shipwrights and blacksmiths – the early Sydney metalworkers were organised in its many small workshops.[13] In this closely-knit social and economic landscape, a traditional artisanal 'harmony of interest' – a craft-conscious fraternal bond – existed between master manufacturer, journeyman engineer and apprentice.[14] There was a unity of purpose that anticipated a future for the colony beyond the export of wool. They believed their efforts would advance civilisation in the colony.

It was not until the 1820s that private property and market relations had taken root in what was still a penal settlement.[15] Beyond Sydney's boundaries, an emergent wool industry established an increasing economic significance. With the export of this valuable commodity and the imports and investment the colony required, Sydney developed into an entrepôt economy where several successful local merchants amassed significant wealth and exercised political influence.[16] Alongside this mercantile group were such larger-scale enterprises as the Australian Sugar Company, Robert Cooper's Distillery and Thomas Barker's flour mill.

These were not typical though, and industry in early Sydney was instead characterised by the small workshops and craft workers associated with the engineering, maritime and building industries, and the household and domestic trades.[17] It was this body of independent tradesmen, not the wealthy entrepreneur or joint-stock company, that provided the basis of much of Sydney's productive manufacturing at the time.

Crucial to this period were the new metal trades of the millwright, engineer, boilermaker and machinist. Although initially few, they would eventually displace the blacksmith – the mainstay of the old metal trades – from the urban economy as machinery became more complex in its manufacture. They became essential to the

productive sector of the colony's economy.[18] While economies of scale necessitated the organisation of most trades into industrial production in the large markets of Europe and North America, 19th century Australia – distant from the major export markets and with limited domestic demand – offered little scope for such large-scale development.[19] In colonial Australia, the small workshop remained the principal site of urban production for much of the century.[20]

By 1828 there were 21 members of the new metal trades active in the colony's free economy. Three were engineers, employed to maintain the imported steam engines that powered such large-scale enterprises as Thomas Barker's Steam Flour Mill, the Darling Mills at Parramatta, and Robert Cooper's Sydney Distillery. The remaining 18 were millwrights, most of whom worked for John Smith of George Street. An important figure in the early metal trades, Smith was responsible for the erection of several flourmills in the city.[21]

Brass-founding was the other significant urban metal trade of the early period, with 11 members in Sydney. Its products were relatively small in scale. They made hinges and handles for furniture, domestic water taps, small bells, and lamp bodies. Pitt Street was the centre of early brass-founding in the city and its workshops were typical of artisan production with master craftsmen and journeymen working in small one- or two-man enterprises.[22]

Early 19th century Sydney was developing into a significant seaport, with between 30 and 50 ships berthed at any time and supporting a small but thriving artisanal economy.[23] It was common for one in five of the ships in port to undergo refitting or repair, thus requiring the labour of proficient shipwrights, rope-makers, sail and mast makers.[24] Most of these early maritime trades were concentrated in The Rocks area behind George Street and the wharves of Sydney Cove (now Circular Quay). However, Sussex and Kent Streets, facing the larger new wharves of Cockle Bay (later named Darling Harbour), were already developing into important sites of the local maritime industry.[25]

Alongside the workshops of the traditional maritime trades were those of the engineers, millwrights, and iron-founders. Many were specific to the maritime industry and concentrated on anchor and ship-smith's work or the manufacture of whaling gear. Others were more generalised and engaged in mill work and decorative ironwork.[26] As the effects of Britain's industrial revolution gathered pace, its influence reached ever deeper into the Sydney economy. The older maritime trades, the sailmakers and boatbuilders in wood, began the inevitable slow decline as the new iron-based technology exerted its industrial influence. Within 30 years, iron had largely replaced wood in the construction of ships, and the wood-working shipwright gave way to the boilermaker and iron plate.

Similarly, the development of the steam engine for ship propulsion ended the need for large-scale sail making. As with the maritime industries, the rest of

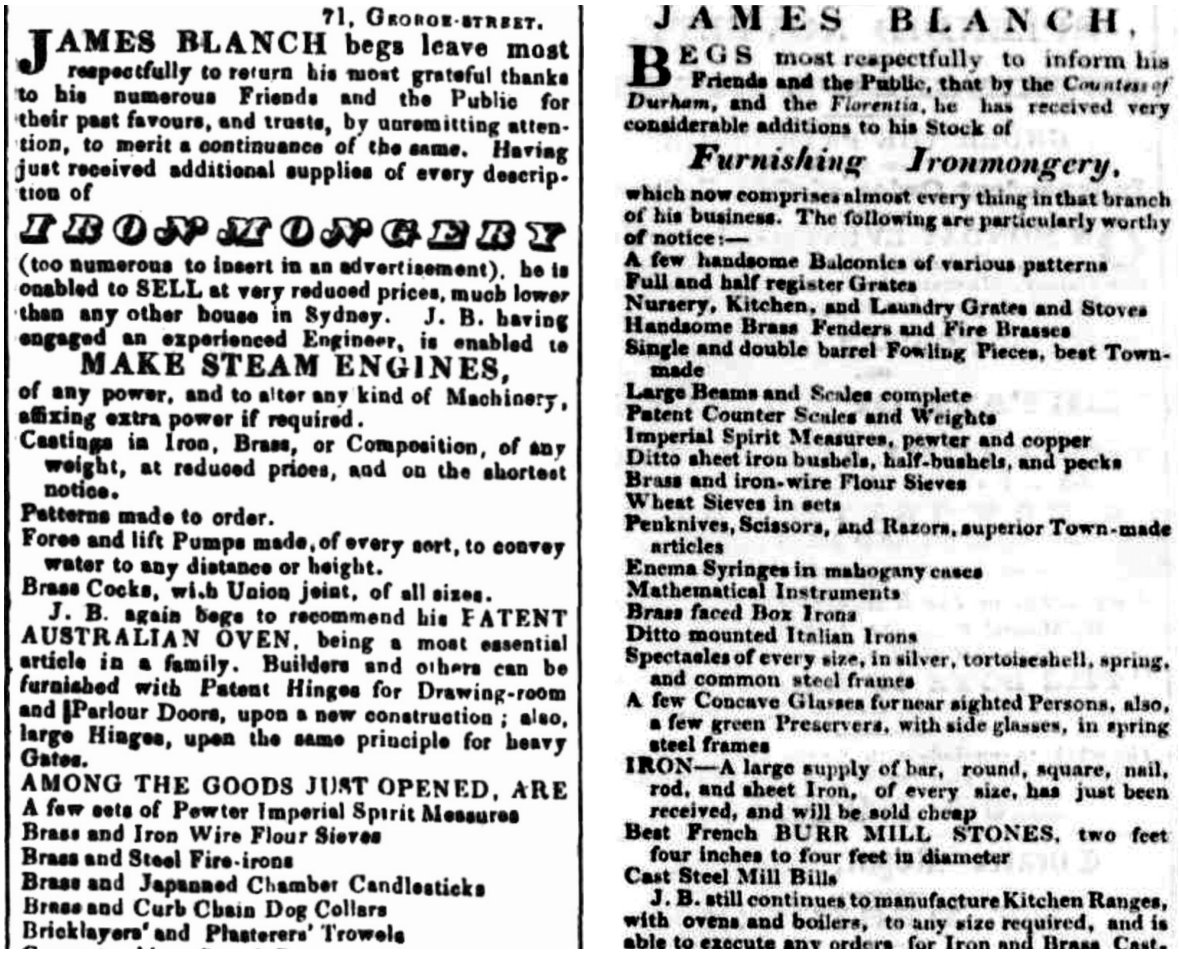
Sydney's industrial economy witnessed increased mechanisation in the mining, agricultural and pastoral industries, and the associated processing industries of flour milling, tanneries, boiling down establishments and wool preparation shops.[27] The machinery needed for such mechanised processes demanded skilled metalworkers in its manufacture and maintenance, and within a few decades the metal trades came to dominate the machinery, toolmaking and maritime industries.

The history of the colonial metal trades was one of rapid expansion and increasing influence in the urban economy, despite a reliance on the import of such important raw materials as iron, tin, copper, zinc and lead.[28] In 1821 James Blanch established the colony's first commercial iron foundry in George Street, which cast the household items of railings, stove bodies, and domestic fire grates.[29]

George Street, Sydney, 1838, the early focus of the urban economy.
(RAHS Foster Glass Slide Collection)

Blanch's small pioneering operation was later joined by larger foundries that emerged in response to demand from the city's nascent metal industries. In 1834 William Bourne established his Phoenix Iron and Brass Foundry, and in 1835 Robert Cunningham's George Street shipbuilding firm expanded into iron and brass foundry work, claiming that at a cost of between 3d and 4d per lb for iron, and around 1s 6d per lb for brass, it was able to offer any size casting of equal quality to the British product.[30] Castle and Dawson's Australian Brass & Ironfoundry, another pioneering George Street contemporary, stated that it could cast brass and iron at any weight, and manufacture ship chain, anchors and cable, cast iron verandas and balconies.[31]

In its geographic location, although never to the scale of London, Birmingham, or the port cities of the American eastern seaboard, the economy of early Sydney



71, GEORGE-STREET.

JAMES BLANCH begs leave most respectfully to return his most grateful thanks to his numerous Friends and the Public for their past favours, and trusts, by unremitting attention, to merit a continuance of the same. Having just received additional supplies of every description of

IRONMONGERY

(too numerous to insert in an advertisement), he is enabled to SELL at very reduced prices, much lower than any other house in Sydney. J. B. having engaged an experienced Engineer, is enabled to

MAKE STEAM ENGINES,

of any power, and to alter any kind of Machinery, affixing extra power if required.

Castings in Iron, Brass, or Composition, of any weight, at reduced prices, and on the shortest notice.

Patterns made to order.

Force and lift Pumps made, of every sort, to convey water to any distance or height.

Brass Cocks, with Union joint, of all sizes.

J. B. again begs to recommend his PATENT AUSTRALIAN OVEN, being a most essential article in a family. Builders and others can be furnished with Patent Hinges for Drawing-room and Parlour Doors, upon a new construction; also, large Hinges, upon the same principle for heavy Gates.

AMONG THE GOODS JUST OPENED, ARE

A few sets of Pewter Imperial Spirit Measures
Brass and Iron Wire Flour Sieves
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Brass and Japanned Chamber Candlesticks
Brass and Curb Chain Dog Collars
Bricklayers' and Plasterers' Trowels

JAMES BLANCH,

BEGS most respectfully to inform his Friends and the Public, that by the *Countess of Durham*, and the *Florentia*, he has received very considerable additions to his Stock of

Furnishing Ironmongery,

which now comprises almost every thing in that branch of his business. The following are particularly worthy of notice:—

A few handsome Balconies of various patterns
Full and half register Grates
Nursery, Kitchen, and Laundry Grates and Stoves
Handsome Brass Fenders and Fire Brasses
Single and double barrel Fowling Pieces, best Town-made
Large Beams and Scales complete
Patent Counter Scales and Weights
Imperial Spirit Measures, pewter and copper
Ditto sheet iron bushels, half-bushels, and pecks
Brass and iron-wire Flour Sieves
Wheat Sieves in sets
Penknives, Scissors, and Razors, superior Town-made articles
Enema Syringes in mahogany cases
Mathematical Instruments
Brass faced Box Irons
Ditto mounted Italian Irons
Spectacles of every size, in silver, tortoiseshell, spring, and common steel frames
A few Concave Glasses for near sighted Persons, also, a few green Preservers, with side glasses, in spring steel frames
IRON—A large supply of bar, round, square, nail, rod, and sheet Iron, of every size, has just been received, and will be sold cheap
Best French BURR MILL STONES, two feet four inches to four feet in diameter
Cast Steel Mill Bills

J. B. still continues to manufacture Kitchen Ranges, with ovens and boilers, to any size required, and is able to execute any orders for Iron and Brass Cast-

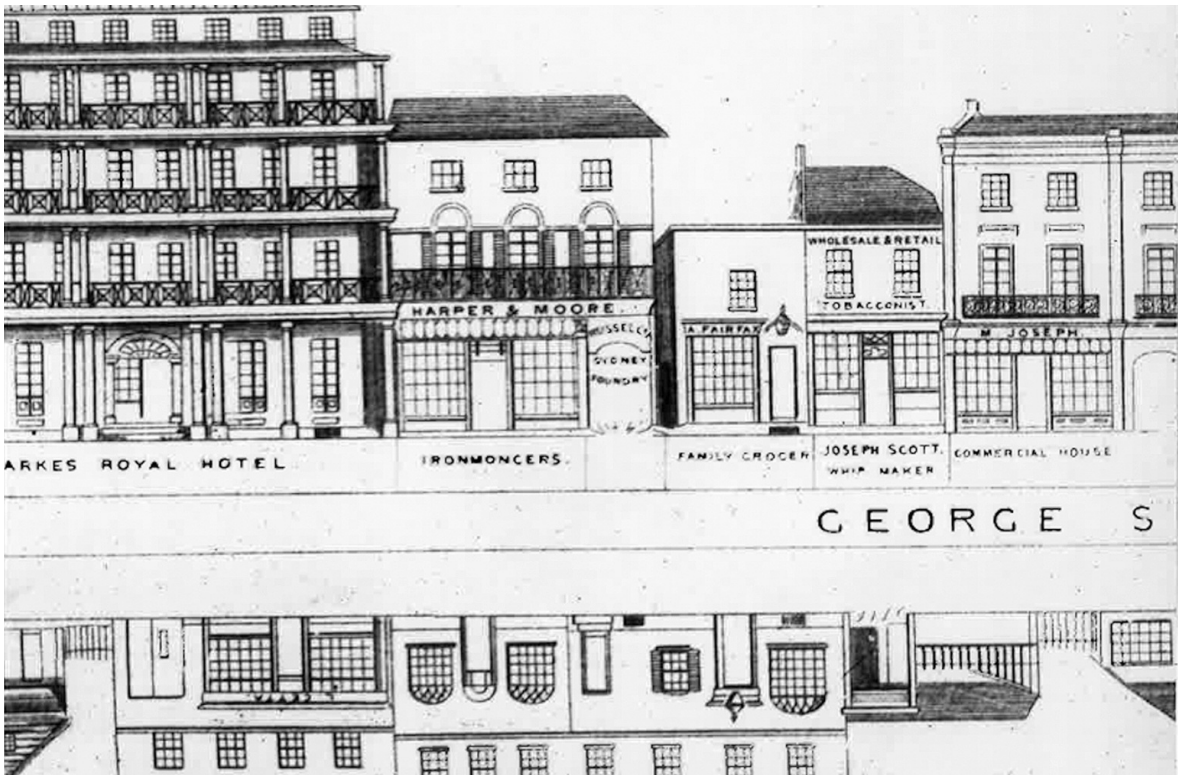
Advertisements for James Blanch's metal products, Sydney Gazette 5 November 1833, p 4; Australian 3 January 1837, p 4.

nevertheless held much in common as a site of production and commerce.[32] During the 1820s and early 1830s, George Street was the focus of the urban economy. It was the city's main thoroughfare, running the two miles from Brickfield Hill in the south to Sydney Cove and Dawes Point on the harbour. At its northern end stood Windmill Street, Cunningham's shipyard and the maritime trades of The Rocks; to the west, Cockle Bay. Along its length was a mix of industrial, domestic, and maritime trades and the numerous public houses that often doubled as landmarks.[33] Here the iron foundries of both Blanch and Dawson stood among the many tailors, shoe and bootmakers, saddlers, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths premises, as well as grocery stores, importing houses and banks.[34]

Most of the city's engineering establishments had begun moving to the west as the new and larger wharves and slipways of Cockle Bay gradually superseded Sydney Cove as the focus of shipping operations. Although George Street remained an important commercial and industrial site, larger enterprises such as Bourne's foundry and William Orr's workshop opened in Sussex and Kent Street.[35] In 1842 George Russell opened an engineering shop and engine works in Sussex Street, with

others nearby including John Taylor's Victoria Foundry and Young & Mather on Goulburn Street.[36]

The area between George Street in the east and Sussex and Kent Streets in the west formed the productive hub of the early city. It held the numerous houses, small shops and workshops where master craftsman, journeymen, apprentice and labourer alike lived, worked and socialised.[37] It was a hive of industrial activity where urban tradesmen created the socially useful items that they believed increased the wealth, importance and productive capabilities of the city. Thus, the colony would become increasingly less reliant on the import of such vital agricultural tools and machinery as saws, scythes, sheep shears, chaff and hay knives from Britain.[38]



George St held numerous houses, small shops and workshops: 'A contemporary ironmonger' from 'Sydney in 1848: illustrated by copper-plate engravings of its principal streets, public buildings, churches, chapels, etc' from drawings by Joseph Fowles. ('Some early founders', J. A. Stinson, c.1953; RAHS Collection)

The metal trades' main constraint during this embryonic phase was the cost and availability of iron. The average cost of iron and steel imports between 1838 and 1841 was £12 per ton – a considerable sum for the time.[39] Local foundries using imported pig iron offered castings at £28 per ton. While the casting process had been successfully undertaken locally and had significantly increased the range of products offered by colonial engineers, the material properties of cast iron limited its usefulness in the manufacture of items such as tools.[40]

Prior to modern steel-making processes these items were made from the stronger, more malleable and expensive wrought iron.[41] But wrought iron lacked any hardening ability, was of limited use in parts subject to wear and abrasion, and was unsuitable for making 'edge tools' where a cutting or shear edge was required to be kept sharp. Usual practice was to use it in conjunction with the specialist Sheffield steels of 'blister steel' and 'shear steel'. These were harder, more resilient to wear, and allowed repeated sharpening.[42]

In the absence of any colonial blast furnace or wrought ironworks, such iron and specialist steel was mostly imported from Britain.[43] However, it is difficult to determine exact amounts and characteristics because imported iron of all descriptions was listed under the generic term 'iron', or 'assorted iron' on ship's manifests.[44] In 1828, these imports totalled 792 tons. Twelve years later they had more than quadrupled to a peak of some 3500 tons as the colonial economy surged ahead.[45]

Blister steel, shear steel, and Swedish tool steel – especially prized for its low phosphorous content – were advertised by local ironmongers from as early as the 1820s; Iredale's Australian Iron Warehouse of George Street in particular had a reputation for quality among the local engineers.[46] On a larger scale, Castle & Dawson's Sydney Cove foundry stocked 200 tons of assorted iron, including bolt iron from one-half to two inches diameter, square iron from one-half to three inches, boiler plate up to three-eighths of an inch thick, sheet iron, pig iron, and rod for making boiler rivets.[47]

Beyond the city, the emerging rural economy demanded tools. Rakes, hoes, and other tools for working the soil, and edge tools such as scythes, sickles, reaping hooks, chaff-knives and wool-shears were in constant demand. Many were imported, but distance and nature's constraints on the maritime shipping routes made these items expensive and their availability unreliable. Locally made tools had the potential to reduce these disadvantages and promised an end to delay in agricultural production. Of necessity, the colonial economy encouraged their manufacture.

In such small urban workshops as McKinnon's Edge Tool Factory in Parramatta Street and McMillan's of Windmill Street, the tool's basic form would be forged from wrought iron and the thin strip of blister steel or shear steel that was to form the cutting-edge hammer-welded to it at red heat. This was followed by the hardening and tempering process, then final sharpening.[48] These were highly skilled operations, and it is not difficult to picture a sober and industrious émigré Scottish craftsman like Donald McKinnon, in the heat and dust of the forge, reflecting on his labours and their social and economic importance to the growing colony.

There was a significant industrial step forward in the colonial economy when Castle & Dawson completed the first colonial-built steam engine for use in their

foundry and workshop in 1835.[49] Within a year, the small local engineering partnership of Dingwall, Wilson & Mair completed their first colonial-built steam engine at their Clarence Street workshop. Significant in that all of the engine's components were cast or finished locally, the latter was used for the grinding of coffee, pepper and rice at J. T. Hughes' import house on Pitt Street, and ground as much in one hour as could be ground manually in a day.[50] The steam engine was only working at one fifth of its capacity and had the potential to power several additional mills.[51]

These engines represented a major advance in colonial engineering, demonstrating that the power required for colonial industry could be manufactured locally. Demand for steam, although small by American and European standards, had nevertheless increased steadily and by the mid-1830s there was enough demand for British engine manufacturers to begin advertising locally. The expanding local economy presented an opportunity to its engineers and within a short period many larger engines were being built by Sydney's engineering shops.

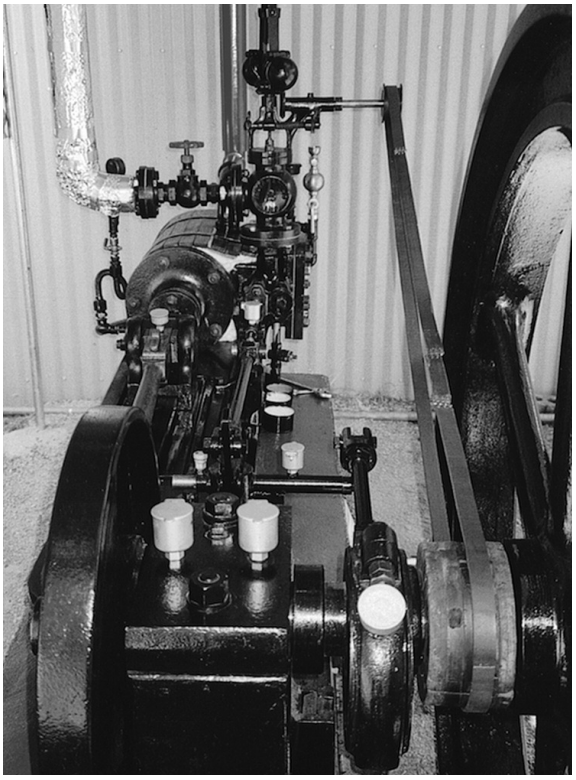
The steam engine also held a social and economic significance by offering an answer to the colony's perennial labour shortages. Its labour-saving potential could, according to the *Sydney Herald*, be put to many uses and settlers from the outlying districts were urged by the *Herald* and the *Sydney Gazette* to consider its use to grind wheat or other (unspecified) suitable applications. Investment in a steam engine would offset the continual costs – and supposed capriciousness – associated with the employment of human labour.[52]

Many of the tasks involved in the manufacture of such an engine – foundry work, for example – were hot, dirty, and dangerous. These unavoidable hazards of the job were inherent to the process of bringing a new source of potentially unlimited industrial power to the colony. The many hours of skilled labour exerted by the engineers in their workshops and the equally skilled millwrights on site, transformed basic pig-iron, wrought-iron bar and brass into a valuable finished machine ready to engage in socially useful productive work. These tradesmen undoubtedly took pride in their handiwork; they were already in the process of revolutionising maritime transport, and it was surely only a matter of time before their skill and labour, via the power of their steam engines, would be turned to harness Australia's vast resources.[53]

The early lead of Dawson and Dingwall did not last. In September 1836, John Struth, another emigrant Scots engineer and millwright, once employed at Thomas Barker's flour mill, established a workshop in Sussex Street near his former employer's premises. Struth manufactured and repaired high- and low-pressure steam engines and their boilers for marine or land use. He also advertised his intention to make hydraulic pumps and presses, flour mill machinery, grain elevators, and thrashing and winnowing machines.[54]

High pressure engines built on a larger scale required the best materials

available and best-practice design and construction skills. The engines' associated boilers also required high levels of skill in their manufacture. As Struth would later understand, the danger of catastrophic failure and consequent fatal explosion demanded close attention to their exact design, and that only high-quality wrought iron plate and rivets be used in their construction.[55] Even the manufacture of less complex machinery such as a hydraulic press – where the smallest leak would render the machine incapable of holding its high working pressure – demonstrated a high degree of accuracy in the work of the local engineers.

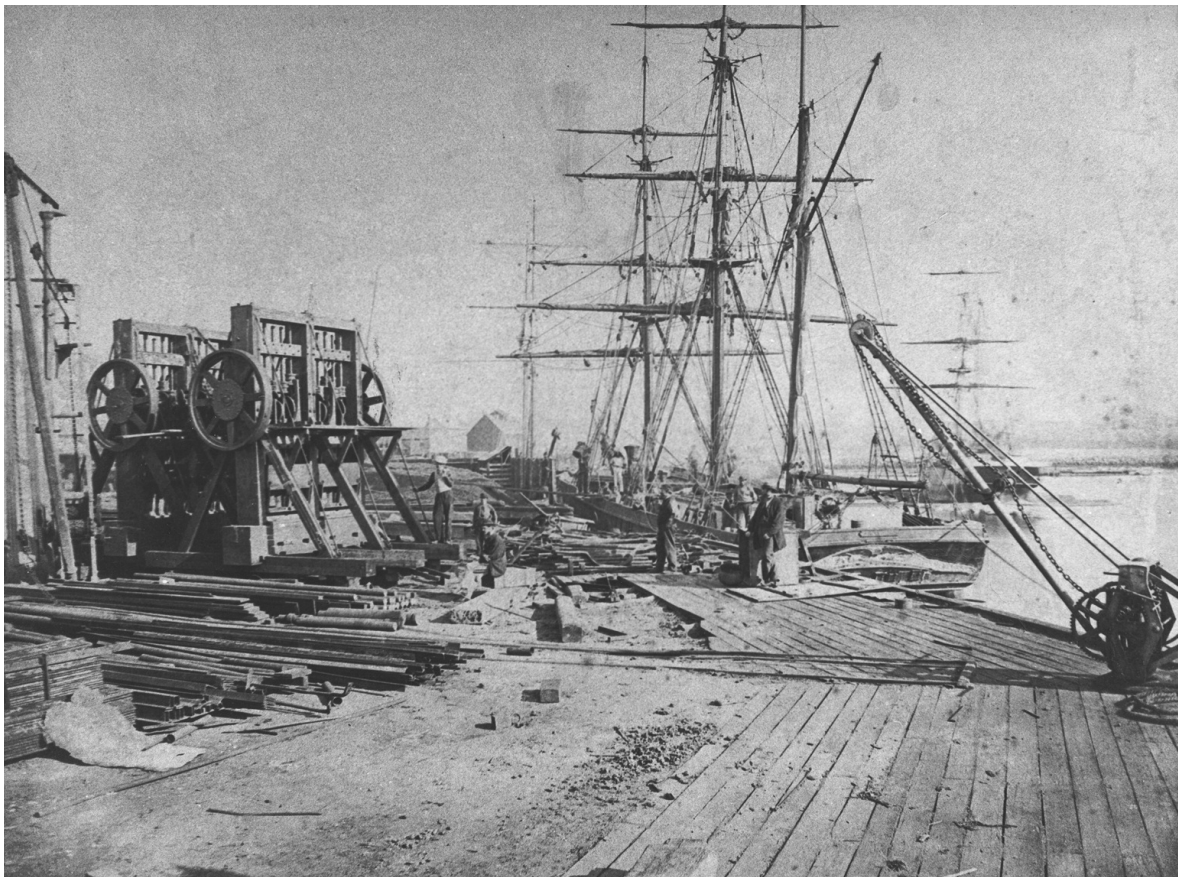


Early colonial steam engine, believed to have been manufactured at Russell Brothers Engine Works, Sussex Street, c.1845. (Picture courtesy of Turon Technology Museum, Sofala, NSW)

Through their endeavour, the colonial metal trades expanded and prospered, and within four years of the first engine there were four steam engine manufacturers in Sydney listed in the Colonial Returns.[56] Assorted iron imports increased rapidly, demonstrating that demand for the work of local engineers like Struth. A year after commencing business, Struth moved to bigger premises at Wilson's Wharf in Sussex Street. By late 1839 he moved to larger premises, Struth's Wharf, at the junction of Sussex and King Streets. Within 10 years of his establishment, and despite the depression of the 1840s, Struth's foundry and forge demanded 400 tons of coal a year.[57] He employed several journeymen engineers, millwrights and labourers and was a pillar of Sydney's early metal trades until his retirement through ill health in 1854.[58]

The metal trades were the epitome of colonial progress. Within a decade of the first colonial-built engine, even the smaller workshops such as that of Rogers, McVey & Buller of Kent Street claimed the capacity to produce various steam engines and engage in ship's ironwork and millwork.[59] Struth supplied Major Thomas Mitchell's fourth expedition with two specially built iron boats that could be dismantled and carried, while the Australian Sugar Company had enough confidence in local manufacturing to place an order for 10,000 iron moulds with colonial foundries.[60]

The wages of the journeyman engineer, millwright and foundry labourer were high by contemporary standards and complimented by good working relationships



P. N. Russell's wharf at Darling Harbour. The decline of traditional trades such as sailmakers and boatbuilders in wood led to an expansion of Sydney's maritime industry, with the new iron-based technology located in close proximity to the city's docks. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection.)

between master and men. In early 1840, a series of meetings took place between the city's engineers, millwrights, founders and smiths.[61] They announced the industry's 'immense advance' through the rising demand for steam machinery. It was also declared that improvements made to steam machinery and an increased number of mechanics required measures to protect the interest of both employer and employed.[62]

A 'house of call' was to be established at the Old King George the Third public house in Clarence Street, and a registry book kept on the premises to introduce employers and workmen. Importantly, 'no mechanic (would be) recommended by the Committee unless they (were) satisfied they (were) of good character, and competent to fulfil the engagement with their employers'.[63] Although such measures upheld the employers' interests, they also sought to best maintain standards, promote the trade in Australia, and advance the colony at large.

Artisanal craft consciousness saw a so-called 'harmony of interest' within the trade reflected in the committee's statement that 'obligations between the employers and employed (were) reciprocal, so in like proportion must be the benefit resulting from a union between them.' These artisan values, dating back beyond the British *Statute of Artificers* of 1563, were echoed through the committee's 'code of laws',

which would ensure not only the morality, sobriety, and respectability of its membership, but the social standing, respectability and reliability of the trade itself.[64] Given the 'increased demand for our art and labour', it was in the interest of all in the trade to provide a high standard of workmanship and personal character, it declared.[65]

By 1841 progress was such that there were 41 land-based steam engines in the colony with an aggregate 471 horsepower.[66] Most were in flour mills, including the largest colonial-built land engine of 20-horsepower provided by Castle & Dawson to John Teal's flour mill at Windsor.[67] Several smaller engines were also put to work driving the machinery of the local engineering establishments. Both John Struth and William Bourne possessed locally manufactured two-horsepower engines, Blanch's foundry had a four-horsepower machine and Dawson's a six-horsepower engine respectively.

Marine engines built in the colony were much larger. In the same year, a 60-horsepower engine was under construction for the steamship *Maitland* and two of 20-horsepower for the *Aphrasia*. Work on two 25-horsepower engines (one for a dredging machine) and another of 16-horsepower had also commenced. Orders were on the books for several more including a 16-, a 25-, three 30-, and two 20-horsepower engines, but as the *Herald* noted 'from a scarcity of mechanics none of them will be completed this year'.[68]

The industry's capacity to build ever larger engines led the *Herald* of 1841 to reiterate its message of five years earlier, restating the importance of steam power to its readership. It informed them that colonial workshops could produce engines up to 60-horsepower and boilers of any size but bemoaned the lack of skilled engineers in the colony and the consequent inevitable delays in production. The steam engine provided rural employers with an answer to the shortage of rural labour and a poorly disciplined but highly paid rural workforce (sic). Calculating that each horsepower replaced the labour of more than six men, and hence the aggregate power of the colony's steam engines approximated to 3000 men, it stressed that 'given the present urgent demand for labour the power of the steam-engines in the colony is a matter of considerable importance'.[69] Unbeknownst to the *Herald*, in the depression that shortly followed, demand for both labour and engines was to swiftly evaporate.

Economic malaise

If the 1820s and '30s offered Australia's working people a relative prosperity, the 1840s brought depression, unemployment and a general economic malaise.[70] While the maritime and building trades suffered immediately, the metal trades remained initially buoyant, with demand exceeding supply and a seemingly permanent shortage of skilled mechanics.[71] But the labour shortage exacerbated stagnation, and when orders dwindled and purchasers were unable to fulfil their contractual obligations, insolvencies increased. William Bourne and the Russell

brothers' Macquarie Place engineering shop both found themselves encumbered with expensive machinery lying uncompleted and declared themselves insolvent. Richard Dawson's foundry also closed its doors.[72] By the mid-1840s, iron and steel imports had plummeted from the 1840 high of 3500 tons to 1300 tons. As late as 1848, iron imports were still 1000 tons behind the 1840 peak.[73]

In a brief re-emergence of their underlying political radicalism, the artisans of Sydney believed the depression to be brought about by events that were beyond their control.[74] To the sober and industrious Presbyterian Scots who dominated the maritime and metal trades it demonstrated what happened when moral and socially useful productive labour was abandoned in favour of the usury, speculation and other forms of jobbery that sought to somehow generate wealth without the necessity of engaging in any real work.[75]

Several of the more radical Sydney newspapers agreed, declaring that greed and moral turpitude had encouraged this climate of speculation. When productive labour was abandoned so too was social morality, and a colony living beyond its means through extended credit had engaged in drunkenness, immorality, and a tendency to gambling and speculation. The only certain way forward was through a return to honest labour.[76]

The 1840s provided a period of consolidation for Sydney's metal trades. While the depression had forced the more inefficient out of business, many survived, and some even expanded. The millwright John Smith, for example, moved from George Street to Sussex Street and turned to specialising in flour-making machinery and the manufacture of wire webbing. In 1846, after seven years at his Sussex Street premises, William Orr moved to larger premises at the western end of Bathurst Street where he continued to manufacture marine and land engines and 'all other machinery'.[77] John Struth maintained his extensive workshops in Sussex Street, and despite the collapse of their Macquarie Place engineering business, the Russell Brothers' George Street foundry and Sussex Street engineering and boiler-making works survived.[78] Dawson's foundry quickly re-established itself, while other survivors included Dingwall & Mair, Taylor's Victoria Foundry, McLaren & Smith's Newtown Foundry, and the works of both Young & Mather, and Rogers & Buller.[79]

The 10-year hiatus for the local metal trades ended with the discovery of gold in the Bathurst and Araluen/Shoalhaven areas of New South Wales in 1851. Demand for specialised mining equipment and common hand tools, in addition to the coming of the railway to the colony, led to a resurgence in the metal trades with 54 engineers in Sydney, 12 foundries and 11 boilermakers' workshops.

Some members of the metal trades began to specialise in one area. These included the machinists' workshops of John Chapman & Brothers, Drinkwater & Lee, Storey & Ashton, and the machine-tool maker Charles Wood.[80] This points to a small but viable modern engineering industry in the city by the late 1850s.

One of the few well-documented cases that offers a glimpse into early colonial

engineering practice arose from an improvement to the engine of Thomas Barker's flour mill. London-born Barker, an engineer and millwright, arrived in New South Wales in 1813 as an apprentice to the colony's first steam mill owner, John Dickson. During the 1820s he established a steam mill at Darling Harbour with the help of the millwright John Smith. In 1832 he employed the newly arrived 28-year-old John Struth as his engineer at the mill, marking a 35-year working relationship between the two.[81]

In 1860 Barker commissioned the engineer Edward Evans of Cumberland Street to investigate ways of upgrading the mill's engine. Evans recommended the addition of a third fire-tube to the boiler. This would increase the rate of steam generation and raise its pressure, producing the potential for more power to the engine.[82] Calculations made from pressure/volume indicator diagrams rated the engine at 53-horsepower.[83] Evans rejected the option of increasing the cylinder bore of the engine, noting that although made of superior quality iron, the walls were too thin.[84] A new cylinder and slide-valve was cast at Young & Mather's Bathurst Street engine works, but after it had been bored, faced, and planed, it was found to be 'honeycombed' (porous) and deemed unfit for use. Despite this, Barker agreed to bear the cost and accept the new cylinder in order not to put financial pressure on Young & Mather. There is no indication of the cylinder's cost at this time, but in 1867 Dawson's Australian Iron Works quoted the cost of casting a new cylinder for the same engine at £45 with a further £40 for boring and facing operations.[85]

The new cylinder's porosity caused problems at the mating surface with the slide-valve. The slide-valve was critical to the operation of the engine, admitting steam to the cylinder at the appropriate moment. To operate effectively, the sliding surface between the two parts needed to remain steam-tight; however, the porosity of the casting made this impossible. It was agreed between Barker and Young & Mather that the part of the cylinder which formed the mating surface with the slide-valve would be undercut and then returned to its original dimensions by riveting a brass plate to it, thus maintaining a steam-tight seal. But it was quickly discovered that the excessive friction between the brass and the cast iron slide-valve due to the different material characteristics of the two metals, made the engine unsafe to operate.[86]

The Australian Steam Navigation Company was consulted, but their engineer believed the engine would never work properly or efficiently. He suggested the friction problem might be lessened by reducing the surface area of the assembly. John Struth, who had retired, was also consulted and offered the same solution. It did not work, and the engine could only be made to run effectively for short periods when a harder brass was used. For the next seven years, engine problems due to the faulty cylinder caused frequent stoppages at the mill lasting from a day to two weeks. In 1867 the cost of engine repairs in one shutdown came to £120. Rent of £96 and a wages bill of £90 made a total loss of £306, exclusive of lost production,

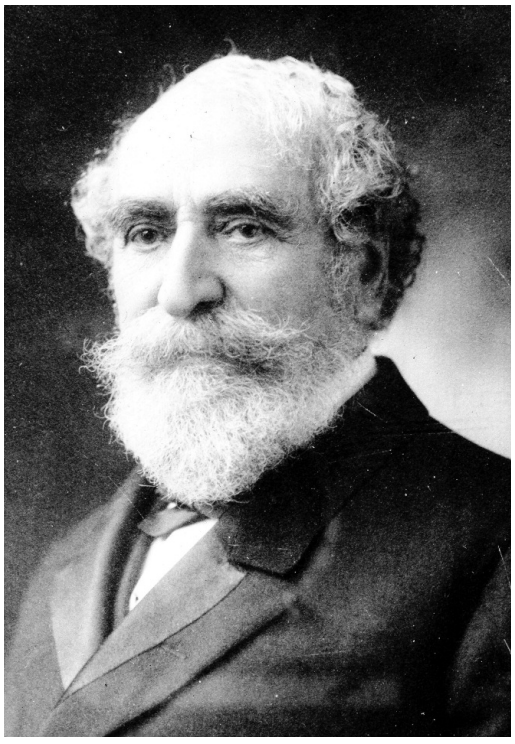
a considerable sum for the time.[87]

The engine's problems were finally solved in 1867 with the installation of a new cylinder. An earlier inspection by Joseph Mather concluded that backlash between the engine and the grinding wheels was excessive and dangerous. The primary gearing was 20 years old, and the wear in the gear teeth was considerably beyond the original specification. Already faced with a cost of £33 for new gear wheels and a replacement slide-valve at £25, under the advice of both Struth and Evans it was decided to install a new cylinder to avoid future delays and loss of production.[89]

Barker's engineering problems, his acceptance of Young & Mather's flawed casting at his own expense, and the relatively free way in which advice and expertise was proffered by the local engineers concerned (although no doubt money changed hands) demonstrated the close-knit nature of Sydney's pioneering metal workers. But the craft-consciousness and fraternal artisanal relations of Barker and the other early Sydney engineers in solving Barker's engine issues were drawing to a close.

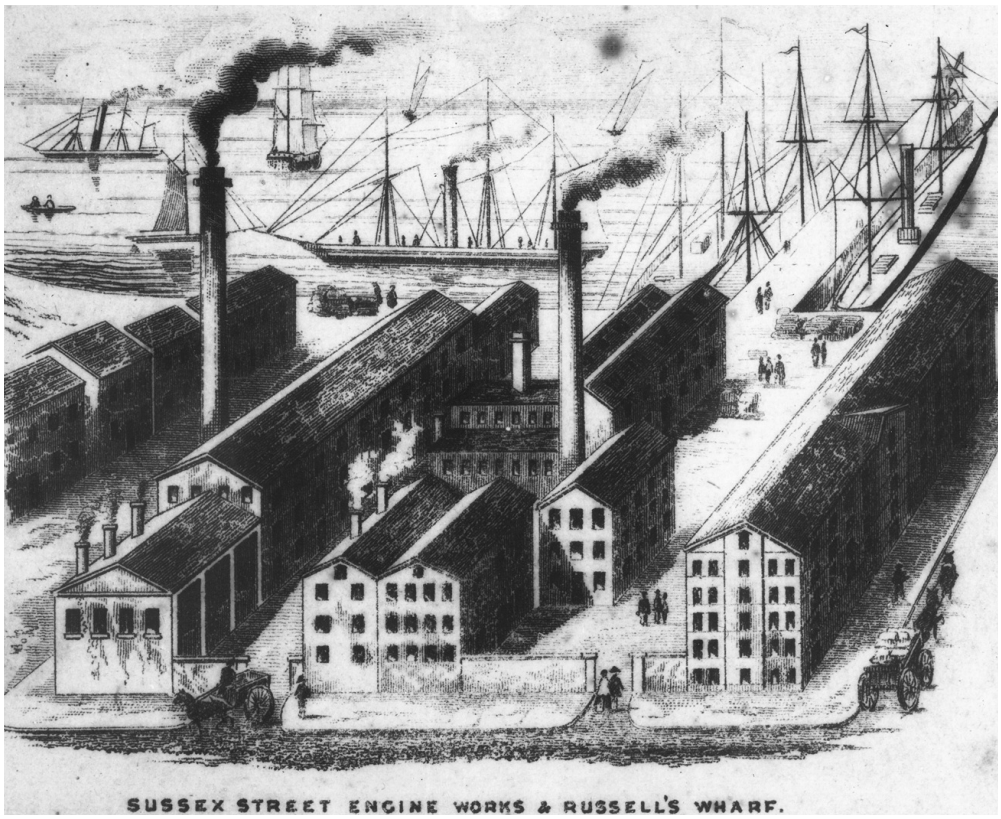
A new industrial workplace

In 1841 Peter Nicol Russell (later Sir) bought James Blanch's workshop and foundry.[90] When purchased it was a typical colonial small engineering workshop run by a master, two or three journeymen and a similar number of apprentices. Russell's acquisition represented a different future for the metal trades of Sydney. Blanch's small foundry was transformed into Sydney's largest engineering works. Employing more than 1000 workers, it encompassed a large waterfront area at Darling Harbour and a warehouse and works that went from George Street through to York Street.[91]

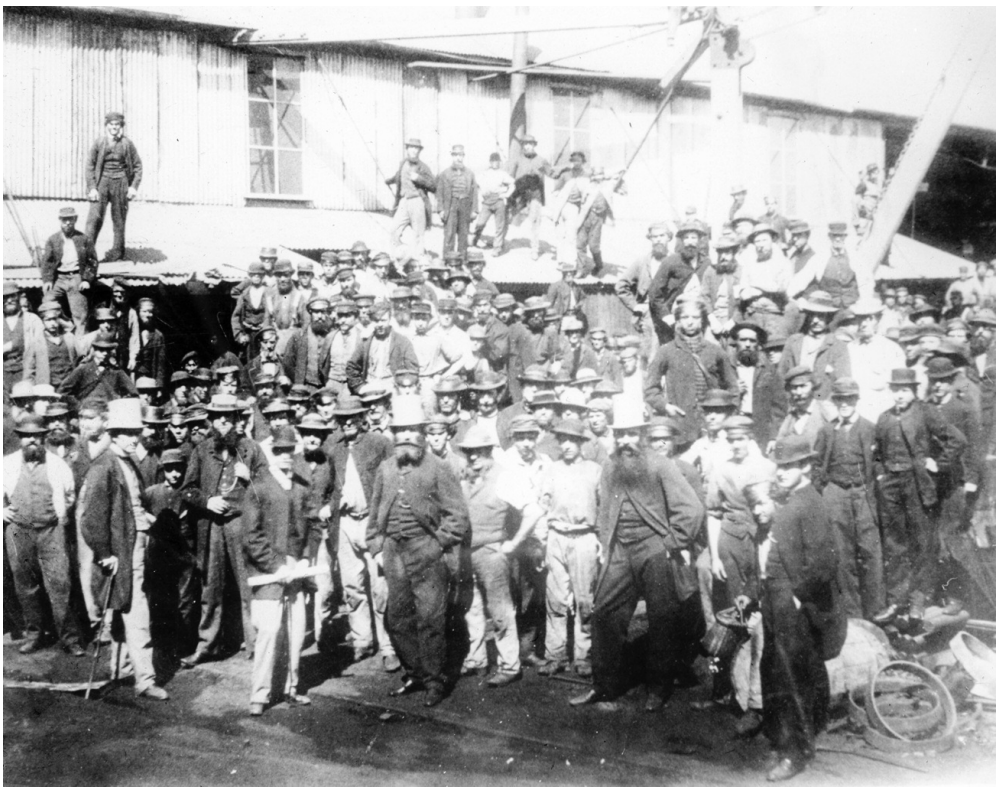


P. N. Russell moved away from the traditional 'harmony of interest' with metal trades craftsmen into a workplace system more akin to modern industrial relations. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection.)

Driven by the market demand for profitable return, it typified the new industrial workplace: organised, disciplined, and efficient. It marked a move away from the social relations of the old workshop, witnessing a breakdown in the traditional 'harmony of interest' and the metamorphosis of traditional artisan radicalism into modern industrial relations. Unlike the small master craftsman, Russell as an employer had little in common with the workers, choosing not to work alongside them but to instead employ a



Russell's foundry became Sydney's largest engineering works, employing more than 1000 workers. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)



The Russell works continued to be troubled by labour problems in the years following a strike organised by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

works manager. His notoriety for paying below average wages made it inevitable that market competition would eventually force all the other local small employers to either adopt his capitalist methods or close their business.[92]

Russell's managerial style, and the industrial nature of his enterprise, was the cause of much labour unrest. Jacob Garrard, a fitter, and James McGowan, a boilermaker, both went on to forge careers in politics – McGowan becoming premier of New South Wales – after cutting their political teeth in conflict with Russell.[93] In 1861 the works was closed for six weeks by a strike organised by George Newton of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers – the first major British industrial union – which had established a local branch in 1852.[94] The strike was in response to a 10 per cent pay cut from an employer already paying up to 20 per cent less in wages than the other local employers. The employer claimed that the works was uncompetitive. The strike was successful inasmuch as the pay cuts were not instituted, but the workers in return had to agree not to pursue the eight-hour day.

However, the works continued to be troubled by labour problems and in 1875, in what appears to have been a fit of bloody-mindedness, Russell shut the works permanently. He retired to the genteel surroundings of Cavendish Square in London, apparently indifferent to the fate of the 1000-plus men he had just thrown out of work in Sydney.[95] The industrial landscape had changed significantly since the days of Struth, Dawson and Orr.

Conclusion

It has only been possible to present a sketch of Sydney's early trades in this account as most of the city's early tradesmen left little record of their lives except for listings in trade directories, advertisements in local newspapers, census entries and the occasional mention in church records.[96] Too little is known of them or their activities. The early metal trades were no different in this respect, and it was not until 1852 and the arrival of the first members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers that its workers were organised, and records began to be kept in earnest.[97]

Like most tradesmen of this early period, almost all among the metal trades worked in small-scale enterprises or in partnerships between independent craftsmen. Such small firms were often fluid and based on the exigencies of a small and fluctuating local market. The engineering firm of Rogers, McVey & Buller was typical when in late 1846, after a two-year partnership, the boilermaker Andrew McVey returned to self-employment, leaving the partnership to continue as Rogers & Buller.[98] Engineers like Struth and Dawson, though larger employers, perhaps even early 'entrepreneurs', were still master craftsmen who worked alongside their men. They represented a handful of engineers in a remote and sparsely populated colony.[99] Such conditions fostered a unity of purpose – a 'harmony of interest' – between master, journeyman, and labourer. It was still a time when it seemed that

the opportunity for independence and a modest competence was within reach for many tradesmen.

It was also believed that productive labour on the land and in the workshop laid the foundations for Australia's future. The cities of Australia and their streets and suburbs might be named after members of the British and colonial ruling elite, but it was people like Richard Dawson, David Dingwall, John Struth, William Orr, and the journeymen engineers and labourers whom they employed that were the true source of its wealth and stature.

As far as Sydney's metal trades of the time were concerned, P. N. Russell, the independent capitalist, remained the exception while pointing to the future. Mort's Dock swallowed up Dawson's Foundry along with several other small local concerns when its business operations were expanded in 1866.[100] Further to the west in Auburn, Newington and Granville, the advent of the railway had seen the establishment of the large rail engineering workshops of George Ritchie and the Hudson Brothers.[101]

As the economic logic of capitalism forced the small master to adopt capitalist measures or go under, competition drove a wedge between master and tradesman, changing the relationship to one of employer and workman. For the latter, the prospects for independence and a modest competence evaporated, to be replaced by a wage and managerial control of their work practices. The 'harmony of interest' associated with the earlier artisanal economic and social relations came under question and was eventually discarded as a declining craft consciousness gave way to a rising class consciousness. The line of fracture that had opened between employer and worker widened into a chasm. Stepping into that chasm was the first and most powerful of the new industrial unions, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers.[102]

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Notes

1 T. A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia*, vols 1, 2, McMillan, Melbourne, 1969; G. P. Walsh, 'Manufacturing', in B. Nairn (ed), *Economic Growth of Australia, 1788-1821*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969; G. J. R. Linge, *Industrial Awakening: a geography of Australian manufacturing, 1788 to 1890*, Australian University Press, Canberra, 1979; N. G. Butlin, *Forming a Colonial Economy, Australia 1810-1850*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1994.

2 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin, London, 1968, pp12-13.

3 *Sydney Morning Herald* (henceforth *SMH*), 23 September 1882.

4 One notable exception in this area is the work of Harry Irwin, whose biographical accounts of the pioneering iron founder and engineer Richard Dawson provide a detailed glimpse into the world of the early colonial industrial metalworker. Harry Irwin, 'Richard Dawson: colonial ironmaster, engineer, merchant and agent of technology transfer', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* (henceforth *JRAHS*), vol 97, pt 2, 2011; Harry Irwin, *The Iron Man of Sydney*

Cove: the untold story of Richard Dawson, colonial engineer, Australian Scholarly Press, North Melbourne, 2018.
5 Carol Liston, *Sarah Wentworth: mistress of Vaucluse*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Glebe NSW, 1988, pp 7-11.
6 W. Fairburn, 'Treatise on Mills and Millwork', 1861, cited in R. A. Buchanan, *The Engineers: a history of the engineering profession in Britain, 1750-1914*, Jessica Kingsley, London, 1989, p 35.
7 In 1831, iron imports totalled 439¾ tons, valued at £5557; in 1838, 1196 tons valued at £14,986. *Returns of The Colony of New South Wales* (henceforth *RCNSW*), 1831, 1838. The authors thank Carol Liston for these references.
8 Helen Hughes, *The Australian Iron and Steel Industry, 1848-1962*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1964; R. Ian Jack and Aedeen Cremin, *Australia's Age of Iron: history and archaeology*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 1994.
9 M. Roe, '1830-50', in Crowley, F. K. (ed), *A New History of Australia*, William Heinemann, Melbourne, 1974, p 123.
10 G. Davison, 'Sydney and the Bush: an urban context for the Australian legend', *Historical Studies*, vol 18, no 71, 1978; H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Frank Cass, London, 1967, p 233 (first published 1851).
11 Terry Irving, *The Southern Tree of Liberty: the Democratic Movement in New South Wales before 1856,* Federation Press, Annandale NSW, 2006.
12 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Artisan or Labour Aristocrat', *Economic History Review*, vol 37, no 3, August 1984, pp 355-72; R. W. Connell and T. H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History: poverty and progress*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1992, p 67.
13 *Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol 5; J. Cobley, *The Crimes of the First Fleet Convicts*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1982; Walsh, 'Manufacturing', p 64.
14 The harmony of interest was a regular feature of the British and Australian social landscape. It promoted the idea that the employer and worker had a common interest in promoting industrial development. It emphasised craft over class. E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Tramping Artisan', *Economic History Review*, vol 3, no 3, 1951, pp 299-320.
15 See Connell and Irving, *Class Structure*; Andrew Wells, *Constructing Capitalism: an economic history of eastern Australia, 1788-1901*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989.
16 Most early radical papers regarded Sydney politics as being dominated by city merchants and the legislature of the colony as a whole by the pastoral interest, for example, *Australasian Chronicle* (henceforth *AC*), 13 March 1840.
17 *RCNSW*, 1828, p 178. *Census of New South Wales*, 1828 (henceforth 1828 Census). Trades as listed in the 1828 Census or in various contemporary newspapers.
18 Walsh, 'Manufacturing'.
19 Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*; Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, Hill & Wang, New York, 1989.
20 *RCNSW*, 1845; Coghlan, *Labour and Industry*, vol 1, pp 510-15; Ray Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in NSW, 1880-1900*, NSW University Press, Sydney, 1988, pp 29, 31.
21 1828 Census.
22 1828 Census.
23 Figures obtained from shipping lists published in the contemporary Sydney press, for example, *Commercial Journal* (henceforth *CJ*), 6 July 1835.
24 For example, nine of the 32 ships listed in harbour by the *Commercial Journal* of 6 July 1835 were undergoing refit or repair.

25 1828 Census. Information also from contemporary newspapers and journals.
26 *CJ*, 3 March 1838; *Low's Directory of the City and District of Sydney for 1847* (henceforth *Low's Directory 1847*). Advertisements in *CJ, Sydney Herald* (henceforth *SH*), *Sydney Gazette* (henceforth *SG*) and others of the period frequently stated that the local metal trades were prepared to engage in all types of work. The fact that most of the engineering works mentioned were located at The Rocks or Darling Harbour does not mean that they were solely engaged in the maritime industries. It just so happens that this was the industrial centre of early Sydney.
27 Linge, *Industrial Awakening*; V. G. Childe, *How Labour Governs: a study of workers' representation in Australia*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1964, p 5.
28 *RCNSW*, 1841, 1848, 1856. The authors thank Carol Liston for these references.
29 P. H. Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell, 1816-1905: his family and associates: pioneers of the Australian iron and engineering Industry', *JRAHS*, vol 50, pt 2, July 1964, p 133.
30 *The Monitor*, 18 February 1828; *CJ*, 6 July 1835; *SH*, 22 February 1836.
31 *SH*, 21 June 1841.
32 London and Birmingham were the largest centres of artisan production in contemporary Britain. They should not be confused with such centres of large-scale capitalist industrial production as Leeds or Manchester. See Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, pp 259-65; I. J. Prothero, 'London Chartism and the Trades', *The Economic History Review*, vol 24, 2, 1971, pp. 202-19; Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth-Century London: John Gast and his times*, Wm Dawson & Son Ltd, Folkestone, Great Britain, 1979, pp 1-6.
33 J. Maclehose, *Picture of Sydney and Strangers' Guide in New South Wales for 1839*, John Ferguson, Sydney, 1977, pp 66-70 (reprint).
34 1828 Census; *SH*, 18 July 1831.
35 Maclehose, *Picture of Sydney*, pp 61-3.
36 *SH*, 21 June 1841; Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell', p 134; *Low's Directory 1847*.
37 Master-craftsmen often lived at their work premises. Such premises were advertised in *CJ*, 6 July 1835; *SH*, 16 February 1841.
38 Tools as advertised by Levick & Younger of George Street and Woolley's, also of George Street, *CJ*, February 4, 1836; *Examiner*, 9 August 1845.
39 *RCNSW*, 1841, 1848.
40 B. R. Schlenker, *Introduction to Materials Science*, Jacaranda Press, Milton Qld, 1986, p 222.
41 K. C. Barraclough, *Steelmaking Before Bessemer. Volume 1. Blister Steel: the birth of an industry*, The Metals Society, London, 1984, p 7.
42 Barraclough, *Blister Steel*, pp 43-6; K. C. Barraclough, *Steelmaking, 1850-1900*, Institute of Metals, London, 1990, pp 3-5.
43 The first (unsuccessful) attempt at iron smelting was made in 1848 at Mittagong, NSW. Hughes, *Australian Iron and Steel Industry*, pp 2-7. Other raw materials were also imported. Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, p 91.
44 *RCNSW*, 1828, 1840, 1845.
45 *RCNSW*, 1828, 1840.
46 *Monitor*, 27 April, 3 December 1827; *CJ*, 6 July 1835; *SH*, 7 March 1836; *Omnibus and Sydney Spectator*, 2 October 1841; *Examiner*, 9 August 1845; *SMH*, 28 August 1850.
47 *SH*, 22 February 1836.
48 W. K. V. Gale, *Iron and Steel*, Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Ironbridge, 1979, p 19; *CJ*, 9 December 1840; *Low's Directory 1847*; Barraclough, *Steelmaking Before Bessemer, Vol 1,* p 2. For modern practice see W. J. Patton, *Materials in Industry*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs NJ, 1976, pp 213, 238-41; Schlenker, *Materials Science*, pp 229-33, 239-42. Such practice has changed little over time.

49 *The Colonist*, 24 September 1835.
50 *SG*, 28 January 1836.
51 *SH*, 8 February 1836.
52 *SH*, 8 February 1836; *SG*, 28 January 1836.
53 This utopia was most forcefully expressed in the early editions of the *People's Advocate*, various editions 1848-49. See also, D. Grundy, 'Labour', in J. Griffin (ed), *Essays in Economic History*, Jacaranda Press, Milton Qld, 1970, p 207.
54 *SH*, 22 September 1836; *SMH*, 15 January 1886.
55 Harry Cole, 'Explosion Onboard the Steamer *Native*: the limits of early marine engineering in colonial New South Wales', *JRAHS*, vol 92, pt 2, 2006, pp 145-64.
56 *RCNSW*, 1840.
57 NSW Legislative Council (subsequently NSWLC), Select Committee on Coal, 1847. Minutes of Evidence.
58 *CJ*, 20 September 1837; *AC*, 14 January 1840; *SMH*, 15 January 1886.
59 *Sentinel*, 8 January 1845.
60 T. L. Mitchell, *Journal of an Expedition into the Interior of Tropical Australia, in Search of a Route from Sydney to the Gulf of Carpentaria*, 1848; *Sun*, 4 February 1843; *Sentinel*, 8 January 1845.
61 *AC*, 27 March 1840.
62 *AC*, 19 May 1840. Committee consisted of Robert Russell (snr chairman), David Dingwall (chairman), C. M. Crighton, and Messrs McKurrow, Marshall, Sommerville and Holden.
63 *AC*, 27 March 1840. On completion of an apprenticeship, it was usual for the new tradesman to leave the employ of the master craftsman and take to the road as a 'journeyman' in a search for new opportunities. A house of call was an establishment – often a public house – where the registered journeymen of a trade could call to find prospective employers and/or receive some small financial assistance. See Hobsbawm, 'The Tramping Artisan'; R. A. Leeson, *Travelling Brothers: The Six Centuries' Road from Craft Fellowship to Trade Unionism*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1979; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, pp 35-7.
64 In keeping with the morals and respectability of artisan culture, apprentices were forbidden to visit taverns, playhouses, or other places of ill-repute; play games of chance; commit fornication or enter matrimony during the period of indenture. From 17th-century Britain to late 19th-century America, Australia and New Zealand the language used in apprenticeship documents bears remarkable similarity and demonstrates the continuity and tenacity of Anglo-Celtic artisan culture. J. Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*, London, UCL Press, 1996, p. 2. For example, the 1766 indenture of Justin Hitchcock of Granville, Massachusetts, the 1873 indenture of John Heine of Buckfastleigh, Devon (later a Sydney machine tool maker), and the 1912 indenture of William Lambert of Sydney contain much the same language. Springfield Technical Community College, http://shaysrebellion.stcc.edu/shaysapp/person.do?shortName=justin_hitchcock, accessed 4 October 2021; John Heine Apprenticeship Papers, Mitchell Library, SLNSW, MLDOC 1866; William Lambert Apprenticeship Papers, Mitchell Library, SLNSW, MLDOC 2417.
65 *AC*, 19 May 1840.
66 *SH*, 2 April 1841.
67 *The Colonist*, 24 September 1835. See also Irwin 'Richard Dawson'.
68 *SG*, 30 June 1835; *SH*, 2 April 1841
69 *SH*, 2 April 1841.
70 According to the *Atlas,* 30 November 1844, the period 1826-41 witnessed growth and progress in NSW that was 'without parallel in the history of the world'. The population had increased

threefold, exports tenfold, and revenue sevenfold.
71 Sixteen ship carpenters and boat-builders declared themselves insolvent in 1842. Likewise, 15 builders and stonemasons, and four engineers; *SMH*, 3 January 1843. Though the numbers appear small, they were significant in colonial terms. The relatively 'easy' contemporary bankruptcy laws, however, need to be borne in mind.
72 *SH*, 2 April 1841; *SMH*, 3 January 1843; *WR*, 12 August 1843; Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell', pp 133-4; Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, pp 92-5.
73 *RCNSW*, 1845, 1848.
74 An early Australian labour historian referred to the early Sydney mechanics as a 'labour aristocracy always exceedingly independent and often insolent … instinct with a strong labour consciousness generated by a continual opposition to monopoly and extortion'. L. M. Thomas, *The Development of the Labour Movement in the Sydney District of New South Wales*, Australian Society for the Study of Labor History, Canberra, 1962, pp 13-14 (first published 1919),
75 See for example, NSWLC, Petition of Presbyterians, 1842. Engineers who signed the petition included Robert Cunningham, David Dingwall, Donald McKinnon, William Orr, John Struth and John Taylor. Many journeymen also signed, and the maritime trades were similarly represented.
76 *Sun*, 29 April 1843; *Star*, 13 April 1844; *Sydney Record*, 14 October, 18 October 1843; *Weekly Register* (henceforth *WR*), 29 July 1843.
77 *Low's Directory 1847*.
78 *Low's Directory 1847*; Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell', pp. 133-4.
79 *Low's Directory 1847*.
80 *Waugh & Cox's Directory of Sydney and its Suburbs 1855*; *Cox & Co's Sydney Post Office Directory*, *1857*.
81 *SMH*, 15 January 1886; University of Sydney Archives, Thomas Barker Papers (subsequently TBP).
82 Evans to Barker & Co, 4, 5, 14 September 1860, TBP. At this time Thomas Barker had retired and leased the mill to his nephews trading as Barker & Co.
83 For method of such calculation see V. M. Faires, *Theory and Practice of Heat Engines*, Macmillan, New York, 1948, pp 231-53; A. C. Walshaw, *Heat Engines*, Longman Green & Co, London, 1938, pp 51-65.
84 Evans to Barker & Co, 4, 5, 14 September 1860, TBP. The indicator diagrams taken during the engine testing are also contained in Barker's papers.
85 Dawson & Co to Barker & Co, 6 August 1867, TBP.
86 Schlenker, *Materials Science*, pp 221-2. Such excessive friction remained a potential problem for all such steam engines. D. A. Wrangham, *Theory and Practice of Heat Engines*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1960, pp 230-3.
87 Barker & Co to Thos Barker, 30 July, 13 August 1867, TBP. Struth retired in 1854. *SMH*, 15 January 1886.
88 Mather to Barker & Co, 12 August 1867, TBP.
89 Struth to Thos Barker, including the letter of Evans, 8 October 1867, TBP.
90 The Russell brothers were originally from Kirkcaldy, Scotland. They held a significant presence in the 19th-century Sydney metal industries. See Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell'.
91 Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell', pp 133-9.
92 D. G. Laws and G. Wilson, *Jacob Garrard: a joint work*, D. G. Laws, Sarasota Fl, 2002, p 50.
93 Laws, *Jacob Garrard*, pp 50, 60; Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell', p 139.
94 The ASE, established in Sydney in late 1852, was used to dealing with intransigent employers in its native Britain. S. Webb and B. Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism*, Longmans Green,

London, 1920, pp 204-17, 484-92.
95 Webb, *History*; Laws, *Jacob Garrard*, pp 50, 60; K. D. Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia, 1852-1920*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1970.
96 For example, *Low's Directory*, *Commercial Journal*, *Sydney Herald*, *Sydney Gazette*, 1828 Census, 1841 Census, *CRNSW*, 1828, 1840, 1845; TBP.
97 Buckley, *Amalgamated Engineers*.
98 *The Sentinel*, 8 January 1845; *Low's Directory 1847*.
99 Butlin, *Colonial Economy*, p 34.
100 A. Barnard, 'Mort, Thomas Sutcliffe (1816-1878)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, adb.anu.edu.au, accessed 21 September 2021.
101 Unlike Russell and the Hudson brothers (the latter immortalised by Henry Lawson as the 'Grinder Brothers'), T. S. Mort was considered a good employer who instilled much good feeling in the industrial relations of the time. See Russell, 'Sir Peter Nicol Russell'; B. Hardy, *Their Work Was Australian: the story of the Hudson family*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1970; Laws, *Jacob Garrard*, pp 50, 60, 188.
102 Webb, *History*, pp 204-17, 484-92; Buckley, *Amalgamated Engineers*.

This anomalous community: Dungog Magistrates' Letterbook, 1834-1839

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Bound in a single volume of copied letters, running from the beginning of 1834 until early 1839, is a record of the outward correspondence of magistrates sitting at the newly established courthouse at what was first referred to as 'Upper William' and from about August 1834, as Dungog.[1] This correspondence was to local landowners, magistrates of surrounding districts, the commissioner of the nearby Australian Agricultural Company (AAC), as well as to numerous functionaries in Sydney including the Superintendent of Convicts, the Colonial Storekeeper and most often, the Colonial Secretary.

This outward correspondence by Dungog's magistrates contains numerous insights into local administration in the convict period of Australian history, capturing as it does a slice of life across a wide range of matters over a few years in the late 1830s. Land grants had commenced along the Williams River by 1829 and the town of Dungog was newly established on this river a day's walk above the head of navigation at Clarence Town, which is just before the Williams meets the Hunter River at Raymond Terrace.[2]

The Letterbook gives a glimpse into Australian history at a time when convicts, Indigenous people and newly granted landowners lived side by side on the edge of white settlement, some 150 miles and at least two hard days' travel from Sydney. Perhaps most suggestive of the basis of this 'anomalous community' is the paradoxical phrase – 'free by servitude' – frequently used to refer to its many ex-convict members who had completed their sentences.

The range of matters dealt with in the letters is broad as the police magistrates at the time had a wide brief and extensive powers. Around 1834, there was difficultly getting people to act as a magistrate. George Mackenzie's property, for example, was 16 miles from the courthouse at Dungog, which was 'directly in the through fare between the AACompany's extensive establishment and Hunter River'.[3] The AAC's property between Port Stephens and Gloucester to the east of

Bank of Australasia, Stroud, formerly the headquarters of the Australian Agricultural Company. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

Dungog meant many convicts needed to be dealt with, while it was on the Hunter River that settlers and police were to be found.

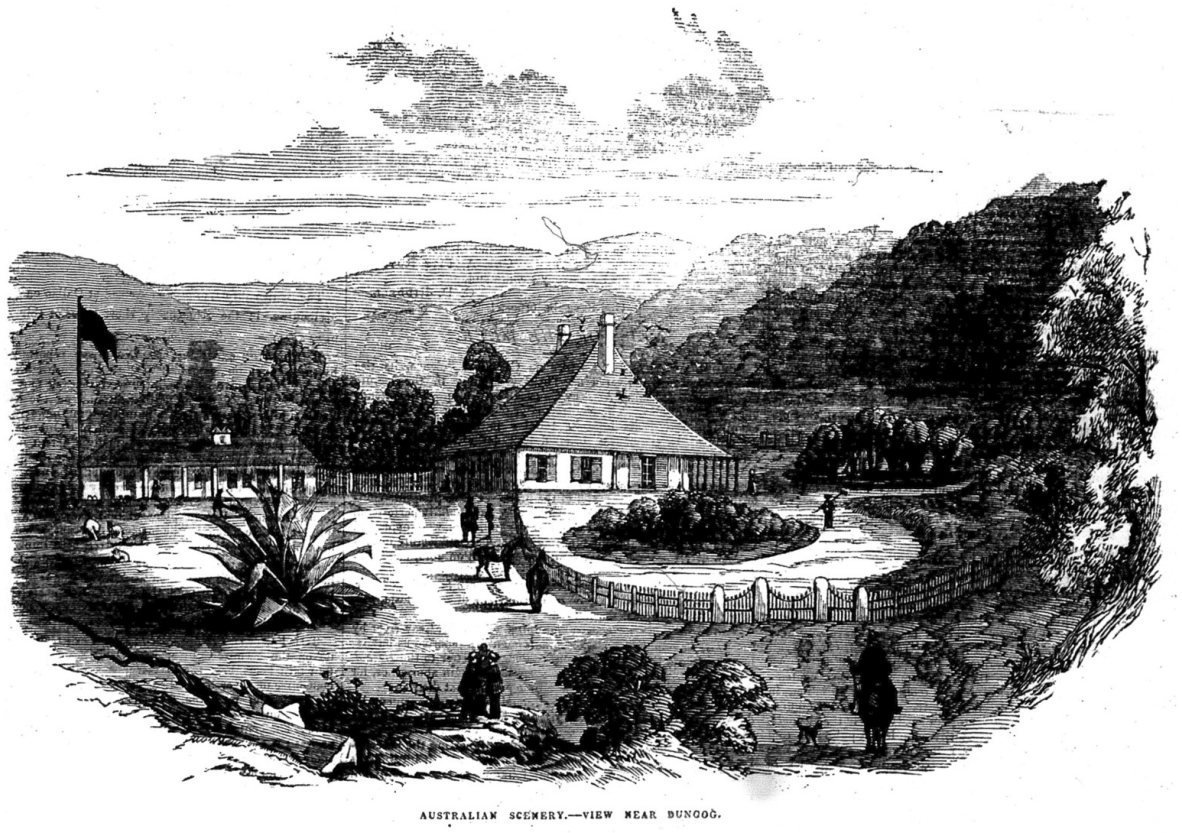
However, having a magistrate on this privately owned estate carried its own issues. Consequently in 1837, Thomas Cook, originally appointed as paid Police Magistrate at Port Stephens (as opposed to the local landowning justices of the peace acting as unpaid magistrates), was appointed to Dungog (or Upper Williams) but also with responsibility for Port Stephens and its court at Stroud.[4] That Cook was a paid official of government rather than a local volunteer landowner is apparent when ill health delayed him in Sydney and he supplied a doctor's certificate to back up this claim.[5] The magistrate and his clerk needed to make the trip once a fortnight from Dungog to Stroud to hear cases there, and once, in October 1837, Cook wrote that he was too ill to make this trip 'over the mountains'.[6]

As a Police Magistrate on a salary paid by government Thomas Cook was part of an ongoing political issue that pitched the power of local landowners, who often acted as honorary magistrates, against the authority of the governor in Sydney. While Cook's appointment was undoubtedly within the context of such political struggles, it is not possible to say 'what, if any, they had on magisterial practice'.[7] And in any case landowners' desire for a functioning legal system to handle the

'dangers of bushranging' outweighed their concerns about any threat to 'English liberties' as perceived by these landowners.[8] The Letterbook tells us much about 'magisterial practice' in dealing both with landowners and bushranging but little about the government in Sydney apart from its bureaucratic demands.

The bulk of the correspondence in the Letterbook occurs from 1837 under the name of Thomas Cook, after he had taken up residence at Dungog rather than simply visiting from Stroud, and runs until early 1839 when the volume becomes full. Thomas Cook, the son of a Scottish merchant, arrived as a free immigrant with his wife and several children in Sydney in April 1834, and he took oath as a magistrate in November that year to become the Police Magistrate of Port Stephens from which he originally visited Dungog.[9] His appointment may have been due to the influence of his brother-in-law, Colonel Kenneth Snodgrass, MLC.

Soon after this the police districts were reorganised and in 1837 Cook was appointed Police Magistrate of both Upper Williams and Port Stephens, but now residing at Dungog and visiting Stroud. Most of what is known of Thomas Cook comes from a period after the end of the Letterbook. While at Dungog Cook purchased a property that he named 'Auchentorlie'. Cook lost his position as Police Magistrate in 1843 when the government reverted to unpaid magistrates, but he



The estate of Thomas Cook, 'Auchentorlie', near Dungog, from the Illustrated Sydney News, 5 August 1854.

continued serving as a justice of the peace. He also lost both a daughter and a son to illness while living at Dungog. In the 1850s, Cook sold Auchentorlie and left Dungog, dying at Woollahra, Sydney, in 1866.[10]

The deliberate move to Dungog and thus outside the territory of the AAC is indicative of the power of this large landowner. The AAC was at the time the largest single landowner in New South Wales, consisting as it did of a private company made up of prominent and wealthy members of the British elite. The actual running of the enterprise was in the hands of managers. The Letterbook provides ample hints of the practical difficulties a magistrate such as Cook had in dealing with the AAC that is perhaps worth further investigation.[11]

Managing convicts and former convicts

The control and punishment of the convict population of the district was a major function of a magistrate at this period and, in fact, the first letter in the Letterbook complains that two years on a road gang was inadequate power to punish absconders.[12] This was written by the first magistrate of Upper Williams to use the Letterbook, George Mackenzie, JP, who at the end of January 1834 was investigating the activities of William O'Neil, 'here by servitude', who was occupying Crown land on the Clarence Town road and, having no visible means of sustenance, was suspected of receiving and stealing cattle. Having been convicted of harbouring prisoners of the Crown he was given notice to quit.[13] R. G. Moffatt (Captain 17th Regiment) added in March that O'Neil is 'a most notorious Sly Grog seller'.[14]

Thomas Cook's first letter in the Letterbook is more typical of convict administration and concerned a routine passing on of a ticket-of-leave application, as well as the answering of a circular requesting information about facilities within his district, namely that Singleton's Mill was the only public flour mill, located two miles above Clarence Town.[15] Also routine were the applications by landholders for assigned convict servants, as in September 1837, when Cook needed to ask James Edward Ebsworth of Boorall to sit with him in a 'Special Petty Sessions' for this purpose.[16] Authorising ticket-of-leave men's transfers to other districts was another increasing part of a magistrate's role, with Cook reporting at the beginning of 1838 on the transfer of 11 men to various districts.[17]

The anomalousness of this community is emphasised by the fact that, according to Cook, 'no convict can legally possess any money'. Cook goes on to say that it was usual for constables to search prisoners for the purpose of taking their money,[18] presumably to turn it over to the authorities. The month following this Cook forwarded £2/9/- taken from a prisoner, which was 'the mode followed by me when any money was found in the pocket of convicts sent up for trial, it being illegal and unsafe for them to possess any means'. The money was to be put in the bank on their behalf. If this was not done, Cook feared the prisoner population would soon be too much.[19]

However it was not all routine and in May 1835, Cook gave a detailed report on the escape from Dungog lock-up of Timothy Fogarty, a captured bushranger who managed to lever down the wood panelling of his cell, remove the outer bricks and then scramble over the 10-foot yard wall. Although a constable was living inside the courthouse, and the jailer and his family also lived in a small room off the court house, Cook stated that 'from sundown to sunrise' there was no observation of prisoners.[20] Other escapees passed through the area, with one from Port Macquarie described as wearing a green cloth jacket, blue trousers, blue waistcoat, check or striped pants and a straw hat.[21]

Escaping from custody was usually preceded by escape from one's place of assignment and so dealing with absconders and suspected absconders was also standard. When local landholder W. F. Forester declared that Margaret Sheedy was an absconder, and that she was free, Margaret was held in custody while Cook determined the case.[22]

Another was Thomas Mullins who, 'not giving a satisfactory account of himself', was liable to be arrested as a vagrant.[23] In this case, Mullins was an absconder from Brisbane Waters for which the constable who picked him up was rewarded £5.[24] This Constable Harcourt, who was 'free by servitude', was still waiting for his reward to be paid three months later.[25] In the meantime Mullins escaped again. 'A more troublesome villain than Mullins I never did meet before now. The constable had a job of him.' This time Cook felt it 'right to claim the "Five Pounds" from the Constable and Gaoler who allowed him to escape'.[26]

Crimes such as cattle and horse stealing were also frequent, with for example, cattle slaughtered at Wallarobba being identified by Mr Chapman as his.[27] Assault was another common occurrence, and Charles White and Pat Brady were charged for 'assaulting and molesting John O'Brien at improper hours in his own house'.[28] Another common crime was forgery, as when Patrick Brenan, alias Maccurran, forged a draft for £13/15 on 'Mr Lord of Sydney' and a local landowner. Brenan attempted to cash the draft at O'Brien's store near Clarence Town. The draft was supposedly drawn by Lord's superintendent Mr Flitt. O'Brien called on Mr Flitt to check and so the forgery was discovered. A warrant for Brenan's arrest was issued by another landowning JP, Lawrence Myles, in Cook's absence.[29]

Punishment

For absconding and other crimes, punishment with the lash was often inflicted, as when William Forbes and William Daley received 50 lashes each. John Ford was given 50 lashes plus 12 months on the 'Ironed gang' and John Cairns also 12 months.[30] Michael Welsh received 100 lashes for 'Cooking' sheep and cruelty to animals, and 12 months in an 'Ironed Gang' for absconding a second time.[31] William Evans, who dared to complain against his Master, a complaint Cook regarded as

'trifling and vexatious', was given 50 lashes and returned.[32] Some exceptions were recognised, however, as when Edward Birmingham was described as a simpleton who 'absconded through ignorance'.[33]

A more common punishment than the lash was to be deprived of one's ticket-of-leave. Both John Walsh and Harry Trowbridge lost their tickets-of-leave 'for improper treatment of Constable Powers when on duty on the Road between Stroud and Dungog'.[34] With William Pepper, who had been a prevaricating witness in Cook's opinion and 'attempting to defeat the ends of justice', Cook recommended the loss of his ticket.[35] In August 1837, James Lyman and John Cane also had their tickets withdrawn, the first for harbouring a prisoner and attempting to bribe a constable, and the latter for stealing a jacket.[36] However, a magistrate's decisions were subject to review, and in July 1837 Cook's sentence of two years in the 'Ironed gang' for James Howatt for slandering a Dr Whitfield was overturned by the governor.[37]

Loss of ticket-of-leave was a punishment that limited a person's mobility and thus made a servant of less use, as when J. M. Pilcher wrote to complain that his overseer Downs had been so punished. Cook reminded Pilcher that such a ticket was 'only to be enjoyed during good behaviour'.[38] Other technicalities associated with punishing a useful class of people was the need to inform the bench before trial that a master wanted a convict back, otherwise they would be sent to Sydney on conviction.[39]

The ticket-of-leave was a significant document and proof of it was required if a person was not to be arrested on the spot. Charles Romance claimed that his was lost when children in his hut took it from his coat pocket and destroyed it.[40] Lawrence Sullivan offered as evidence of his certificate of freedom what Cook described as a 'scrap of paper'.[41] Cook also felt he could accost anyone on the road and demand such proof, as he did of William Robissis 'on the Clarence Town Rd about 7 miles out'. When the reply was not satisfactory, he ordered him to appear before him in court.[42]

Constables

Cook as a paid magistrate did not entirely solve the shortage of magistrates, as in many cases, such as the assignment of convicts, two magistrates were needed. This need to get a second magistrate was a constant concern, with Cook explaining four years into his appointment that it was easier to get Johnston from Paterson than Esbworth from Port Stephens as he lived at Booral, which was 30 miles from Stroud.[43] This delay in getting the required second magistrate often led Cook to send prisoners on to Sydney rather than hold them while waiting for a second magistrate.[44]

The constables used by magistrates such as Cook for escorting prisoners to Sydney and elsewhere were usually ex-convicts and this often caused difficulties. In September 1834, Senior Constable Thomas Rodwell was replaced in his position due to being intoxicated 'while in the discharge of his duty'. His replacement was Michael Connolly, a ticket-of-leave man and former constable at Bathurst.[45] A few

years later, a constable brought in his prisoners drunk, having given them rum at a public house near Paterson – 'the day being wet & cold'. Magistrate Cook seems to have sympathised and waived the charge of neglect but did fine the Senior Constable £5 for breach of the Licensing Act; half of this to go as a reward to the informer, in this case the Police Magistrate at Paterson.[46]

However, when a constable was found to be reliable, Thomas Cook at least was prepared to act accordingly. In February 1839, for example, Cook recommended that Robert Mason replace James Edwards as constable at Stroud. This was despite Mason having been dismissed by Major Sullivan, though 'for no removable act' in Cook's opinion. Mason was sent to Stroud that same day with a note to the AAC requesting he be provided with provisions and accommodation 'on usual terms'.[47]

Cook was also very pleased with the work of what seems to have been a lone constable placed at Gloucester, Patrick Conway, who gave 'good service in taking bushrangers and putting down sly grog shops'. Cook felt that Conway's one shilling per day pay should be increased.[48]

Convicts as servants

Cook spent much time dealing with the relations between convicts and the masters to whom they were assigned. As such, Thomas Cook was part of a government bureaucracy that included the Board of Assignment of Servants, responsible for the placement of convicts and to which Cook as magistrate could only make recommendations if a crime were not involved. In October 1836, Cook was investigating a complaint of J. Devlin, assigned to Mr Holmes. Devlin was described as 'a poor simpleton'.[49] Later that same year, James Williams requested 'slop Clothing'.[50] The following year, Joseph Webster found himself removed from service with Mr Rogers for complaining from 'Peak, and not ill usage'. Cook felt Webster was 'one of those Convicts who pretend to know Rules Laws, and regulations better than their superiors', and feared this 'leveling Spirit Contaminate whatever they come near'. Cook suggested Webster go to the 'Ironed Gang' at Port Macquarie.[51] The assignment of servants did not always work out, as when Cook ordered that Sarah Robinson be removed from the house of Michael Doyle, 'she being a greater burden than a comfort to an industrious Family'.[52]

Local landowners such as Lord and Myles also needed to abide by the restrictions on their workers but appeared reluctant to always do so. At the end of 1837, for example, Cook needed to remind John Hooke that application must be made to the Superintendent of Convicts before 'your man' could leave the district, as Hooke proposed.[53]

Cook also queried matters between landowners that he felt were not legal, as when this same John Hooke purchased the property of Lawrence Myles, including all his assigned servants. Cook wrote for advice on the legality of this to the

Commissioner for the Assignment of Servants.[54] This case continued for some time and in the following month, Cook wrote to Myles pointing out that the 'alienation of his Wallarobba meadow' had not been reported and that he needed to see the assignment regulations.[55] At the same time, Cook wrote to Hooke, the purchaser of the 'Wallarobba meadow', to point out 'an apparent irregularity in the construction of your present establishment as regards some convict servants'. He requested that Hooke 'without delay turn to the 15th paragraph of the assignment regulations'.[56]

Despite Cook's (seemingly prescient) disquiet, the transfer of both land and convicts from Myles to Hooke went ahead and Cook was reduced to overseeing the details. He wrote to Hooke to insist that the appropriate forms be filled in, particularly all servants' names.[57] Cook informed J. M. Slade, Superintendent of Convicts, that Hooke had complied and Myles not, but that the transfer would go ahead anyway.[58] A couple of days later Myles wrote with the list of convicts, 24 in total, including such names as William Mumford (*Lady MacNaughton*), John Farrell (*Clyde*) and John Pritchard (*Printra*), to complete the transfer of property and servants to 'John Hooke of Wiragully Farm'.[59] The Wallarobba meadow property under question consisted of four lots of 2,560/790/640 and 940 acres, and 25 men.[60]

Despite these formalities, the following year this transaction took an unexpected turn when Hooke swore that Myles and MacKay had entered into a conspiracy to deprive him of one of the convicts, John Lingfoot. Cook was obliged to write to Slade asking him to check the original list of convicts to be transferred, as Lingfoot was not on the copy Cook had.[61] A few days later Cook appears to have accepted Hooke's claims, reporting that 'the name Lingfoot has been by some Chicanery withdrawn from this list', and that Lingfoot had joined his 'former master', Myles, in Sydney.[62]

Convict economy

While the landowners were seemingly manipulating the system, those with less resources were doing what they could. A glimpse of such economics is seen in Cook's account of the activities of Thomas Ford, an absconder who had been recaptured and while free had been selling and branding cattle 'for the purpose of raising money and deceiving government'. Ford had made contact with a Dark of Hinton who had borrowed money from Andrew Lang of Paterson. Phillip O'Brien was the principal purchaser of cattle, and one of Hooke's had been killed and six others stamped over 10-12 days according to witness James Doherty. Ford and partner Latham had bought casks off William Miller to cure four tons of beef. Thomas Bamford was their cooper employed to seal the casks, whereabouts unknown.[63]

Cook was concerned that absconding convicts such as Ford were easily able to obtain work among an increasing population of either ex-convicts or people simply anxious to obtain a worker and not keen to ask too many questions. As Cook

described an absconder from his own property, named Joseph Ailkens, he was 'a sort of rough carpenter and being a plausible fellow will easily find employment'.[64]

This concern grew as settlement on the Peel River to the north opened up new opportunities for employment far from authority. Cook wrote in May 1835 of five absconders from AAC lands who, once past Maitland, hoped to find employment on the Peel. Cook suggested mounted police be sent to recapture them and a fine imposed on any that employed them.[65]

Soon after this, in July 1838 Cook emphasised the point that settlers too easily assisted runaways by detailing the case of Pat Brady (alias Brown) who absconded in December 1836, taking a steamer to Sydney (presumably paying with money he should not have had), from where he walked to Parramatta. Here he took up with a party being taken down to Port Philip, being paid £3. He then returned to the Hunter region and took a contract with Mr Dawson of Black Creek as a shepherd for £22 and a large ration 'without anything to show for his freedom'.[66]

Cook would have been pleased when in the following October he was able to summons 'a Mr MacKay for harbouring & employing 2 convicts illegally at large', namely Bing Petty and John Smith.[67] However, continuing frustration over this issue was expressed soon after when Cook wrote that 'Bushranger is merely a prettier name for High Wayman' and complained again of people 'harbouring & employing'.[68] The crackdown in this area continued, and in November at least three people were fined substantially for 'harbouring & employing': R. B. Dawson of Black Creek – £224/14/4; Alex McLeod – £112/9/8 and Alex L. Dave – £112/9/8.[69]

Convicts – mental health

The magistrate often needed to deal with problems relating to the mental state of convicts. At least one prisoner complained enough to receive some attention from Cook, who wrote to Doctor Park at Paterson that he was sending Thomas Ford, who had been some time in the lock-up and wished to consult a medical practitioner for an 'imaginary disease'. Cook sent him to the Paterson lock-up where Dr Park could advise him.[70] A little later Cook seems to have modified his opinion, writing that Ford, who had been charged with cattle stealing, 'seems to labor under some nervous affliction – arising I believe from confinement and anxiety of mind'. Cook suggested Ford 'be either committed for trial or at once discharged'.[71]

In November the same year Ford's 'anxiety of mind' was recognised, another prisoner, this time in the watch-house at Stroud, attempted to commit suicide. John Williams was declared insane and sent to Newcastle.[72] Early in 1839 a servant of James Walker of Brookfield was declared not fit for service due to his being subject to 'common fits'. Walker was therefore short of hands.[73]

Other cases seem less clear, as when the wife of local landowner Mr Hooke requested leniency for a Mary Williams, who had been absent without leave and

placed in solitary confinement. Later Mary was declared 'filthy' and diseased and sent to Newcastle.[74] And in another case, the situation was clearer but the solution less so when Cook, concerning a Mrs Park, wrote: 'What is best to be done for a woman in her destitute situation?' All he could do was send her and her two children to Newcastle jail 'to await His Excellency's pleasure regarding them'.[75]

In addition to mental health problems the risk of death was also high and investigation of deaths, including the many accidental ones, were also the preserve of local magistrates. At 'Cairnsmore', the estate of Crawford Logan Brown, according to the deposition taken by Cook, William Mitten was 'killed by an explosion of gunpowder which he himself had placed in a well for the purpose of blowing up the rock'.[76] That same month an inquest was held into the death of a servant of W. J. Forster, named William Wilson, killed by a falling tree.[77]

Two months later there was another death by falling tree, this time on AAC property, of Robert Launders, who had just come to the colony. Cook was moved to think in terms of prevention and wrote to fellow magistrate and sometime Commissioner of the AAC, Edward Ebsworth that, as this was one of four such cases in four months and that as many such accidents were due to 'inexperienced youth', such people should be paired with 'old hands' to provide training.[78] It is not known if this was done. Cook was also concerned with drinking and the following year suggested a ban on selling more than two gallons at a time.[79]

Cook in some letters does appear to show sympathy on occasion for others. William Dewhurst lost his ticket of leave as a warning to other overseers of the value of the flocks of the AAC. Dewhurst, it seems, was able to be understood only by George Jenkins, who had been superintendent at the AAC for many years and Cook suggested that Dewhurst be sent to Liverpool Plains where Jenkins now lived.[80] In apparent contrast to this concern, when his own servant John Flynn died in hospital, Cook applied to the Commissioner of Assignment to send another, in 'stout health' and 'one that can eat his bread and earn it'. Cook declared that as he had 40 acres cleared he was entitled.[81] The next day Cook wrote to the Superintendent of Convicts to inform him that John Flynn had had an accident 'on my farm' in early February and had died.[82]

Traditional owners

While dealing with various aspects of the convict population was the main concern of the magistrate, the remaining traditional owners also often came within the purview of the Dungog bench.[83] In April of the first year of the Letterbook, a request for arms and ammunition was made because 'at present the Aborigines are very troublesome', with mounted police from Patrick's Plains also requested due to a spearing and 'well grounded alarm'.[84] In the same month a John Flinn was killed

in the camp of 'our own tribe' and 'although Blacks may not be considered as being of such importance as Whites in these cases', Cook's predecessor Magistrate Moffatt nevertheless committed the accused murderer for trial.[85]

Some of the early letters are signed not by magistrates but by the Clerk of the Bench, D. F. MacKay, a local landowner. MacKay wrote to nearby Paterson for assistance in July 1835 when he felt 'the Blacks have again commenced committing serious depredations in the neighborhood', including spearing cattle in the bush opposite his own residence.[86] Earlier in the year, a reward was offered for 'an Aboriginal Black named Jemmy' for 'many outrages'.[87] The following year reference was made to the murder of Mackenzie's men on the Gloucester in May 1835, the accused being 'Jemmi' and 'Kotra Jacki'.[88] Lawrence Myles, JP, also requested mounted police in May 1836 under the shadow of this attack, citing 'intelligence that the Blacks are becoming more troublesome'.[89]

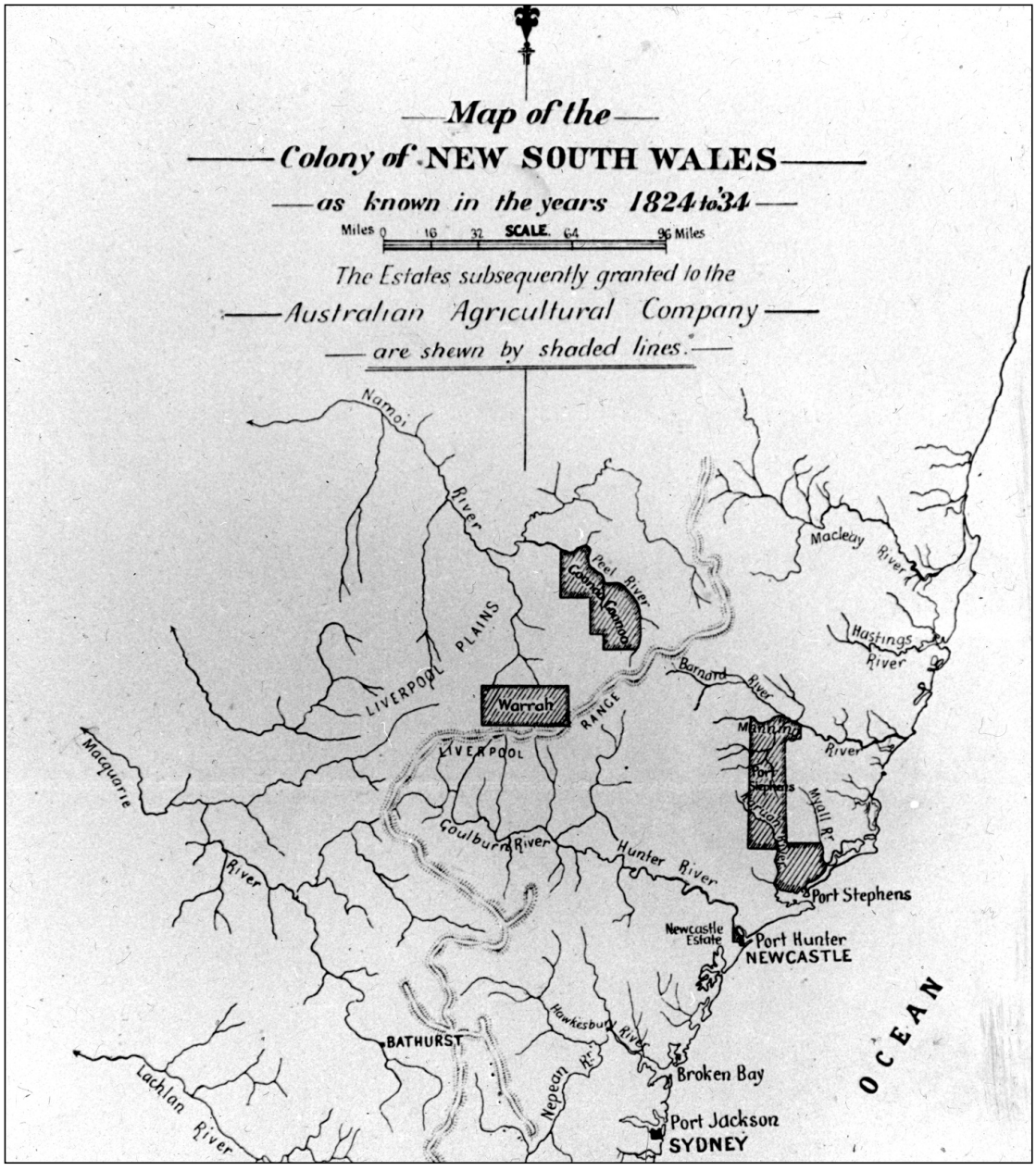
In the beginning of 1836, for example, Cook too was fearful of a rescue attempt being made on 'Black' prisoners being sent to Newcastle and requested two troopers from Maitland.[90] This was granted and in September, MacKay, as Clerk of the Bench, wrote that 'Jimmy' was sent under escort of two mounted police and a reward of £10 was to be paid.[91]

Dealing legally with the local Aboriginal people meant talking to them and in July 1834, a request was made for the Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld, a missionary working on the nearby coast who had learned a related Aboriginal language, to act as interpreter in King vs Jacky.[92] Possibly, this was the same Jacky sent down to Maitland the year after for the 1831 spearing of a Robert Weddis, from where he would go by steamer to Sydney.[93]

In theory the traditional owners were not only subject to the law administered by Cook but also under its protection. In 1837 an incident occurred that shows the limits to the authority of the police magistrate, at least in dealings that concerned the native people. Cook needed to write to 'The Hon E. Deas Thomson', the Colonial Secretary, seeking advice on how to proceed in a 'case of native wives being detained against their will and that of their friends'. After a 'formal complaint by a respectable person' was made in favour of five Aboriginals, Cook interviewed the five 'blacks', including Fullam Derby and Pirrson, whom he described as 'most intelligent fellows', and that 'Derby is a king and speaks English well'. Cook discovered that the superintendent of Mr John Lord, Mr Flitt, had detained their wives, in fact that he 'keeps quite a seraglio'. Cook sent a note to Flitt 'via one of the blacks', only to have them report back that Flitt had torn it to pieces. Cook wrote that he 'feared ill blood and foul murder may result', and requested 'instructions how to proceed'.[94] While the results of this case are unknown, it is apparent that Flitt's arrest was not one of them.

Jurisdiction

If the local people found it difficult to invoke the protection of the law, the more recent arrivals, or at least those with land grants, felt more confident complaining about it. Thus, the newly established settlement of Upper Williams, soon known as Dungog, was a convenient link between the AAC lands to the east and the much larger settlement at Maitland on the Hunter River, and this position was a reason for its early courthouse. However, Dungog was not so convenient for those living along the Allyn River, which runs parallel to the Williams, and settlers there wrote in 1836 to request they be allowed to deal through magistrates at Paterson rather than Dungog.[95]



The Australian Agricultural Company Grant covered large tracts of land in the Dungog/Port Stephens district. (RAHS Glass Slide Collection)

The question of whether Allyn River settlers belonged to Paterson or Dungog was part of the evolving administrative organisation of the Sydney-based government and as part of this, a census was to be taken, which in turn required the district's boundaries to be defined. In 1836 these were from Singleton's Mill, the head of navigation above Clarence Town, then west to Stony Creek, that creek being the south-west boundary, then north to the head of the Williams, including Wallarobba.[96]

Routine

Much of the magistrate's work involved administrative routine such as the sending on of monies collected to Sydney. In October 1837, for example, £41/16/2 was paid to the Colonial Treasury and £2/10/- to the Benevolent Society.[97] In the October quarter of the following year a total of £63/2/8 was collected in fines and £22/10/- in fees.[98] Other routine matters for the magistrate included advising Donald Campbell, the poundkeeper, that he needed to move closer to the pound, or resign.[99] This was in response to a complaint by William Miller of Glen William to whom Cook wrote saying that Campbell had come to see him and promised to move.[100]

Thomas Cook was an active magistrate and often wrote in an attempt to improve facilities, such as the lock-up at Dungog.[101] He was also responsible for the facilities at Stroud, but here he needed to rely on the Australian Agricultural Company, a bureaucracy it seems every bit as slow as the government's, and so he also wrote to speed up the new lock-up at Stroud.[102] As well as facilities, Cook frequently sent reminders about arrears of pay for his Lockup Keeper, John McGibbon, and about expenses paid during the 1837 Census.[103] Money was still owed McGibbon six months later and eight months after the census.[104] And in a reminder that the system was not only slow but brutal, Cook requested 'scourging Cats' at the same time that he required ammunition, flints, and handcuffs; obtaining each from a different department of government.[105] In December 1837, a request was made for less violent but urgently needed 'fine foolscap paper and Quills'. Cook asked that these to be sent by the sloop *Northumberland* to Clarence Town, or if that had sailed, by steamer to Raymond Terrace.[106]

Resources

Cook was Magistrate of two police districts, the Upper Williams River (courthouse, Dungog) and Port Stephens (courthouse, Stroud) and thus oversaw considerable resources. The AAC, whose many convict shepherds caused much work for the court, was required to share some of the expenses, such as a new lock-up and payment of constables.[107] In 1837, the force Cook controlled within the Port Stephens district was three constables paid by the government and four constables plus a 'scourger' paid for by the AAC.[108]

The Letterbook provides a fascinating snapshot of the wide range of matters that magistrates were required to deal with. (Photo Michael Williams, July 2010)

The full force of the law under Police Magistrate Cook is laid out in the 'Statement of the Police force authorized and existing in the Districts of Port Stephens and Upper Williams River up to the 30th June 1837', viz:

Dungog	**Port Stephens**
1 Resident Magistrate	
1 Clerk	3 Ordinary Constables in Government Pay
1 Gaoler	a Clerk
1 District Constable	4 Ordinary Constables (one acting as Lockup keeper)
3 Ordinary Constables	and Scourger in AAC pay and 1 Scourger'[109]

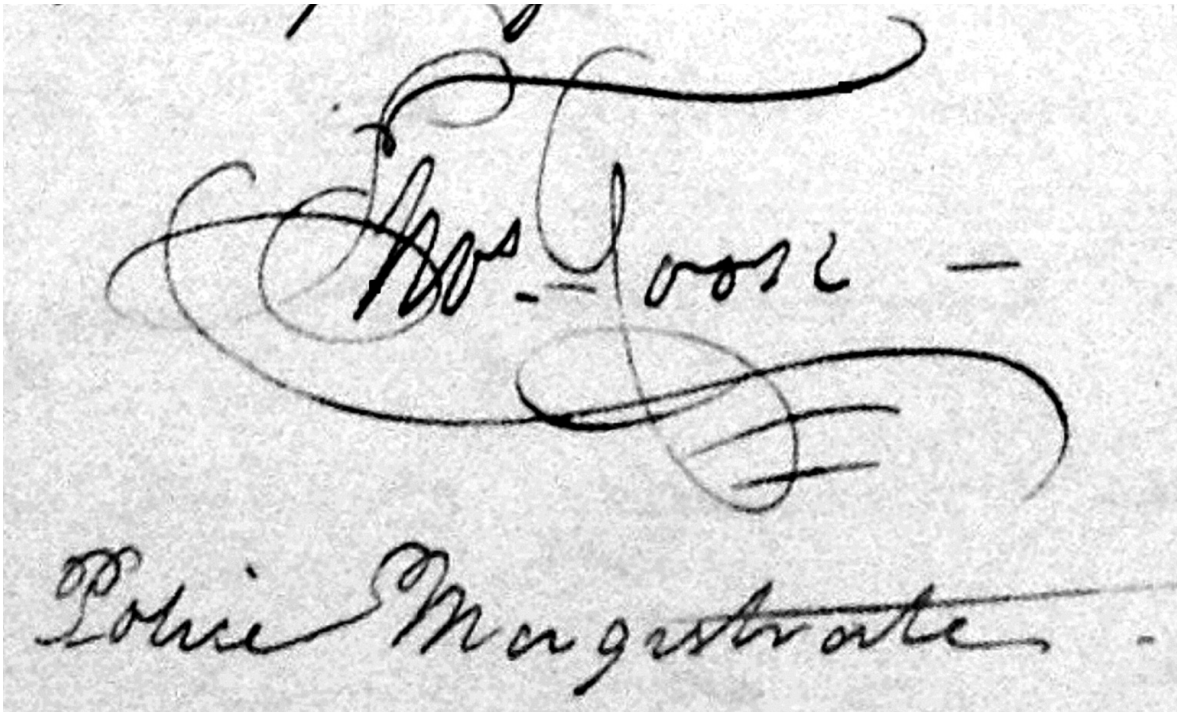
The previous Chief Constable had been paid £75 per year and the current District Constable @ 3/- 'per diem'.[110]

In 1838, Cook gave a clear account of the budget of his domain in an estimate of expenses for the following year, including 'absolutely necessary' expenditure on facilities.[111]

Estimated Expense 1839		
Dungog		
Magistrate	£250	
Clerk	£100	
Chief Constable	£75	
Lock up Keeper	£54	
3 Ordinary Constables	£139/10/-	
Scourger	£40/10/-	
		Total – £659
Port Stephens		
Lock up Keeper	£54	
2 Ordinary Constables	£81	
Scourger	£40/10/-	
		Total – £175/10/-
Rations for Lockup & gaol	£40	
Lighting	£2	
Escort expenses	£3	
Postages	£3	
		Total – £48

Supplementary	
Verandah for Courthouse 'absolutely necessary'	£10
Rebuilt chimney	£4
Magistrates Rm (renovation)	£6
Minor repairs Court Hse/Lockup	£6
Lockup House with 2 strong rooms	£40
	Total – £66

This came to an annual budget to run the two police districts of £948/10/-.



The signature of Police Magistrate Thomas Cook.
(Photo Michael Williams, July 2010)

Cook was also responsible for changes in the personnel and needed to inform the Colonial Secretary that Alexander Hamilton, the lock-up keeper in Stroud, was relieving for McGibbon in Dungog;[112] also that John Powers had been appointed scourger at Stroud at 2/3d per day and 'performs his duty well'.[113] Similar information was conveyed to Dumaresq at the AAC when it was recommended that John Powers continue as scourger and the AAC Commissioner noted that this was not a claim on the AAC. In the same letter, Cook reported he would be visiting the next Tuesday and 'will be glad to listen to any case you or Mr Arkins may have to bring forward'.[114] Later in the year, McGibbon transferred to Stroud as lock-up keeper and was replaced in Dungog by James Boland.[115] In March 1838, Constable Brown resigned, eventually becoming a clerk in Sydney gaol.[116]

Sometime during 1837, Cook's control over the AAC constables seems to have been withdrawn.[117] Nevertheless, Cook continued to complain about this large landowning company, this time to a fellow Police Magistrate, about being forced to hold court in a 'Common School Room'.[118] Perhaps the Colonial Secretary was also becoming frustrated with the complaints, however, this official merely wrote to 'call your attention to the expediency of acting in concert with the Commissioner'.[119]

Infrastructure

Due to the increasing number of absconders from the AAC, a 'small force of mounted police' formed by 'Sir Rich Bourke KGB', was established at Dungog at around the time Thomas Cook was there. However, as Cook pointed out, no accommodation was available, but a 'slab-building' could be put up by the government party and a long requested watch-house and lock-up keeper's apartments at the same time. All of which was 'now undisputedly necessary'.[120] In support of his feeling that more buildings and accommodation were needed, Cook provided the Colonial Secretary with a detailed description of what existed at the time in terms of police buildings in Dungog. There was the courthouse itself, off which was a small consulting room and 'a dark place' for securing property in charge of the police.

The dimensions of the rooms were:

Court Room	18 feet by 14 feet with a 9 foot ceiling
Consulting Room	9 feet by 8 feet with a 9 foot ceiling
Place for books	9 feet by 6 feet with a 9 foot ceiling
Yard	80 feet by 54 feet and a 10 foot fence
Cells	7 feet by 4 feet, height 7½ feet[121]

The cells at the back of the courthouse were surrounded by a high slab fence. It seems these cells were for prisoners sentenced to solitary confinement, although as Cook pointed out, they were not much good for this purpose as the prisoners could talk to each other. In these cells sometimes eight to 10 prisoners could be kept for days or weeks awaiting a second magistrate. This was a 'great inconvenience' – whether for Cook or the crowded prisoners is not clear.[122]

Australian Agricultural Company

Relations with the AAC were sometimes difficult, as with a dispute in August 1837 over the cost of feeding a prisoner in custody. According to Cook, 'when convicts are sent by their masters to any lock-up in the country, to await the appointed day for the coming of a Magistrate, it is understood the culprit brings his rations with him; but having once been before the Court and remanded, all subsequent expense falls on Government'.[123] This is a fine distinction about one's status in custody that must have left many convicts wondering where their next meal was coming from.

Some time later Cook's frustrations in his dealings with the AAC is evident in the mild scorn he allows himself in a letter to fellow magistrate Major Johnston, when he wrote that the Commissioner of the AAC had discovered that he was 'on an equal footing with other respectable settlers in regard to the assignment regulations'.[124] Difficulties with the AAC over petty matters continued, however, such as when Cook wrote concerning a dispute between Thomas Brown, one of his constables based in Port Stephens and described by Cook as 'ready, steady and active in the performance of his duty', and the AAC, which had refused to sell the constable provisions from the public stores.[125] It was the government, Cook reminded the AAC, that had requested a lock-up keeper, two ordinary constables and a scourger be placed 'on the north side of the Williams'.

Postal service

In addition to legal matters, the postal service was also part of a magistrate's responsibilities and in the Letterbook's opposite end are a few letters written concerning post office matters. This was because at first the Clerk of the Bench, Duncan MacKay, also handled postal matters. The first of these letters is in fact MacKay's resignation, in which he stated that William Cormack would act as Post Officer but not if he got the Clerk of the Bench position.[126] Cormack is described by Cook in another letter as a 'respectable free Emigrant'.[127] Two months later Cormack himself writes to the Post Master that he is too busy as he often spends a week in Port Stephens, a fortnight if a flood and that court related work had trebled since MacKay resigned. Cormack felt he could find someone in Dungog for the role if the salary were £30 a year,[128] a salary that Donald Campbell, the poundkeeper, was willing to accept, according to Cook.[129]

Regardless of the salary paid, not all was satisfactory with the mails and in September 1837 Cook complained about the post service; Friday's letters arrived in Sydney the following Thursday and Tuesday's letters the following Monday, while special letters required the expense of being sent down to Raymond Terrace.[130] The postal service seemed to be in high demand and in November 1837 a total of £9/12/11 was taken in postage over three months.[131] In March the following year a joint complaint was made about the poor postal service, signed by Cormack and two

others.[132] Complaints continued nevertheless and Cook was forced to declare that postal delays were not his fault.[133]

Dungog town

In 1838 a Dungog town plan was drawn up, with allotments to be sold at auction. Cook was involved in the preparations for this, writing to Colonial Secretary Thomson that no allotments had yet been sold in Dungog but a ready market would be found when 'properly defined and portioned off'.[134] In October that year, Cook received the 'plan for this township', which he 'kept for the inspection of the Public'.[135]

The need for a town at Dungog was perhaps based on a government survey undertaken the year before. Magistrate Cook had sent out this survey of both Upper Williams and Port Stephens requesting information on the average wages of 'mechanics' and prices in the district for the six months to 30 June.[136] The major landowners surveyed in Dungog were James Marshall, C. L. Brown, W. H. Windeyer, James Walker, Lowe, D. F. MacKay, John Hooke, J. Forester, Myles, E. Ross, Barrymore, Meyer, and Holmes. The information was returned and compiled by the beginning of November and included average wages, with and without board and lodging, numbers required in addition to those already employed and average prices. Overall, Dungog was a more expensive place than Port Stephens but paid higher wages.[137]

Return showing the average Prices of Provisions and Agricultural Produce in the District of the Upper Williams for the Six Months until 30th June 1837

Articles	**Average Prices**
Maize	3/6 – 4/- bushel
Wheat	6/6 – 7/- bushel
(Indian) Corn	3 – 4½ lb
Beef	3½ – 4 lb
Pork	6 – 7 lb
Mutton	6 lb
Tea	3/- – 4/- lb
Sugar	6/- lb
Tobacco	3/6 – 4/- lb
Butter	1/6 – 2/- lb
Cheese	6 ?
Milk	3 quart

NB: When the Settlers here supply their free servants with groceries, they usually charge 25 per cent on the Sydney prices.

Return showing the average Prices of Provisions and Agricultural Produce in the District of Port Stephens for the Six Months until 30th June 1837

Articles	**Average Prices**
Maize	2/6 – 4/- bushel
Wheat	4/- – 9/- bushel
Barley	4/- – 5/- bushel
Tobacco	2 – 3 lb
Lemons, Potatoes	
& every vegetable	½ – 1 lb
Flour, Fine	2½ – 3½ lb
Flour, Seconds	2 – 3 lb
Beef	4 – 5 lb
Mutton	4 – 5 lb
Pork	6 – 8 lb
Tea	2/6 – 3/- lb
Sugar	6 – 7 lb
Salt	1½ lb
Soap	6 – 7 lb
Cheese	6 lb
Butter	1/- – 1/6 lb
Talcom	4 – 5 lb
Hogs lark	6 – 8 lb
Lamp oil	3/- – 3/6 gal
Rum	16/- gal
Wine (cup?)	5/- – /8/-

Return showing the average Wages of Mechanics & Others in the District of Upper Williams for the Six Months until 30th June 1837 and the numbers required in addition to those already employed

Trade	**Average Wages per day without B&L**	**Per Annum with B&L**	**Number required**
Carpenter & Joiner (rough)	4/- – 5/-	£40 – 50	15
Cabinet Maker	6/- – 7/-	£70 – 80	5
Blacksmith & Farrier	6/- – 7/-	£70 – 80	6
Wheel Wright	7/-	£80	4
Cooper	4/6 – 5/-	£40 – 50	2
Stone Mason	5/- – 6/-	£60 – 70	5
Brick Maker	5/- – 6/-	£60 – 70	4
Sawyer	5/- – 6/-	£60 – 70	10
Fencer & Splitter	4/6 – 5/-	£40 – 50	0
Shoemaker	4/-	£40 – 45	5
Taylor	4/6 – 5/-	£40 – 50	2
Nailor	5/- – 6/-	£60 – 70	1
Plasterer	6/- – 7/-	£70 – 80	5
Turner ?			2
Harness Maker			1
Shepherds	3/6 –	£30 – 35	12
Laborers of all sorts	3/- – 3/6	£25 – 30	150

Return showing the average Wages of Mechanics & Others in the District of Port Stephens for the Six Months until 30th June 1837 and the numbers required in addition to those already employed (allowance for B&L 10/- – 12/- per week)

Trade or Calling	Average Wages per day without B&L	Per Annum with B&L	Number required
Builder	about 6/5	£100	
Carpenter & Joiner	about 1/11	£35 – 35	4
Bricklayer & Plasterers	about 3/10	£60	2
Saddler & Harness Maker	about 2/7	£40	1
Blacksmith	about 3/10	£60	1
Farrier			1
Shipwright	3/2 –	£50	
Brickmakers	1/-	£15 – 20	
Sawyers	are generally paid by the price 7/6 per 100 feet sawn timber		
Bullock drivers and shepherds	1/- – 1/6/-	£20 – 25	
Laborers	1/- – 1/6/-	£20 – 25	

At the beginning of 1838, another return was required, this time concerning an 'estimate of Agricultural Produce'. One flour mill and one threshing machine was reported in the Upper Williams district and one mill and two threshers in the AAC lands, but no quarries or mines.[138]

Conclusion

The Dungog Magistrate's Letterbook ends in early 1839 as it began, with routine matters, such as fines being sent to the Benevolent Institution and a deposition being taken in a robbery case.[139] Also at the beginning of 1839, Thomas Cook, writing from his estate, Auchentorlie near Dungog, took the 'oath of allegiance' and so was prepared to continue in his position. This he does until cost cutting in 1843-44 saw him acting as an unpaid magistrate just as any landowning JP, such as John Hooke and others he had dealt with.[140]

The scope of duties of the Dungog Magistrate can be seen to be wide-ranging; from the punishment of prisoners and routine ticket-of-leave applications, to collecting statistical information, forwarding on of fines, fees and 'Benevolent

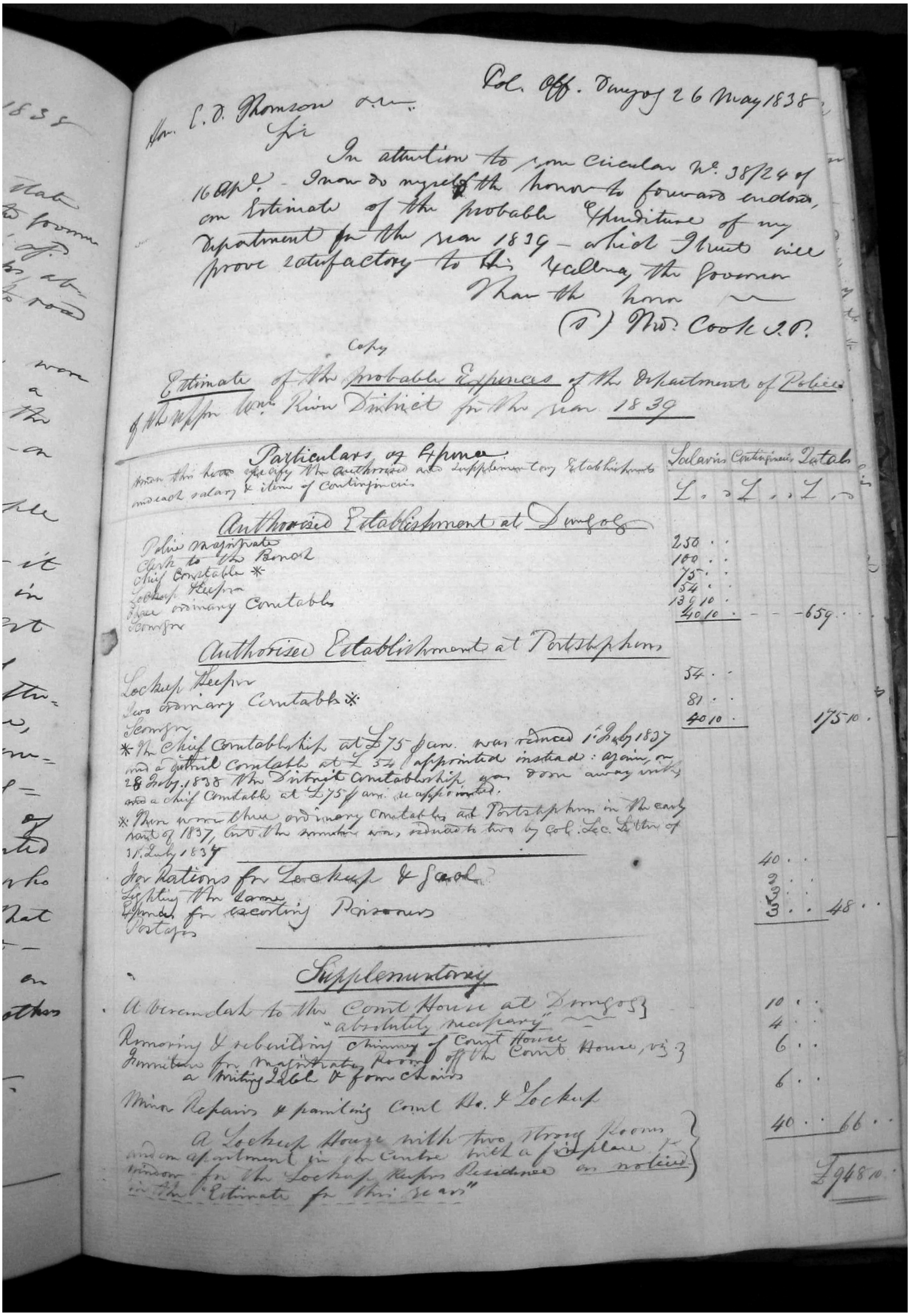
Society' collections, as well as ordering supplies and hiring constables, including 'scourgers'. Much is also revealed about this community, anomalous or otherwise, through the nature of the most common offences brought before the bench: absconding, being absent from one's district of ticket of leave, cattle stealing, and harbouring absconders. Also exposed in the letters is the administration's weakness in dealing with the oppression of the original inhabitants of the Williams River valley by those nominally under its authority.

The clerical methods employed can also be seen, such as the practice of referring to a convict or prisoners in general terms in a letter and then adding the name in the margin. The identification of convicts was via their ship of arrival, and sometimes the length of their sentence, a system that seems to have worked, with only one case where identification could not be determined.[141] Other traces of the administration's procedures can be noted: the varying handwriting as the scribe or Clerk of the Bench changes, or the red sealing wax used to glue in the occasional loose sheet. Another touch, this time of the hierarchy inherent to the administration, is demonstrated by the formal acknowledgments used, graded according to the status of the person addressed, as in: 'Sir', 'I remain', 'I have the honour…', and 'I do myself the honour ...'[142]

The need for the magistrate to balance the legal requirements of a convict-based system with the landowner's requirements for labour is seen in letters discussing punishments that lessen the usefulness of an assigned convict.[143] This is most clearly observed in a dispute between landowners over the transfer of a convict with the sale of land.[144]

The checking of identification for possible absconders is a recurring matter, even if most often displayed in the magistrate's frustration that this was not being done enough.[145] This inbuilt tension within the system is seen to increase when the landowner is the Australian Agricultural Company, an ongoing source of concern for a magistrate given charge of the AAC's area and, it seems, purposely stationed outside it in response to earlier pressure being brought to bear on the nominal representative of the Crown.[146]

Rare aspects of the lives of those on the fringe of society are also glimpsed in cases where a convict is certified insane, a mother is sent to jail because she is destitute, or when a traditional owner speaks English sufficiently to tell the magistrate that women of his group are being held against his (and presumably their) will.[147] Names appear and then disappear back into the obscurity of the past. And although these are official letters, some of the personality of Police Magistrate Thomas Cook slips through from time to time, such as in his concern for the accidental deaths of young newly arrived convicts and his suggestions for improved training, his frustration with the actions of the AAC, and his apparently futile efforts with the original inhabitants. These attitudes, alongside Cook's seeming callousness over the death of a servant, or his assumption of faking by a sick prisoner, provide a picture that is well within the range of average human strengths and frailties.



Pol. Off. Dungog 26 May 1838

Hon. E. D. Thomson &c &c

Sir

In attention to your Circular No. 38/24 of 16 Apl. - I now do myself the honor to forward enclosed an Estimate of the probable Expenditure of my Department for the year 1839 - which I trust will prove satisfactory to His Excellency the Governor

I have the honor ~

(S) Wm. Cook J.P.

Copy

Estimate of the probable Expences of the Department of Police of the upper Wm. River District for the year 1839

Particulars of Expense	Salaries £	Contingencies £	Totals £
Authorised Establishment at Dungog			
Police Magistrate	250		
Clerk to the Bench	100		
Chief Constable *	75		
Lockup Keeper	54		
Three ordinary Constables	139 10		
Scourger	40 10		659
Authorised Establishment at Portstephens			
Lockup Keeper	54		
Two ordinary Constables *	81		
Scourger	40 10		175 10
[illegible]			
For Rations for Lockup & Gaol		40	
Lighting the same		[illegible]	
Expenses for escorting Prisoners		[illegible]	
Postage		3	48
Supplementary			
A Verandah to the Court House at Dungog "absolutely necessary"		10	
Removing & rebuilding Chimney of Court House		4	
Furniture for Magistrates Room off the Court House, viz a Writing Table & four Chairs		6	
Minor Repairs & painting Court Ho. & Lockup		6	
A Lockup House with two strong Rooms and an apartment in the Centre with a fireplace & window for the Lockup Keepers Residence as noticed in the Estimate for this year"		40	66
			£948 10

Magistrates' Letterbook for the police districts of Dungog and Port Stephens, New South Wales, 1834-1839. (Manuscript; nla.obj-232787744, National Library of Australia)

The Letterbook is scattered throughout with the names of members of this anomalous community. In addition to Police Magistrate Thomas Cook himself, there are those of landowners and grantees, names that are also known from other sources, such as Myles, Hooke, MacKay, Mackenzie, Lord, and Brown; names that even now appear on the street signs of Dungog town. There are also the names of various workers within the system, Clerks of the Bench D. F. MacKay and William Cormack, also known elsewhere, and of others less well known or known only in these pages: the pound keepers, William Spencer at Paterson and Donald Campbell at Dungog; watch-house keepers John McGibbon and James Boland at Dungog, and Alexander Hamilton at Stroud.

Not to be neglected are the many ex-convict enforcers of the law, constables such as Michael Connolly at Dungog, John Tippary and Patrick Conway at Gloucester, and James Edwards and Robert Mason of Stroud, and of course the scourger John Powers, also of Stroud. Naturally, there appeared before the Dungog Magistrate many convicts, such as the patient escapee Thomas Fogarty, the nervously afflicted Thomas Ford, the 'troublesome villain' Thomas Mullins and the much-desired John Lingfoot, most of whom, if they survived, would have eventually become 'free by servitude'.

Also appearing in these letters are the names, even if they are sometimes names of foreign origin, of the traditional owners of the Williams valley, Fulham Derby, McAuthy, Jemmi and Kotra Jacki, witnesses to, victims of and players in, the great changes influencing and destroying their society as the anomalous community glimpsed in this Letterbook establishes and transforms itself.

Perhaps no single letter in the Dungog Police Magistrate's Letterbook tells us anything previously unknown about this period of colonial history. But taken in its entirety the Letterbook provides a fascinating snapshot of this early handful of years at a time when magistrates were required to deal with a wide range of matters within a community that Thomas Cook quite rightly describes as 'anomalous'. Close reading of such sources can perhaps tell us more than broader approaches ranging over wider sources. It is because this source is so rich in detail that the preference has been to deal with it as a whole, leaving more specific analysis to the many specialists it will undoubtedly interest.

Western Sydney University

Notes

1 Magistrates' Letterbook for the police districts of Dungog and Port Stephens, New South Wales, 1834-1839, MS 3550, National Library of Australia (now digitised). All references are to the Letterbook unless stated otherwise. This volume of the Letterbook is the first of a series by the Dungog magistrates, separated and eventually finding itself in the National Library of Australia, while the rest of the series (by no means as interesting) is in the NSW State Archives (NRS-2965, Copies of letters sent, Dungog Court of Petty Sessions, 1839-1851).

2 For a history of Dungog, see Michael Williams, *A History in Three Rivers*, Dungog Shire Heritage Study, Carste Studio Heritage Consultants, Dungog Shire Council, 2014.
3 Mackenzie to Colonial Secretary, 16 April 1834. Then and now the AAC styles itself AACo, but this is never the case in the Letterbook.
4 *Sydney Gazette*, 16 November 1839, p 4.
5 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 15 July 1837.
6 Cook to Dumaresq, Commissioner for AAC, 11 October 1837.
7 Hilary Golder and Ian Pike, *High and Responsible Office: a history of the NSW magistracy*, Sydney University Press, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p 37.
8 Golder and Pike, *High and Responsible Office*, p 42.
9 *Sydney Gazette*, 5 April 1834, p 2; *Sydney Herald*, 20 November 1834, p 3; 15 November, p 4.
10 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1842, p 3; *Maitland Mercury*, 2 June 1852, p 3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1866, p 1. For more on the life of Thomas Cook, see Michael Williams, '"By the Pleasing Countenance of My Superiors": The life of Dungog Magistrate Thomas Cook, JP', https://williamsvalleyhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Thomas-Cook-final.pdf
11 The Australian Agricultural Company's archives are held in the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra and are included in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.
12 Moffatt to Colonial Secretary, 3 January 1834.
13 Moffatt to Colonial Secretary, 31 January 1834.
14 Moffatt to Mackenzie, 7 March 1834.
15 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 27 December 1834.
16 Cook to Edwards, 30 August 1837.
17 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 21 January 1838.
18 Cook to Commissioner for AAC, 10 August 1837.
19 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 9 September 1837.
20 Cook to Alexander Macleay, 19 May 1835.
21 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 6 May 1835.
22 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, John McLean, 17 October 1837.
23 Cook to Paterson Bench, 31 August 1837.
24 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 17 September 1837.
25 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 12 December 1837.
26 Cook to Henry Denin, Brisbane Waters, 5 January 1837.
27 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 25 August 1838 and 17 September 1838.
28 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 6 October 1838.
29 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 1 November 1837.
30 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 21 September 1837.
31 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 12 October 1837.
32 Cook to Police Magistrate, Maitland, 24 November 1838.
33 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 21 September 1837.
34 Cook to Cormack, 23 November 1837.
35 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 27 March 1837.
36 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 8 August 1837.
37 Cook to Commissioner for AAC, 18 July 1837 and 19 July 1837.
38 Cook to Pilcher, 1 October 1837.
39 Cook to Ebsworth, 8 June 1838.
40 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 11 July 1838.

41 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 31 January 1839.
42 Cook to Police Magistrate, Paterson, 26 January 1839.
43 Cook to E. Deas Thomson, 18 June 1838.
44 Cook to Police Magistrate, Paterson, 21 September 1837.
45 Mackenzie to Colonial Secretary, 18 September 1834.
46 Cook to Police Magistrate, Paterson, 25 August 1838.
47 Cook to E. Deas Thomson, 8 February 1839.
48 Cook to E. Deas Thomson, 26 October 1837.
49 Cook to Holden, Government House, 7 October 1836.
50 Cook to Superintendent of Police, Newcastle, 16 December 1836.
51 Cook to John Ryan Brennan, 26 April 1837.
52 Cook to Bench of Magistrates, Newcastle, 26 September 1838.
53 Cook to Hooke, 23 November 1837.
54 Cook to Commissioner for the Assignment of Servants, 26 October 1837.
55 Cook to Myles, 22 December 1837.
56 Cook to Hooke, 22 December 1837.
57 Cook to Hooke, 22 December 1837.
58 Cook to Slade, 16 January 1838.
58 Lawrence Myles to Police Magistrate, 18 December 1837. (This is the only example in the book of a copy of a letter addressed to the Dungog court rather than being as all others, an outwards letter.)
60 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 19 December 1837.
61 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 17 March 1838.
62 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 21 March 1838.
63 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 17 October 1837.
64 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 19 December 1837.
65 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 26 May 1838.
66 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 23 July 1838.
67 Cook to Police Magistrate, Paterson, 8 October 1838.
68 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 20 October 1838.
69 Cook to Clerk of the Peace, 24 November 1838.
70 Cook to Park, 23 February 1838.
71 Cook to Alexander Livingston, 5 March 1838.
72 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 14 November 1838.
73 Cook to Colonial Surgeon, 1 February 1839.
74 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 9 February 1839.
75 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 6 June 1838.
76 Cook to William Dun, 10 August 1837.
77 Cook to William Dun, 18 August 1837.
78 Cook to Ebsworth, 6 October 1837.
79 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 25 April 1838.
80 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 2 December 1837.
81 Cook to Commissioner of Assignment, 2 March 1838.
82 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, 3 March 1838.
83 For an account of the Indigenous peoples of the Williams River commonly known as the Gringai, see Michael Williams, '2.1 Aboriginal', *A History in Three Rivers*, pp 15-31.
84 Mackenzie to Colonial Secretary, 4 April 1834.

85 Mackenzie to William Dun, Coroner, Paterson, 15 April 1834.
86 MacKay to Major Croker, Officer Commanding, Paterson, 2 July 1835.
87 MacKay to Paterson Magistrate, 21 January 1835. (See also *NSW Government Gazette*, 30 May 1835 and 15 July 1835.)
88 MacKay to Attorney-General, 26 February 1836.
89 Myles to Lieutenant Beckham, Commander Mounted Police, Jerry's Plains, 20 May 1836.
90 Cook to Officer Commanding Mounted Police, Maitland, 29 January 1836.
91 MacKay to Francis Fisher, Crown Solicitor, 3 September 1836.
92 Mackenzie to George Brooks, Newcastle, 14 July 1834.
93 Cook to Attorney-General, 24 July 1835 and 8August 1835.
94 Cook to Thomson, 14 December 1837.
95 MacKay to McPherson, Collector of Internal Revenue, 20 August 1836. The original 'River William' gradually became 'Williams' River' and finally as now, the 'Williams River'.
96 Cook to Johnston, Superintendent of Police, Newcastle, 31 August 1836. The census was 2 September 1836.
97 Cook to Colonial Treasury, 27 October 1837, Cook to Richard Jones, 26 October 1837.
98 Cormack to Colonial Secretary, 1 January 1838.
99 Cook to Campbell, 24 August 1837.
100 Cook to Miller, 25 August 1837.
101 Cook to M. W. Lewis, Colonial Architect, 28 February 1837.
102 Cook to Commissioner for AAC, 2 August 1837.
103 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 26 April 1837 and 2 August 1837.
104 Cook to Attorney-General, 16 September 1837 and 25 October 1837.
105 Cook to Superintendent of Convicts, Major of Brigade, and Colonial Storekeeper, 3 March 1837.
106 Cook to Colonial Storekeeper, 2 December 1837.
107 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 22 July 1837.
108 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 3 July 1837.
109 Cook to William Lithgow, Auditor-General, 15 July 1837.
110 Cook to William Lithgow, Auditor-General, 3 July 1837.
111 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 10 August 1838.
112 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 30 September 1837.
113 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 30 September 1837.
114 Cook to Dumaresq, 22 November 1837.
115 Cook to Thomson, 5 December 1837.
116 Cook to Smith, 5 March 1838.
117 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 30 August 1837.
118 Cook to Police Magistrate, Illawarra, 11 October 1837.
119 NSW State Archives, Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, reel 2812: Colonial Secretary to Police Magistrate, Dungog, 18 October 1837.
120 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 18 August 1837.
121 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1837.
122 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 16 August 1837.
123 Cook to AAC, 10 August 1837.
124 Cook to Johnston, 28 November 1838.
125 Cook to AAC, 17 August 1837.
126 MacKay to Post Master, 10 July 1837.
127 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 16 September 1837.

128 Cormack to Post Master, 15 September 1837.
129 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 26 September 1837.
130 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 26 September 1837.
131 Cormack to Post Master, 23 November 1837.
132 Cormack, Sullivan, Warn to Post Master, 17 March 1838.
133 Cook to Colonel Lacy, 30 July 1838.
134 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 17 March 1838.
135 Cook to Colonel Lucy, 27 October 1838.
136 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 3 October 1837.
137 Letterbook copy of returns, November 1837.
138 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 12 January 1838.
139 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 9 February 1839, 2 March 1839.
140 Cook to Colonial Secretary, 9 February 1839.
141 Cook to Principal Superintendent of Convicts, 15 November 1837.
142 These examples are to be found throughout the Letterbook.
143 Cook to Pilcher, 1 October 1837.
144 For example, Cook to Slade, Superintendent of Convicts, 19 March 1838. This case is discussed in detail below.
145 For example, Cook to E. Deas Thomson, Colonial Secretary, 23 July 1838.
146 *Sydney Gazette*, 16 November 1839, p 4, 'Report of the Committee on Police and Gaols'.
147 Cook to Ebswoth, 9 November 1838 (John Williams), Cook to Colonial Secretary, 6 June 1838 (Mrs Parker), and Cook to Thomson, 14 December 1837 (Fullam Derby).

BOOK REVIEWS

Chas Keys, *Maitland Speaks: the experience of floods*, Floodplain Publishing, Maitland, NSW, 2020, vii+486 pages; ISBN 9780646818757.

The 1955 flood looms large in the memory of my family. My parents, newly married and just home from their honeymoon, lost just about everything they had as the waters surged through their ground floor flat opposite the river in Singleton. Down river at Maitland, which is the focus of Chas Keys' book, things were just as bad as the river broke through into the regional city and its surrounding suburbs. The flood peaked at 12.1 metres at the river, which resulted in depths of between 1.2 and 4.1 metres throughout the city. It was a devastating and deadly flood event.

The title *Maitland Speaks* hints at the focus of the book, with the first section based on interviews with and reflections by Maitland residents on their personal experience of flood. While most are concerned with the 1955 flood event, some older residents recall earlier floods in 1949 and 1930, and more recent arrivals reflect on the flood events in 2007 and 2015. The interviews include residents of the city and surrounds, people who lost houses and businesses, those who moved and those who stayed, as well as community members who were involved in the clean-up and who joined post-flood flood management and planning committees.

The second half of the book moves to consider the flood experience at a community level. In addition to the planning and political implications of flooding, including attempts at flood mitigation and the role of the Maitland SES, this section also addresses the public memory of the flood, the contemporary response to the threat of flooding, some of the myths surrounding the floods and the response of locals through art and literature.

The book moves from the personal to the political and back again. It is full of keen observations about the community of Maitland. One curious observation is that many older homes in the Maitland area have larger manholes that allowed easier and quicker transfer of personal items to the roof, above the expected flood levels. Another is the proposal to move the city altogether after 1955 to higher ground at East Maitland, almost the exact same proposal put forward by the government surveyor in the 1820s when Maitland was first being surveyed.

The book does not shy away from some contentious issues that still swirl, such as ongoing residential development on flood plains in the area despite decades of warnings. It explores the fading memory and growing complacency of some in the area about the dangers of flooding. The 1955 flood came on the back of regular events, building a community memory. However, since 1955 it has been rare for the waters to

break into the town. A combination of levees and other mitigations has made the city safer overall. Yet outlying areas remain at risk, a point tragically illustrated with the death of a woman in 2015, swept off Cessnock Road near the Maitland railway station by floodwaters. Her death was the first in 48 years due to floodwaters.

As someone who grew up in the Hunter Valley, I was looking for a little more on the wider Valley experience, but this is purely a personal desire and understandably beyond the scope of this work, which has Maitland as its focus (as stated plainly in the title). The structure also lends itself in parts to some repetition, particularly in the first section of interviews. Allowing each of the 12 main interviews to have their own chapter makes this difficult to avoid.

Keys is a former deputy director general of the New South Wales SES, and his experience in the management of floods and disasters adds a weight of experience, especially to the second half of the book. He has written a number of books and ebook publications on flood mitigation and Maitland's experience of floods and is not afraid to ask tough questions of the community and the official response and attitude to flooding.

The book includes dramatic, personal and historic images throughout, as well as tables, graphs and charts that detail the more technical aspects of the story. It is well referenced, has a comprehensive bibliography and an index.

Maitland Speaks joins a growing library of flood and environmental histories at a time when extreme weather is happening more frequently. The book offers some valuable insights into a community forgetting its own history and the real dangers facing a city on a river in a valley that floods.

Mark Dunn
Independent historian

* * *

Adam Wakeling, *A House of Commons for a Den of Thieves: Australia's journey from penal colony to democracy*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2020, 306 pages; ISBN 9781922454140.

One of the earliest scholarly studies in Australian history was A. C. V. Melbourne's *Early Constitutional Development in Australia*, first published in 1934. It was reprinted in 1963 with additional material on Queensland that had fallen outside the original 1856 cut-off date. Melbourne remained the standard text until John Hirst's work in the 1980s; for example, *The Strange Birth of Colonial Democracy* and *Convict Society and its Enemies*. There, Hirst paid careful attention to the society created in the colonies by transportation and to changes in the criminal justice system in Britain that significantly affected the numbers and types of convicts being sent to New South Wales. Over 60 years the characteristics of the convicts changed considerably as did official thinking about the uses of transportation, either as a system of punishment, or for reform, or as an

economical way of dealing with those convicted of crimes in Britain.

Wakeling has largely followed Hirst in his approach, though, like Peter Cochrane, in his *Colonial Ambition: Foundations of Australian Democracy* (2006), he has decided that 'political history can be written as a continuous interwoven narrative of human lives'. Wakeling's cast of characters is extensive and colourful and sometimes the legal and/or political detail may seem to disappear amid trivia or chatter. However his retelling of a complex story, quickly covering developments in Van Diemen's Land, Victoria, and South Australia as well as New South Wales is lively, if at times cryptic. Governors, civil servants, local strong men, ambitious emancipists, and the odd free settlers are all accorded thumbnail sketches (largely based on the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*).

In quick order questions about whether ex-convicts should serve on juries or be able to vote once elected representatives are permitted, or whether property ownership should be an indication of civic worth – a tricky matter since so much land in the early days was simply given to anyone who was willing to try to farm it, are canvassed. Underlying issues such as the relative value of the convicts to the colony, those who had skills as clerks, accountants, school masters or doctors but who happened to have fallen foul of a legal system that had been very harsh on crimes against property, or whose quick brains and nimble fingers could be put to legitimate use in a society desperate for talent, are generally treated as examples.

The basic chronology is contained in two time lines, one covering 'people and events', the other 'key documents' – statutes, orders in council, letters patent and the like, the massive legal apparatus detailed in A. C. V Melbourne's text. And while the bibliography seems a fair list of sources referred to in Wakeling's text, it is in no way up to date or a guide to further reading. Very few of the many biographies of leading men of this period that have been written since volumes 1 and 2 of the *ADB* were published in the 1960s are included in Wakeling's bibliography. And not a few of the authors one might expect to find, are missing; for example, Lloyd Robson for his analysis of the convict records or John Ritchie for his work on Macquarie, Bigge and the Wentworths. J. M. Ward is listed for his *ADB* entry on Governor FitzRoy, but not for his book on Earl Grey and the colonies.

Hirst was never strong on identifying the existence of gender in those areas of Australian history he sought to illuminate. Gender has been absent too in Wakeling's thinking, as it was in the minds of contemporary politicians and public servants. Before the gold rushes the number of marriageable women in the colonies had almost caught up with the number of men looking for wives, especially if widows and girls of 16 are included. Although a few women had already voted in Victoria where they were registered as ratepayers, the general assumption was that women were irrelevant to constitutional questions.

Yet recent research has shown that the women convicts were generally literate and played a significant role in the social and economic life of the colony. They were also the mothers of a rapidly growing group, the native-born children whose status as free British subjects could scarcely be questioned.

William Wentworth may have formerly championed the 'native born' of whom he was one, but he came to lead the squatters with the crazy idea that the squatters should become the hereditary aristocracy of New South Wales. The colonies certainly needed stable societies to be self-governing, but this was happening because of circumstances that allowed men and women to marry, set up families on smallholdings, and develop a lasting attachment to the land. This fact, more than theoretical arguments about who was convict or free, became more significant than the struggle of interests vested in money or power and played out in London as constitutions for four very different colonies, two of them not even founded on convicts, were made into law.

Beverley Kingston
Pearl Beach

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Douglas Newton, *Private Ryan and the Lost Peace: a defiant soldier and the struggle against the Great War,* Longueville Media, Haberfield NSW, 2021, xx, 380 pages; ISBN 9780648973638.

In October 1916, Private Edward J. Ryan sent an impassioned letter to British Labour politician and later prime minister Ramsay MacDonald. The labourer from Broken Hill, serving with the 51st Battalion, described the horrors he had encountered – men butchered on the 'abattoirs' of Flanders and the Somme, or crippled by hellish bombardment. Those who would pursue the war to the bitter end had presented the Anzacs as 'bright and cheery', determined to fight for a righteous empire. The reality, he told MacDonald, was very different. Many, Ryan among them, believed this 'slaughter of human lives' served no purpose; many suspected a 'veil of patriotism' concealed the cynical pursuit of profit and power. Ryan appealed to MacDonald to speak out in parliament for the cause of peace and end 'this frightfulness' beyond imagination.

MacDonald did call for a negotiated peace in the British parliament but did not cite the letter of this poorly educated, plainly spoken soldier in the process. Had he done so, Douglas Newton observes, Private Ryan 'might have been as famous as 2nd Lieutenant Siegfried Sassoon', another shell-shocked soldier damaged and disillusioned by war. This is a bold claim but hardly a fanciful one. In its own way, Ryan's visceral critique of war matched the eloquence of one of the Great War's greatest poets. This was a protest that exposed a terrible truth.

We owe a great debt to Douglas Newton for rescuing this dissenting voice from virtual obscurity. With the clamour of the World War I centenary still ringing in our years, there is a need to be reminded that patriotic platitudes

do little to advance our understanding of Ryan's generation or, indeed, the catastrophe that overwhelmed them. This book is faithful to the men and women asked to endure so much and offered so very little in return. It underscores the 'Great Lie' that sent thousands to their deaths: that the Great War was fought for the 'big words' of freedom and democracy; that this would be the 'War to End all Wars'.

Newton is a diplomatic historian by training but he is also an accomplished practitioner of social history, a history from below. He carefully charts the course of Ryan's war, from the heady days of his enlistment, through the brutal months of training, the long voyage to Egypt and then to the Western Front, the shock of battle and the judicial ordeal of no fewer than four courts-martial. Ryan was one of 121 Australian soldiers sentenced to death, a sentence (reluctantly) commuted. His defiance in the courtroom rivalled the courage of any soldier on the battlefield. Charged with cowardice and desertion, Ryan demanded the right to speak out against the senseless pursuit of war.

This close reconstruction of Ted Ryan's war was made possible by the dexterous use of archival material. Newton fashions his narrative from service records, private letters, diaries and newspaper sources. He masterfully evokes place and personality, borrowing freely from soldiers' testimony to do so. And, at every point of this often-confronting book Newton warns the reader against the comforting illusions that so often frame the popular memory of war.

> We should not imagine that for a soldier to be taken to hospital was some kind of deliverance, there to be lulled by soft hands, plump pillows, and smooth sheets …
>
> Edgar Morrow … recalled his ambulance driver … cleaning out his ambulance as he looked on. There were 'armfuls of blood-soaked blankets', wrote Morrow, 'Blood was everywhere … and vomit on the floor'.

It is a measure of Newton's skill as a historian that he can move with ease from such graphic encounters with the battlefield to the rarefied atmosphere of diplomatic intrigue. In fact the two spheres, the war and what Newton calls the war behind the war, are pursued in parallel throughout the course of the book. As Ryan crosses the Mediterranean to fight in France we are reminded of Emily Hobhouse's secret journey to Berlin and attempts to broker a peace treaty; Ryan's appeal to MacDonald is set against the tense backdrop of the first conscription referendum in Australia and mounting opposition to the war in Britain. In this way, the author invites us to 'contextualise' and draws us back to the 'big picture'. And Newton is relentless in his critique of the old men that sent the young to war – 'the spirit of snatching and hoarding' that fashioned one expedient imperial alliance after another. The War Aims and Secret Treaties of Britain and the Entente Powers appear in an appendix to the volume.

This is a passionate book but also, paradoxically, a measured one. Newton

invites his reader to weigh up the evidence, he allows scope for individual agency and cautions against any simplistic reading of this immensely complex conflict. He writes with compassion and critical insight. He has the professional distance of the historian but a wealth of human empathy as well.

In the years preceding the centenary of World War I and for some time after it, bookshops bulged with reminiscences of the Anzacs. But this story stands in a class of its own. It may be a war through one man's eyes but it is also a window into the experience of a generation. The voice of Private Ryan issues a challenge to us all.

Bruce Scates
The Australian National University.

* * *

Catherine Bishop, *Too Much Cabbage and Jesus Christ: Australia's 'Mission Girl' Annie Lock*, Wakefield Press, Mile End, South Australia, 2021, xvi + 327 pages; ISBN 9781743058572.

The lively title of Catherine Bishop's latest book presages her lively account of Annie Lock and her life as a Christian missionary with various groups of Aboriginal people across Australia in the first three decades of the 20th century. This contrasts with Bishop's previous work, which has focused primarily on 19th century businesswomen in Australia and New Zealand. But, like those colonial female entrepreneurs, Annie Lock is a somewhat 'forgotten' figure in Australian history, despite it having been claimed in the early 1940s that 'no name is so well known in connection with Aboriginal mission work'.

The biography traces Lock's life, and work, from its beginnings in the mid-north of South Australia, in 1876, to her decision, in 1901, to become a missionary and undertake a two-year course at Angas Missionary Training College in Adelaide. From there Lock was sent to work for the New South Wales Aborigines Mission (NSWAM), initially at La Perouse, in Sydney, then at Sackville Reach, on the Hawkesbury River, before establishing a mission at Forster, on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, in 1906.

Following the expansion of the NSWAM (and associated name change to the Australian Aborigines' Mission) in 1908, Lock offered to work in the west, moving to Western Australia in 1909 where she worked, in various locations and capacities, until 1923. From there she moved to work in far northern South Australia for several years before heading even further north into the Northern Territory, where she established several missions over the next five years. Her next move, in 1933, was back to South Australia, where she opened a mission station at Ooldea Soak. In 1937 she resigned from what was then known as the United Aborigines Mission (UAM), surprising many by marrying a retired National Bank manager from the Eyre Peninsula.

Writing a biography of someone who left virtually no personal papers – no diaries, no personal letters and, tantalisingly, no extant memoir – is no

easy task. Most of the available documents were work-related. Bishop compensates for the absence of personal papers with extensive contextual research that adds greatly to our understanding of the institutions with which Lock interacted.

I was not, however, always convinced by Bishop's conclusions about how Lock might have felt in a particular instance based on the wider context. That Lock was 'a hard person for anyone to get on with' might, by the completion of her research, appear self-evident to Bishop. However, the lack of Lock's own private reflections or those of her colleagues on these relationships results in Bishop's assessment of them appearing as more of an assertion than a convincing conclusion.

Bishop's overall treatment of religion in the book – its varieties, its complexities, its contradictions – is, perhaps, not as nuanced as it could be. More comparative discussion of both the theology, and its implementation, of the Australian Aborigines' Mission would have enhanced this aspect of the book. At the same time, she usefully interrogates Lock's expressions of faith. In so doing she reveals how missionaries who worked on 'faith lines'; that is, relying upon God, rather than a stipend from a mission society, developed a variety of very human strategies to ensure the financial survival of their work.

I appreciated the inclusion, by Wakefield Press, of an author's note and a timeline of Annie Lock's life. I was disappointed, though, by the absence of a list of illustrations, referred to, somewhat confusingly, as 'figures' in the text. The illustrations were, however, significantly enhanced by Bishop's contextual comments.

Bishop's extensive research and reflection on the many aspects of Annie Lock's life and work as a missionary come together most powerfully in her concluding chapter. In assessing this 'contrary and controversial character', Bishop very usefully considers Lock's position within a range of discourses – the landscapes she inhabited, general historical and personal memory, the archive, academic history, including feminist and missionary history and indigenous policies, both historical and contemporary. Her conclusion that, in the end, Lock must be seen as part of white Australia's devastating colonising project is a sobering one. Her biography will contribute to our understanding of our past, while, at the same time, speak to our current project as a nation to achieve a 'fair and truthful relationship' between the peoples of Australia.

Patricia Curthoys
MPHA

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Quentin Beresford, *Wounded Country: The Murray-Darling Basin – a contested history*, New South, Sydney, 2021 432 pages; ISBN 9781742236780.

I hope applicants for the recently advertised position of chief executive officer of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority had opportunity to read this book. They would have found a sure-footed explanation of the problems

faced by managers of the Murray-Darling Basin, a clear account of how those problems arose and a vigorous denunciation of how the river system has been managed.

This environmental history is carefully structured. Beresford starts in two places: in south-west Queensland at St George, 100km north of Cubbie Station, and at Menindee, further down the Darling River in far west New South Wales. Large-scale cotton farming and fish kills in 2019 set him on a journey to explain how the Murray-Darling Basin is and has been managed. His dissection of 'an anatomy of an ecological disaster' is neat but savage. The language is strong, the judgments harsh. This is a story of degradation and catastrophe. The Basin has been plundered. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan is flawed. Its implementation has been undermined. Beresford tells an angry rather than a sad story.

The first third of the book analyses approaches to land and river development from the Traditional Owners through the immediate years of dispossession with the spread of white settlement. It ends the 19th century with what Beresford calls a war on nature through forest clearance and state-sponsored attacks targeting many native animal species.

The second third looks more directly to river management. Beresford explains the increased interest in irrigation in the 1890s and after each of the two World Wars. He tells how agrarian dreams faded to Australia's dust bowl in the 1930s and 1940s.

The final part continues the story of state attempts to foster an agriculture sector. It unravels the ways political leaders have failed to cope with the challenges to the river system brought by more droughts and complicated with climate change.

As one might expect of a political scientist, Beresford provides a detailed analysis of the attempts in the 21st century to manage the Basin with all the complications that come with the divided responsibilities of a federal system of government. He acknowledges the three big instances of political leadership – Paul Keating's big picture announcement of Commonwealth responsibility for a Basin-wide approach; John Howard's generously funded Water Act; and Julia Gillard's negotiation of a Murray-Darling Basin Plan. His praise for those political achievements is tempered by criticism of the outcomes of each.

Beresford sees plans for achieving a balance of environment and riverine community interests as almost beyond reach. So, for example, he accuses Craig Knowles, one of Gillard's lead negotiators, of pragmatic thinking, 'making the science fit the politics'. Perhaps, Beresford says, the needs of the Basin were 'too complex for the political system to fix'.

Beresford presents a parade of well-credentialled critics and insightful media commentators as he critiques the political disputes about land and water management, and unravels the complexities of the privatisation of water, the establishment of a water market, water buy-backs and the rise of

water barons, such as Chris Corrigan's Webster Ltd.

His story is a well-peopled. There is throughout constant reference to the Aboriginal perspectives. Indigenous views are voiced by Badger Bates of the Barkindji people and are channelled through the work of Virginia Marshall. There are cameo appearances of many bureaucrats, environmental scientists and investigative journalists – such as Peter Cullen, Tim Flannery and John Doyle and the compilers of two incisive ABC *Four Corners* programs, 'Pumped' in 2017 and 'Cash Splash' in 2019.

I was disappointed to see that Beresford did not use contemporary cartoons to advance his argument. Yet the one image he does use – a map of the Basin – is a powerful reminder of the way thinking has evolved to embrace a whole Basin approach. The state borders in the map sketch are very faint.

His conclusion points to a 'way forward', principally calling for the abandonment of pro-development policies and adoption of bottom-up rather than top-down plans. That is a bleak conclusion.

Many readers of this review live in the Basin and will see the relevance of this work to the localities in which they live. Some readers will be familiar with the complaint music of Midnight Oil and the lyrics of *Barka-Darling River*, one of their final 'Resist' tour hits.

> Who left the bag of idiots open?
> Who drank the bottle of bad ideas?
> Who drew the last drop from the bottom?
> Good people, good people are forgotten.

Beresford may not have the repute of Midnight Oil or the magic of its music and its performances, but he has sung a similar angry refrain about poor stewardship.

Bruce Pennay
Charles Sturt University

* * *

Matt Murphy, *Rum: a distilled history of colonial Australia*, Harper Collins Publishers, Sydney, 2000, 370 pages; ISBN 9781460713044 (paperback).

Matt Murphy offers a survey of Australian colonial history as viewed through the lens of a rum bottle. Matt has an engaging writing style, cheeky and conversational, that propels the reader along at a lively pace uncorking a complex history with the aid of colourful anecdotes and irreverent observations. *Rum* is a gossipy account that fits well with Elbert Hubbard's view that history is 'gossip well told'. The author describes himself as a part-time historian and teacher, but primarily a Sydney *firie* for the past 30-plus years. This is Matt Murphy's first book on colonial Australian history.

The book is divided into five chronological parts, each dealing with the role of alcohol, chiefly defined as distilled alcohol, or 'rum', in the politics, economy and society of the colony in the period covered. Within the main body of the book, Parts B-D (pp 31-234), covering 1788-1825, the reader will find the expected topics, including for example the role of the infamous

Rum Corps in colonial politics and the story of Governor Macquarie's Rum Hospital. Overall, however, the book is a mixed crate of drinks, with some bottles out of place in a very crowded crate. My impression is that the author felt obliged to cram in every possible story he could tell, even if at the expense of relevancy and continuity.

Having said that, Matt Murphy offers a detailed and sober account of the significant role played by rum in the colony from the arrival of the First Fleet through to the time of Governor Macquarie. His perspective in the struggle to control the rum trade focuses on the interactions of those in government with those more often wielding actual power, making this largely a study of the people so involved. The governors are all well represented, with their character and competency thoroughly thrashed by the author.

Murphy is equally unbiased in his assessment of the principal characters on the other side of this struggle over the economic and political role of alcohol, with John Macarthur in particular put under the pump. Murphy interrupts the drive of his narrative with breakout sections that are often irrelevant to what is otherwise a story well told. For example, regaling the reader with salacious details of the sexual appetites of governors Phillip and Bligh doesn't have much to do with the subject of the book.

The final section, Part E: 1825 Onwards, reminds this reviewer of a mixed cocktail of remnant drinks left over from a party. Murphy should have been advised by his editor to forego this section and stay with the core purpose of his book, and given encouragement to return later with a separate book of booze-related (in)discreet stories. In Murphy's hands, it would be a rollicking good book. But, overall, this piecemeal section is a shambles, as for example in his account of 19th century temperance movements, which shows little awareness of their importance in Australian feminist history. Moving 'onwards' onto the broader post-1825 history of Australia also legitimately opens the author to criticism of what he has not included. Surely, Henry Lawson deserved a chapter. It would be nit-picking to take this criticism further.

But it is not nit-picking to castigate the author on his failure to reference his sources. Although he does occasionally contextualise sources in his text, the book lacks the referencing rightly expected by the reader. Murphy's editor surely advised on how to provide a minimalist arrangement that wouldn't overtax the book with an avalanche of endnote references. As well, the book is in dire need of an index, an essential aid in a book of this description. (Do you know how Ultimo got its name? It's in the book, somewhere. 'Your time starts now.') The Select Bibliography reveals Murphy has put effort into his research, accessing both primary and secondary sources, about 100 items in all, including making good use of primary sources now available on-line. A criticism might be levelled that he may

not have been especially assiduous in seeking more recent publications.

I recommend Matt Murphy's *Rum*. It's a good read. I advise buying the ebook version. This will provide a keyword search facility in place of the missing index.

Robin McLachlan
Independent Historian

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Alexis Bergantz, *French Connection: Australia's cosmopolitan ambitions*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2021, 194 pages; ISBN 9781742237091.

This relatively short book is entertaining. Based upon the author's PhD thesis it is scholarly and generally well written. It contains a select bibliography, index and detailed notes. The typeface is large enough for easy reading. It has six chapters with an Introduction and an Epilogue.

Reliance on the title would mislead. Bergantz makes clear he does not pretend that the stories he recounts are anywhere near the whole picture of Australia's connection with France and French culture. Rather he concentrates on the period roughly from the 1850s to World War I. But even for that period he does not attempt to be comprehensive.

Each of the chapters is self-contained. Although the Introduction and the Epilogue attempt something approaching an overall thesis to bind the stories, it is a weak one. Through these stories 'we can glimpse a more connected and cosmopolitan Australia, one that was half imagined and half real', and through them we can think of French culture as a mirror that reflects our own Australianness, and contributes to our idea of who we are, or aspire to be, and how we see our place in the world.

Despite the lack of a strong unifying thesis each of the chapters is engagingly written and holds the reader's interest. The first chapter – A glittering, raucous ritual: French cafés and culture – is a gallop through a selection of encounters of certain people with French culture and France (mainly Paris) and contains some interesting anecdotes (such as the one about the librarian at the University of Melbourne who refused to put the scandalous Zola on open access).

Chapter 2 – A battle for control: *Alliance* and misalliance – is for this reviewer the most amusing. The essence of the battle was that the French consul in Melbourne wanted the *Alliance Francaise* of Victoria to fulfill its role in disseminating French culture and language, whereas those who controlled it – a fashionable, all-female Australian faction – wanted to maintain it as an elitist sanctuary for Melbourne socialites, in which France itself held little importance. The consul, with some undiplomatic behaviour, won the ostensible battle. But the women, with close contacts in the French government, got their own back – the consul was recalled.

Chapter 3 – The scum of France: A reckoning with Australia's past – deals with France's use of New Caledonia as a

penal colony in the second half of the 19th century and Australia's reaction to the hundreds of French convicts, escapees as well as sentence expired, who came here. On the other hand the following chapter – French migrants: The 'crème de la crème' – is about French migration more generally. From the early 1870s to 1891the French population in Australia almost doubled to just over 4500. However, as is clear from that figure, few French came to Australia and Bergantz asserts that they never formed a distinguishable national community like the Germans, Greeks or Irish.

Chapter 5 – A matter of honour: Frenchness on trial – relates the essential details of two stories. Lord Beauchamp, Governor of New South Wales, in a display of exaggerated Francophobia, publicly declared that he was glad that he was an Englishman, not a Frenchman, which Bergantz puts in the context of the Dreyfus affair. Beauchamp continued to snub and war with the French consul-general and the Sydney French community until eventually he offered a half-baked apology. The other matter arose from the promotion by French people in Australia of a worthless gold mining company in Western Australia. Inevitably the promoters fell out. Defamation suits followed. This provided amusement in the Australian press, with comments such as one Frenchman saying of another, 'although he pretends to be a Frenchman, he is not'.

The last chapter – Fading family ties to France: Two diarists' views – uses excerpts from the diaries of a father and daughter to illustrate how a family with French roots became absorbed into the Australian community while retaining a sense of Frenchness (although fading) until a visit to France by the daughter. It made clear to her that she had much more personal freedom in Australia. When leaving France to return to Australia she 'felt parted from France ... forever'.

Alexis Bergantz came to Australia as a student backpacker. He stayed, did his doctorate, and now teaches. His writing reveals that he identifies as Australian – no doubt as a French Australian. This book is a worthwhile contribution to study of French people in Australia – all the more so because it comes from the perspective of one who is living that experience.

Ian Dodd

Ian is a member of the RAHS who studied in Lille, Northern France, for a short time in 2018.

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Martyn Lyons, *Dear Prime Minister: letters to Robert Menzies 1949-1966*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2021, 266 pages; ISBN 9781742237305 (paperback).

Dear Prime Minister is a continuation of Professor Lyons' examination of, and fascination with, writing and reading culture. His impressive list of previously published works includes a history of reading and writing in the western world and another on the writing culture of ordinary people in Europe. In this work, he takes that interest specifically to Australia and

focuses on some 22,000 letters addressed to Australia's longest-serving prime minister, Robert (later Sir Robert) Menzies during his second period as prime minister, 1949 to 1966.

Now at first glance those 22,000 letters seem a lot of correspondence, but spread over a period of 832 weeks they amount to only about five per day, efficiently handled by Menzies' public servant secretary and perhaps a second person in his office. Nearly all attracted a reply, a carbon copy neatly stapled to the original letter. As Lyons freely admits, the letters Menzies received paled into insignificance against those generated every day to Barrack Obama (10,000), François Mitterrand (1000), and many other political leaders. So why is detailed examination of the correspondence to Menzies important to Lyons?

Historians usually rely on sources such as cabinet and personal papers, newspaper articles, official and parliamentary reports to piece together their works about prime ministers. In contrast, Lyons presents a 'history from below' using these letters in which people, for a variety of reasons, make approaches to a person of exalted status, maybe hoping for an intervention to solve a problem, or to present an idea, to congratulate or to admonish. No doubt many of the letters, duly acknowledged, ended up being referred to government departments.

Lyons places his examination of the letters in the context of the issues of the times. Correspondence was generated to Menzies on matters such as alleged broken election promises, credit squeezes, high inflation, the fight against communism, the Petrov defection, the poverty of pensioners, and immigration and the White Australia policy. Much of the correspondence was complimentary – on a policy or speech, or seeking autographs and photos, or even congratulatory, especially when Menzies was knighted, on his elevation to Warden of the Cinque Ports and on his love of everything British including the royals. There are letters from the United Kingdom commenting on Menzies' Scottish ancestry. Of particular interest, some from the UK begged him to take over leadership of the British Commonwealth!

Lyons examines many facets of the letters. In most cases they are referred to instead of being reproduced verbatim. However, he goes into some detail of matters such as the paper people used, its shape and colour, the matching of envelopes, the form and reverence of address, the amount of space purposely left blank and even the attempts people made for Menzies himself to personally read their letters, including some writing directly to his wife Dame Pattie in the hope she might influence her husband.

Lyons' work is a flashback to the days before computers and emails, even before A4 size paper. People who felt the need to write to the Australian prime minister mostly used their home typewriters. This is a world of envelopes and stamps, of post offices and letterboxes. In that regard Lyons gives a

slice of social history of the period.

Unfortunately, the corollary of the author's approach is that he sheds no new light on any of the many issues that arose during Menzies' time in power. Lyons does not judge Menzies' record. He leaves that to others. There is little if anything in these letters that is controversial. That includes one I like to think is still among those letters – the one I wrote in 1958 (when I was 14) to Mr Menzies, seeking his autograph. I still have the favourable reply!

Paul Tracey
RAHS member

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Melissa Harper and Richard White (eds), *Symbols of Australia: imagining a nation*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2021, xi + 448 pages; ISBN 9781742237121.

A symbol is something that stands for, or represents, something else. Typically, a symbol is a physical object, or a picture of a physical object. A national symbol is meant to evoke a wide recognition beyond the symbol itself, which may be the power of the state, the feelings of a nation about itself, a reminder of and pride in objects common to the life of the people, and a desire to buy a certain product, among others. National symbols are 'national' because they are presumed in some sense to unite rather than divide, and perhaps to give some sort of deeper meaning to national life, even though they may take a matter-of-fact form.

A symbol may have different meanings and purposes for different groups and may be there to be used rather than to be respected, or both. All of these aspects receive discussion in various parts of this work. 'National symbols are complicated beasts,' write the editors in their introductory chapter, and the contents of this book bear this out.

The book has an introductory chapter 'Land of Symbols' by the editors, and 28 further chapters each devoted to an Australian national symbol, by various authors. The writing is scholarly, but readable and engaging. The reader is not simply provided with facts and dates about the symbols, but is led to place them in a wider and changing social context. There are extensive notes containing sources and references, a comprehensive index and 69 figures.

The book reads rather like a social history, travelling along the highways and byways of the history and the society that created Australia's national symbols. There are many insights into changing attitudes, social mores and lesser-known aspects of Australian history. The figures provide a fascinating series of snapshots on Australia's past.

The book is a history of national symbols, rather than considering only those prominent today. So there are the discussions of the imagining of Australia as a young woman, common in the 19th century, and Australia House, which are hardly national symbols today.

There are chapters on natural symbols such as the Southern Cross, the wattle and the kangaroo, the (inevitable) built symbols of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, and Indigenous symbols that have become national – the boomerang, the Rainbow Serpent and Uluru. As well, there are the abstract symbols of the state – the flag, the coat of arms and the crown. The important influence of the bush and its hard life feature with the billy can, the gum tree and the digger, the latter a 'bushman gone to war' and taken to epitomise the independence and anti-authoritarianism seen in the Australian character. The notion of 'mateship', emerging also from bush life and, although changed, lives on in particular in the most recent symbol in the book, 'the democratic sausage', with its low-key celebration of Australia at election time.

The crown is one of the more problematic symbols. It is the foundation of legal and political authority, but it has also had a moral and even spiritual aspect. On the one hand, it legitimises state power but, as we read, 'it has also acted as a source of appeal against arbitrary exercise of state power'. The quasi-religious 'spiritual and emotional conception' that Sir Robert Menzies perceived in the crown was also perceived more generally until the early 1950s, but can no longer command that type or breadth of intangible and elevated attachment.

Secular materialism is the dominant 'world view' in Australia, as it has become in most of the west. This process of secularisation has been occurring more widely, for example in the transition of universities into places of training, not truth, and in the expanding religious groups that often contain, American-style, an underlying materialism only partially hidden by a religious veneer.

Nevertheless, the need for symbols suggests that an overly prosaic notion of the nation cannot sustain itself. In the chapter on the symbol of the Rainbow Serpent we read: 'Aboriginal culture was increasingly being called upon to provide a symbol of nation … by groups of non-Indigenous Australians who believed it offered a depth and richness of symbolic meaning that more conventional symbols had lost.' One might say a similar thing about the relatively recent recognition of Uluru as a national symbol. Serious engagement with Indigenous culture and a wider appreciation of it could have a further effect on the development of Australia's national symbols.

The editors comment 'the book can be neither comprehensive nor definitive', and in this spirit one can note that words also can be symbolic. In pondering the various shades of possible meaning, the declaration of Australia as a Commonwealth in 1901 might be taken to symbolically express a national spirit to which Australia wished to aspire.

Rodney Nillsen
Independent Scholars Association of Australia

Stephen Gapps, *Gudyarra: the first war of Wiradyuri Resistance – The Bathurst War, 1822-1824*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2021, xi + 276 pages; ISBN 97817422367111.

In *Gudyarra,* Stephen Gapps provides a rich, insightful and meticulously researched account of the opening phase of the invasion of Wiradyuri lands by British imperialism and the fierce resistance of Wiradyuri people to this process.

Gudyarra continues exploration of two key themes that ran through Gapps' celebrated 2018 book *The Sydney Wars*. First, he demonstrates that British pastoral expansion was a thoroughly militarised process, with strategic concerns about how best to meet and defeat Aboriginal resistance guiding when, where and how new settlements were established. Second, Gapps is concerned to 'shatter the idea' that Aboriginal resistance was sporadic and opportunistic, forensically piecing together evidence about the extraordinary scale and effectiveness of Wiradyuri warfare.

Having carefully walked through Bathurst and surrounds as part of his research methodology, Gapps punctures his account of the advance or retreat of colonists and Aboriginal resistance fighters with descriptions of landscapes, landmarks and architecture that remain today. This compelling device, also used in *The Sydney Wars*, helps to embed the history of warfare into the contemporary world we move through, transforming our understanding of both. A deeper appreciation of place is also aided by the maps of conflict sites, drawn by Wiradyuri artist Nyree Reynolds, that accompany every chapter.

The opening chapters of *Gudyarra* pick up the story of British invasion where *The Sydney Wars* left off, in the wake of a brutal counter-insurgency campaign against the peoples of the Sydney basin, initiated by Governor Macquarie in 1816. The early pace of colonisation of Wiradyuri lands was slow and controlled. While a Grand Depot was established at Bathurst as a 'military outpost', the minimal presence of colonists and stock from 1815-1821 kept conflict to a minimum. Gapps quotes Wiradyuri historian Mary Coe who has argued, 'As long as the whites didn't interfere with their lives, [Wiradyuri people] would be prepared to share a part of the land with them.'

These dynamics changed abruptly in 1822, after new Governor Brisbane sought to satiate the appetite of wealthy stock owners for pasture in the 'promised lands' over the Blue Mountains. Up to 1821 only 2520 acres of Wiradyuri Country had been allocated to pastoralists. In the next four years this increased more than 36 times, reaching 91,636 acres in 1825.

The flood of armed colonists, sheep and cattle from 1822 constituted a 'colonial apocalypse' for the Wiradyuri, a powerful concept that Gapps borrows from Ambeyang historian Callum Clayton-Dixon's work on the invasion of New England. Faced with the destruction of their livelihoods and

increasing settler violence, Wiradyuri began to wage 'all-out resistance warfare'. After years of relative peace, the British now faced 'the largest and most powerful nation that they had encountered, or would encounter, in Australia', fully mobilised for fighting that far surpassed the intensity of anything described in *The Sydney Wars*.

Gapps masterfully pieces together the full extent of the 1822-1824 Wiradyuri campaign from disparate sources. He paints a convincing picture of coordinated attacks, by multiple war bands with hundreds of people, across the vast expanse of Wiradyuri country. By the time of the most intense fighting in the winter of 1824, Wiradyuri had forced outstations and even major government stations like Swallow Creek to be abandoned; killed around 20 colonists and wounded many more; killed large numbers of sheep and cattle; and stolen goods, clothing, guns and ammunition. Gandangarra people from the mountains to the south and even Aboriginal people from South Coast New South Wales had travelled to join the fighting.

Governor Brisbane declared martial law in August 1824, precipitating a series of massacres, openly discussed in the Sydney press as a 'war of extermination'. While the devastating scale of this mass slaughter has been documented previously, Gapps carefully unpacks the way massacre operated as the premier anti-insurgency strategy used in New South Wales, designed to decisively crush resistance to pastoral expansion.

Pressure to execute this horrific 'solution' to effective Wiradyuri resistance flowed directly from the expansionist logic of colonial capitalism. In the months prior to the declaration of martial law, the most wealthy and powerful figures in the colony, the 'stockholders of New South Wales', convened in Sydney to demand extermination. In May 1824 the Australian Agricultural Company was formed in London, to mobilise 'large Capital' behind the new opportunities to 'breed fine wooled sheep' on 'fine grazing country'. Securing Bathurst and surrounds from Wiradyuri resistance was key to unlocking the potential of these new lands, and necessitated Wiradyuri genocide: 'The unfettered march of "large Capital" west of the Blue Mountains could not be jeopardised.'

Gudyarra is part of an exciting new wave of military history, including work by Wiradyuri historian Angus Murray, that is deepening our understanding of the scale and intensity of Aboriginal resistance. Hopefully we will soon see another instalment of Gapps' work on the warfare that forged the foundations of Australia.

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Doug Munro, *History Wars: The Peter Ryan-Manning Clark Controversy*, Australian National University Press, Acton ACT, 2021, xxxvi+193; ISBN 9781760464769.

In 1993, the former director of Melbourne University Press, Peter Ryan, launched an unexpected, vitriolic attack on the work and character of Manning Clark. Published in the conservative magazine *Quadrant*, what made this written onslaught particularly surprising was the fact that Ryan had commissioned and published almost all of the volumes of Clark's history of Australia and in the process had praised each one without qualification.

In this book Doug Munro aims to measure Clark's contribution to Australian culture, both as an historian and public intellectual, explain the motives behind Ryan's decision to launch such an ill-tempered and unrestrained onslaught, and to fit this controversy into the wider context of the so-called History Wars debate that marked the Australian cultural landscape in this era.

In evaluating Clark as an Australian historian, Munro tends towards ambivalence, arguing (albeit not consistently), that the best volumes of his history are the earliest, while the subsequent volumes are characterised by a consistent decline in quality. I am not sure of this declension model given that the first volume stands convicted by its critics of too closely following a select number of sources, Collins and Tench in particular. Moreover, Clark's tendency to interpret particular events in terms of a straightforward conflict of personalities is already on display in this volume, always with unfortunate results. For Clark the *Rum Rebellion* was a battle of personalities between Macarthur and Bligh, a reductionist interpretation that ignores the complexity of the social, political and economic issues in play.

In acknowledging some of Clark's shortcomings as an historian Munro, like Mark McKenna, argues that nevertheless Clark was an influential public intellectual who promoted a strong vision of past and present Australian nationalism. Perhaps so, but Clark's vision as well as his approach in presenting it were already anachronistic. In previous centuries, Macaulay, Trevelyan, Michelet, and Bancroft wrote grand personality centred histories that sought to reveal the souls of their nations. However, in the era in which Clark wrote a new generation of social and cultural historians – those who explored the lives of ordinary people, not just those of the elite – were constructing histories of Australia that demonstrated the diversities, complexities and contradictions of Australian culture and history. Clark's histories and his nationalistic vision were already out of date at the time of their publication.

Munro seeks to be objective in explaining Ryan's role and purpose in attacking Clark. I think his dislike of the publisher gets the better of him but, nevertheless, his account is still persuasive –and damning. Ryan claimed to be a

brave, lone critic of Clark's work but the reality was that beginning with volume 1 of the history not only were there a legion of critics but their critiques anticipated most of Ryan's later strictures.

Munro persuasively suggests that Ryan's own deepening conservatism and his resentment of Clark's public profile led to what amounted to a vindictive and enduring hatred-tinged campaign against Clark. Ryan earned the approval of some intellectual right-wing warriors but his extreme rhetoric alienated not only the left but moderates as well.

Munro suggests that the Ryan-Clark debate, as part of the wider History Wars intellectual contest, was not only a national but even part of an international discussion about culture and history. The History Wars debate centring on the 'black-armband'/'white blindfold' interpretations of Australian history was certainly conducted at the national level. However, I'm not sure that the highly derivative and unoriginal contributions to the debate by two English journalists, Paul Johnson and Bryan Appleyard, were taken seriously either in Australia or Britain. Johnson's embarrassing subservience to Ronald Reagan had long since damaged his credibility as a critical journalist.

Moreover, although the Ryan-Clark controversy was linked to a wider context, it was very much conducted along a Melbourne-Canberra axis. While it is true that some contributors to the debate came from universities located in other cities, usually they had close past connections to Melbourne University. The fact is that academic historians in most Australian universities had long ago determined that Clark's research was poor and his approach was anachronistic. From the outside, the Ryan-Clark debate looked like (yet another) Melbourne family squabble.

I cannot fault the research that has gone into this book. Munro has worked his way through an impressive array of personal papers, and reviews of Clark's books. He has also utilised interviews with some of the major participants. The result is a carefully and (mostly) convincingly argued book. As a professed outsider he has also brought new perspectives and understandings to his subject, challenging readers to revise their understandings of Clark and his writings.

Richard Waterhouse
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Ashley Hay, *Gum – the story of eucalypts & their champions*, first published by Duffy & Snellgrove 2002, 2nd edition published by New South 2021; ISBN 9781742237534.

Ashley Hay is a novelist and writer, and for a number of years editor of the *Griffith Review*. Gum, her second foray in 'narrative non-fiction', comprises 10 essays loosely connected on the theme of the genus Eucalyptus, from observations by Europeans – English and French – on first sighting the grey-green forests blanketing the eastern coasts of Australia and Tasmania; to the

endeavours of naturalists and systematic botanists to civilise this continental family of wooded plants that dominated the Australian floral canopy from south to north and east to west; and to capturing the imagination of European artists, explorers, writers and poets, challenging all to reassess their educated ways of looking.

The peculiarly Australian allure of the eucalypts has induced a morbid, compulsive response: from Banks' commissioned but never published *florilegium*, comprising expensively engraved lithographic plates of botanical material accumulated on the first *Endeavour* voyage, never printed in his lifetime; to Max Jacobs' globe-trotting promotion of eucalypts as a wonder crop for developing countries in the equatorial zones; to Stan Kelly's ambitions of illustrating the upwards of 900 identified species using specimens he began collecting while driving trains across the continent; to William Macarthur's display of timber samples presented at the Paris Exposition of 1855; and wrapped up in Murray Bail's gothic novel *Eucalyptus*, requiring a suitor to meet the father's challenge of reciting in alphabetical order the species names for the 300 trees planted on his property.

It is happy hunting ground for Hay, who like the father in *Eucalyptus* has absorbed the rich emanations of this tree as an emblem of what it is to feel truly Australian. Her stories are of obstinate, driven individuals; of delusions and dead ends; of a brotherhood of solace and folly. She would have us see the story within a larger story of the European desire to subdue the landscape; reduce its native forests to usable products; and order for the eye, accustomed to full shade or none; to straight lines and worked planks; to fuel or fibre. Indeed this second enlarged edition 20 years after first publication indicates a degree of absorption in the subject by the author herself.

Weight is given to Michael Jacobs' role in popularising eucalypts as a replacement fuel source for poor countries in the tropics. Gums provide a fast-growing cash crop, holding soil, while valuable as construction material. The message caught the same wave as Norman Bourlaug's revolutionary high-yield grain varieties that fuelled the drive to lift the world out of poverty, hunger and environmental decline. Hay takes the story forward to its less than glorious dénouement.

Perhaps it is in the nature of narrative non-fiction that we are invited to accept the jolts as we move from a case history in botanical systematics; to the founding of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens; to the fight for the forests in the 1970s; to debates over fire in the Australian landscape.

My disappointment was in the subject scatter. The rapid spread of the genus to all corners of the continent and its adaptation to all climates, soils and elevations, something that has occupied observers from the time of the First Fleet to latest speculation with the onset of major climate shifts, is raised but not

pursued. We learn about forestry, and its attendant politics and practice from the perspective of those defending old growth eucalyptus forests from clear felling. We have insight to the European reaction to gum-dominated landscape; we have hints on the management of this landscape pre-settlement; and a delightful story of trees woven into the account of first contact in Botany Bay.

As narrative it succeeds, but I do have reservations on accuracy – for example the reference to the poison 1080 on p 192 is not correct; and water tables tend to rise when trees are felled, contrary to what is said at p 197. Thomas Mitchell is an important figure in the history of settlement. I was disappointed to find his practice of clearing peaks of trees to obtain lines of sight conflated with an ambition to subdue the landscape: he, like most in the colonial administration, was trained to a role. The transcribed field log of the trip the author refers to – when Mitchell called on the dying Oxley on his way out – gives a different picture of the man.

Despite valuable notes and references, the lack of an index is a drawback in an essay collection based on extensive and often deep reading.

Gum as a companion for a beach holiday is hard to beat. Skip over the sweeping declarations; glory in the sideways glances; absorb the histories of men alone in the landscape with their obsessions and the monuments they create. But don't neglect the landmark references from which this author has drawn. Indeed her expansive bibliography is a true anchor to this endeavour in the tradition of Anne Moyal's *Platypus*, Eric Rolls' *A Million Wild Acres*, and George Seddon's *Searching for the Snowy*.

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Contributors

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James McDonald is a retired classicist. He has recently edited the first of three volumes of Doug Kelly's commentary on Xenophon's *Hellenika* (Hakkert, Amsterdam, 2019). In recent years he has published on Canberra district history, including in the *Canberra Historical Journal, Australian Journal of Biography and History* and *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*.

Harry Cole is a former post-graduate student in history and politics. He began his working life as a marine engineer and returned to engineering on completion of his doctoral thesis. He retains a keen interest in the history of metalworkers and their organisations.

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Michael Williams, Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University, is a scholar of Chinese-Australian history, author of *Returning Home with Glory* (HKU Press, 2018), and *Australia's Dictation Test: the test it was a crime to fail* (Brill, 2021). He has also written extensively on local Dungog history including *A history in three rivers*, Dungog Shire Heritage Study (2014), and *Entertaining Dungog – more than a picture palace*, a history of the James Theatre (2012).

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