

**SELECTED INDUSTRIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ABORIGINAL  
LANDSCAPE VAN DIEMEN'S LAND FROM INVASION TO 1830**

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### **Declaration**

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge and belief this thesis contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by any other person except when due reference is made in the text.

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. R. V.' with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

DATE: 5 August 2004.

## SUPPORTING PUBLICATIONS

“Some of the work presented in this thesis appears in published papers and reports. Where substantial parts of these papers and reports are reproduced in this thesis, it is in all cases my own original contribution to those papers that is transposed”.

The papers and reports directly related to this thesis are:

2004            **Australian Forest History Association Conference**  
A paper titled *The Way it Was* will be presented and published in the proceedings. September 2004.

2002            **Australian Forest History Association Conference**  
Presented a paper: *Wattle Bark in Van Diemen's Land 1800-1830*  
Published in the Proceedings

2001            **PURSAL Conference**  
Presented a paper: *Now Again, Then Again, Salt Again*  
Published in the Proceedings

**Salt Line** DPIWE (Department Primary Industry, Water and Environment  
Publication)

- *Perhaps it is Not Always the Farmers' fault*
- *The Ross Formation*

## ABSTRACT

When the British arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1803, they came as a society that was increasingly industrial in belief and technology. Even the small numbers of British inhabitants involved in the original settlements set up under Bowen, Collins and Paterson had the need for cottage industries to provide the products required for daily life. As the European population increased, selected industries evolved into domestic industries, larger scale operations needed for the functioning of the wider economy and to provide a lifestyle that was appropriate for a British colonial settlement. Export industries emerged at the same time to integrate Van Diemen's Land into the world economy.

This thesis investigates the impacts on the Aboriginal landscape of timber, wattle bark, fauna and salt, four early resource-based industries, based on examination of the primary records for the period to 1830. The first two industries come from the European use of trees. The timber industry exploited the easy accessibility of a wide variety trees. Entrepreneurs developed an export industry for wattle bark after local recognition of its usefulness for tanning and the need in Britain to conserve overexploited oak trees. Exploitation of wildlife began with the need for food, but at an early date turned to the commercial utilisation of oil, meat, furs, skins, fat, bones and feathers.

Salt could be produced via a range of technologies. It was intertwined with other industries ranging from the making of soap to the export of skins and hides. Salt pans

were turned into muddy ponds, and the densely tree lined areas near the coastal saltworks were depleted of the wood needed to fuel boilers.

The landscape of Aboriginal Trowernna became the landscape of British Van Diemen's Land. Aboriginal landscape management unwillingly and unwittingly provided the British settlement with a seemingly unending supply of raw materials, hence the consequences of their exploitation was not considered significant at the time. The landscape of Trowernna drew forth little to no affection from the British; that observation is demonstrated by over harvesting, the lack of care with harvesting methods, together with the introduction of European flora and fauna. In 1830 the local European population had grown to 24,504. In less than thirty years, European people and their industries had substantially modified large parts of the Aboriginal landscape beyond recovery.

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There are always people who give inspiration, assist the thesis writer over writer's-block, and offer general encouragement to focus on the task at hand.

Amateur historians were among those people, who, during the research for this work, unstintingly shared their wealth of knowledge. To many professional historians, the very word 'amateur' implies carelessness; someone who puts forward theories with no basis in the documented record. In my experience I have found a number of amateur historians far more knowledgeable in my field of research than some 'professional' historians who have academic qualifications. Many amateurs are often qualified in other areas such as teaching, commerce, geology or nursing. The amateur historian is often a retired person with a passion for one aspect of history be it bridges, mills, family history or landscape. Local historical societies are small groups of like-minded people passionate about the history of their areas.

All the usual avenues of research were used; such as the archives, newspapers, and libraries and collections, but local historical societies filled in the blanks and expanded the information about obscure aspects until I realised that they were neither obscure nor little known. It was this group of informed people who rounded out areas

which had been recorded in obscure places, thus offering me an expanded geographical approach from a variety of viewpoints.

Acknowledgment is a must for Freda Gray (OAM and retired teacher) the President/historian of the Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association, who provided information on people, trades, locations, land grants and name changes when I became stuck. “What do you know about Thomas Kent?” I would say and later in the day I would receive a phone call, more often a fax, and sometimes both, with amazing information that I never knew existed. It was the same with Margaret Long of the Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell, who knew so much about charts and nomenclature and what modernisation changes had occurred from the earliest period. Irene Schaffer, a self published ‘amateur’ historian gave me her file on wattle bark collected over several decades, because it was of interest. Likewise respected ‘amateur’ historians such as Jessie Luckman, Bruce Andrews, Warwick Risby and the list goes on, all answered my questions or set me on the right path. Many times I arrived at an historical meeting to be given photocopied sheets about my topics found while the ‘amateur’ was researching for something else.

To write anything on history a love of the topic is essential and the discipline of historical geography allows for scientific approaches to expressions of knowledge based on the discovery of evidence. In some cases, there are people who open windows that are to unexpected joys; this is what Roger Kellaway did so many years ago, when he inspired my love for historical geography and showed me the benefits of primary research. Encouraging my historical tangents to “get to the truth”. I deeply appreciate the lessons in “getting it right”, given by many historians professional,

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How do you thank friends and historical acquaintances who rallied with replacement pictorial material for me to include within this thesis when my work was arbitrarily packed up, shoved aside. My entire collection of pictures and many of my historical maps were subsequently lost. Hence some of the sources have no formal reference other than the name of the person who gave me the replacement, many are photocopied from untitled books. Special thanks must go to Private Collection, who wished to remain anonymous.

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