

**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.' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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,

academic and amateur, during the research and the writing up of this thesis. I especially thank those who offered invaluable assistance in a discipline far different from their area of expertise, showing me that historical geography can build bridges across disciplines.

Then the most important thank yous always go last. Special thanks must go to family and friends who offered incredible support when things got unbelievably tough.

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.

And, then there are those who threw me a life-line just when I thought I would sink without a trace, Dr Carey Denholm, Dr Richard Coleman and Dr. Stefan Petrow.

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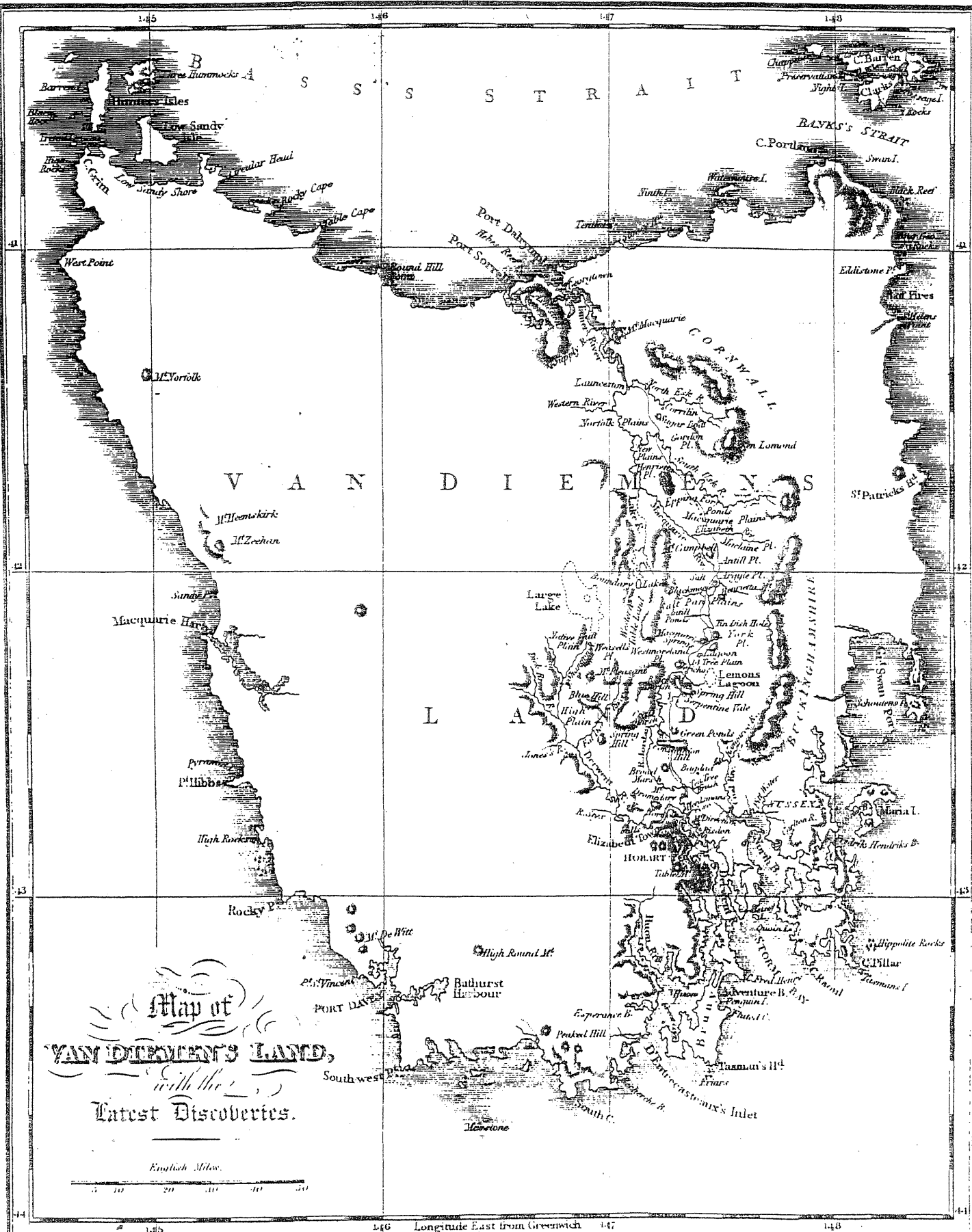
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Map 1: An 1822 map of Van Diemen's Land showing the invaded land and impact areas.

Source: Private Collection.



CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Casual industrial uses of Van Diemen's Land's resources and the beginnings of change to the coastal landscape, in particular at Adventure Bay on Bruny Island, began with visits of European ships prior to the nineteenth century. Ships' crews were able to do routine maintenance, such as obtaining timber for masts, spars, firewood, including the collection of foodstuffs in the form of grasses as fodder for livestock aboard the ships, with fowl, Kangaroos and greens for the crews. The collection of curios was also common during these visits and a number of collections were made for the purposes of science. Descriptions of the landscape made at those early times have been included as they help build a reconstruction of visual changes to coastal areas of Van Diemen's Land.

The 48 people arriving at the Derwent River with Lieutenant Bowen in September 1803 had needs that drove the beginnings of cottage industries based on the timber and foodstuffs available locally. Modification by hunting, land clearing and ploughing had begun. This collective need increased with the arrival of several ships from Port Jackson in November 1803 and even more in when 480 convicts and settlers arrived with Lieutenant Governor Collins in February 1804, to settle on the western shore of the Derwent estuary.

Modification increased in the north of Van Diemen's Land with the arrival of Patterson at the Tamar River in November 1803.¹

From sustaining Aboriginal domestic needs until 1803, to the development of a British cottage industry from that time, limited change occurred to the landscape. However, by 1818 the export of wattle bark, timber and skins, proved profitable for the entrepreneurs who had begun destroying the Aboriginal landscape.² For almost two decades convicts formed the gross labour force. Some free settlers, military officers and emancipists became the colonial merchants. After their respective arrivals, in 1817 and 1824, Lieutenant Governor Sorell and then Lieutenant Governor Arthur encouraged settlers and merchants to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land. People willing to invest in the infant Van Diemen's Land colony received free access to land and labour. Hence rapid change began occurring within the narrow areas associated with settlement, as emigration of free settlers increased during the 1820's and afterwards. Map 1 shows the area modified by colonial expansion between the two invasion points of Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple.

To 1830 colonial Van Diemen's Land was foremost a maritime staging post and penal colony, historical records show the industrial technology was of a civilization transplanted more or less intact from the homeland.³ Every

¹Ships connected to the sealing industry are known to have been in the north of Van Diemen's Land for some considerable time. Presumably they accessed the landscape in a similar way to the south prior to 1804.

²The expression destruction of the Aboriginal landscape is from an Aboriginal point of view. Non Aboriginal people consider it a modification of an original landscape.

³Morgan, S., *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1992.

component of Britishness was transported along with the convicts who were the industrial machinery.⁴

By today's standards, many of the contemporary descriptions of the embryonic colony have themes that many readers and historians have considered either emotive or romanticised.⁵ These themes include accounts, such as those of the early surveyors, Grimes, Harris and Hellyer, who, in brief and comprehensive descriptions, annotated maps and surveying journals, describe an almost 'utopian' landscape.⁶ In a similar way, in setting up and conducting their establishments on the eastern coast of Van Diemen's Land, "settlers" such as Fenton and Meredith observed, and recorded in their journals, their interpretations of the Aboriginal managed landscape. Both Matthew Flinders in 1798 and George Augustus Robinson in 1829 wrote about millions upon millions of mutton birds, called Yolla by the Aborigines.⁷ If it required almost an entire day in one small area of northwestern Van Diemen's Land for the Yolla to fly overhead and the sky was black, how many birds once arrived annually? Other writers describe incredible colonial waste. Hundreds of 'rotting stinking carcasses' is an expression recorded by the sealer Boulton.⁸ If primary records are correct there were hundreds of decaying swan or albatross carcasses rotting in caves or the marsh after their feathered skin had been removed.

⁴Morgan, S., *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1992.

⁵This view has arisen many times during discussions with historians, in the same way a non primitive view of the Tasmanian Aboriginal is always considered as viewing "the noble savage"

⁶Hellyer, Harris and Grimes have left journals and letters describing this early period and are referred to within various chapters.

⁷Yolla is the Aboriginal name for the Short Tailed Shearwater or Petrel, Mount Pitt or mutton bird.

The physical geography of hills and valleys of Van Diemen's Land dictated the land alienation for the European “settlement”, which resulted in large portions of the island still virtually untouched in the twentieth century:

a land of mountains, plateaux, hills and lakes with a significant absence of extensive plains; most of the tractable land is found in the eastern third, to which easy occupation was confined.⁹

Morgan considered the granting of land to be of significance in Van Diemen's Land's agricultural development.

When considering the early movements of the British it is sometimes ignored that there were only Aboriginal tracks or waterways to give access to the interior; in the main exploration occurred along the shores by boat. Land exploration only occurred with the “necessity for new pastures with cattle being the pathfinders”.¹⁰ The “impervious jungle and interminable hills covered with forest” were a depressing deterrent to many.¹¹ Only the free ‘settler’ was able to put forward an opinion; convicts and military had to do as they were told, their opinion unasked and unrecorded.

From the beginning Van Diemen's Land was a dual society where industry was determined by the convicts' technological abilities and the exploitiveness of the

⁸Boulton, J., *Journal of a Rambler: the journal of John Boulton*, Edited J Starke, Oxford University Press, Auckland. 1986.

⁹Morgan, S., *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1992. p. 19.

¹⁰Bigge Report, *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3, Vol. 3: p. 30. In Morgan, S., *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1992.

¹¹Fenton, Mrs , In Morgan, S., *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1992. p. 44.

entrepreneur, combined with the apparent unlimited availability of raw material.¹²

Preliminary research indicated that at least 67 processing industries were established in Van Diemen's Land prior to 1830, producing the basis of the way of life of the invading British. In Van Diemen's Land, wool, wheat and agriculture are the big three commercial areas of popular historical research, as are the industries of whaling and sealing, thus determining their early elimination from this thesis. Further preliminary research showed that a wide range of colonial and export industries overlapped into other larger industrial complexities. The most important colonial industry was that of timber which was the overriding basis of almost every aspect of colonial life, from producing the bare essentials of life to economic viability. That the invading British saw unlimited raw materials for the taking is expounded upon in official and unofficial documents of the period. Discussions in the relevant chapters will show that the raw materials of fauna and timber were in such large quantities that the thought of limitation was denied.

The penal colony administration has left an abundance of government records in the form of statistics, musters and lists, which were indicated by the secondary source bibliographies as the easy research areas. It was found from other primary sources that government statistics, musters and lists were

¹²Modern arguments claim Van Diemen's Land was a society of convict, free settler, military and various class levels in between as well as Aboriginal people. In fact there were only ever two classes. Convict, which included the military and free 'settlers'. The Aboriginal had no rating and is barely recorded within the early records.

incomplete. However, it became obvious that other primary sources provided enormous amounts of untapped data relating to the very early industries.

To a large extent, the majority of information on colonial industries was hidden within colonial newspapers, obscure government records, private correspondence and journals. The industries of Van Diemen's Land's first decades had a surprising amount of under-utilized material original material. The industries involving coopers and blacksmiths overlapped into a number of other industries, as did the industries of skin and oil harvesting. Timber harvesting evolved into a complex series of industrial activities that impinged on all other colonial industries to one extent or another.

Some industrial records were no more than a line describing, such industrial activities as 'trunk maker' or 'felt maker'. Other industries were established and thriving but no information could be found beyond vague references as to the glue industry established in 1805.¹³

In this work the term 'landscape' refers to the Aboriginal managed landscape. Spelling and measurements of the period up to 1830, which adds depth to the context, have been left within the quotes, though capitalisation of letters within quotation marks was ignored. Capitalisation within the original document was sometimes due to poor handwriting rather or fashion, likewise the large S or f in early accounts have been replaced with the modern 's'. Similarly, there is no modern equivalent for the 'firthe kirken' and 'pipe' or the 'hogshead', though

¹³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 15 October 1805. p. 332.

the number of pipes, that made a hogshead, is known. However, in some instances, the transfer of terms into modern equivalents allowed for some of the estimates of production to be worked out for wattle bark, skins and timber industries. When a number of primary sources offered conflicting or confusing information, or when historical accounts differed from the material in secondary sources, the perspective of history became very different from the perspective presented by secondary sources.

When it came to documents, it was found that government papers and newspaper editorials offered particular narratives, usually that are of the powerful people. However, other areas of the newspaper gave an insight into other aspects of colonial society. For example, prizes and awards for exported material indicated quality, the newspaper advertisements and letters to the editor, combined with editorial comments, tended to broaden the newspapers editorial perspective to include the ordinary person. Thus data from these sources formed a “synthesis in which equal amounts of physical and human geography” interacted in a “world regional syllabus” to pinpoint a time in space.¹⁴

With the exclusion of whaling and sealing, there were four industries that formed the basis of the Van Diemen's Land's economy. Each colonial industry impacted on the environment to one degree or another, but three impacted severely. For this reason the chapters are arranged in order of landscape impact: timber, Wattle bark, fauna, salt.

¹⁴Sheridan, G., Dennis Jeans: Historical Geographer and Landscape Interpreter Extraordinaire, *Australian Geographical Studies*, Vol. 39: part 1, March 2002. p. 96.

1.2 The Perspective of the Historical Geographer

Historical geography, according to Moodie and Lehr, offers a distinctive flow of geographical ideas inspired by the uniqueness of the perspective.¹⁵ It is a discipline bounded by time, space and phenomena expanding through lateral movement stretching from a core point and encompassing all before it in a three dimensional cone. As the past is constructed from relationships to place and location, unrecoverable and unrepeatable events, in what is termed history, showing there is a finality in historical events, that cannot be derived from experiments conducted under artificial laboratory conditions.¹⁶

As historical geography offers a complex interlinked perspective of history, so do the historical geographers who are free to examine multiplicity of actions and processes without commitment to “*a priori* assumptions or procedural rules”.¹⁷

In examining the evidence, historical geographers:

may take account of the effects of floods, droughts, epidemics, wars, political upheavals and other events which bedevil economic predictions; in brief, they may interpret economic, social and psychological developments as aspects of open systems.¹⁸

Baker suggests that historical geography involves questioning the adequacy of traditional methods and technologies, ensuring that the discipline does not become technologically moribund. The traditional broad approach, however, is

¹⁵Moodie, D., and Lehr, J., Fact and Theory in Historical Geography. *Professional Geographer*, Vol. 28. 1976. pp. 132-135.

¹⁶Baker, A., *Progress in Historical Geography*, Chapter 1, Rethinking Historical Geography. Edited A. Baker, David and Charles, Newton Abbott. 1972. pp. 11-28.

¹⁷Baker, A., Butlin, R., Philips, A., Prince, H., The Future of the Past, *AREA, Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 4. 1969.

justified through themes of synthesis as the goal of historical geography.

Accordingly, historical geographers consider cross sections and vertical themes in an effort at reconstructing both “aspects of time-as setting and as sequence”.¹⁹

Meinig considers historical geography the territory that lies between history and geography and one of the foundations that encompasses and contributes to all of geography. “Where historical geography is a perspective of seeing, of thinking recognising the essential depth to our understanding of the nature of the world and its interconnection, it is an investment in the geography of the past”.²⁰

In an analysis of how the future developed from the past, the use of other views consider facts drawn from the records as “the touchstones of the validity of his interpretations”.²¹

Historical geographers find their own data sources, form their own analyses, and put forward theories based on their own discoveries. At the same time:

historical geography is based on a temporal juxtaposition of evidence and theory that provides a unique point of view which elicits a distinct set of geographical questions.²²

This view is one that often results in perceptions not previously considered.

¹⁸Baker, A., Butlin, R., Philips, A., Prince, H., The Future of the Past, *AREA, Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 4. 1969. p. 47.

¹⁹Baker, A., *Progress in Historical Geography*, Chapter 1, Rethinking Historical Geography., Edited by A. Baker, David and Charles, Newton Abbot. 1972. p. 15.

²⁰Meinig, D., The Historical Geography Imperative, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 79: part 1. 1989. pp. 79-87.

²¹Baker, A., Butlin R., Philips, A., Prince, H., The Future of the Past, *AREA, Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 4: 1969. p. 47.

²²Moodie, D., and Lehr, J., Fact and Theory in Historical Geography. *Professional Geographer*, Vol. 28: 1976. p. 134.

Historical geography is useful in defining the impact of humans on the landscape over time, and:

has the advantage of linking into a unified approach the chorographic approach of geography with the chronological approach of history.²³

Laws notes that in a vertical theme, for example: the past to the present, it is necessary to select one or more themes, or sub themes as is done in this thesis, then trace the changes to each over time. By blending the breadth of a cross section with the dynamism of the vertical, it ultimately exposes a structure depicting both growth and change in the landscape.

To be able to inform others of the historical geographer's perception, it is necessary to determine relationships and sets of relationships among phenomena rather than the characteristics of the phenomena. It was from this view that early colonial industries were considered a limited manageable project, based securely on the limited documentation known to be available from research with secondary sources. Thus under the criteria of historical geography using primary sources, the perceived self-limiting research project rapidly moved out of control. Instead of a neatly limited and orderly accumulation of facts, the research ended as a mountain range of what appeared to be unrelated industrial snippets. Analysis of the data showed that the snippets were held together by the common thread of colonial industries in Van Diemen's Land prior to 1830, many interlinked with timber.

²³Laws, K., *The Past on a Key to the Present: Historical Geography in the Curriculum, Geographical Education*, Vol. 4. 1983. p. 94.

Harris explains such unexpected avalanches of data nicely, when he recounts that historians write general histories of a place or on a handful of people, whereas historical geographers write about specialised themes that are treated both historically and geographically. Harris notes that such themes:

encompass complex processes that transformed landscape and place, and an attempt to achieve some synoptic understanding of these processes in particular places is a type of geographical synthesis.²⁴

Synthesis is a central geographical tool in the complex understanding of interrelationships behind regions or landscapes, offering a “law finding” scene compared to the “law applying” view of the historian.²⁵ Nothing develops, changes, erodes or destructs in isolation. There are always attributes that may be made to causes for a cause for any reaction, irrespective of the impact. For instance it was the lull in the British war with France that led to the invasion of Trowernna and the beginning of colonial Van Diemen's Land.

According to Laws “cultural artifacts, just as natural landscapes, are best seen and appreciated *in situ*”.²⁶ It is the combination of natural and human instigated changes that constitutes a cultural landscape. “It is important to consider a landscape as a palimpsest and to notice those elements which have been partially erased”.²⁷ Combinations of present landscapes and remnants in museums, libraries and archives provide materials for reconstruction. It is a

²⁴Harris, C., Theory and Synthesis in Historical Geography, *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 15: part 3. 1971. p. 164.

²⁵Harris, C., Theory and Synthesis in Historical Geography, *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 15: part 3. 1971.

²⁶Laws, K., The Past on a Key to the Present: Historical Geography in the Curriculum, *Geographical Education*, Vol. 4. 1983. p. 101.

²⁷Laws, K., The Past on a Key to the Present: Historical Geography in the Curriculum, *Geographical Education*, Vol. 4. 1983. p. 97.

“paradox of historical geography that nothing can be known of the past except through a diligent search of the contemporary world”.²⁸

It is the surviving historical remnants that are used:

to understand a particular region, place, or landscape, or to treat a theme which itself embraces a complex set of relationships bearing on the character of a particular place, is to achieve a synthesizing understanding analogous to that in history.²⁹

Differences in the form of explanation in historical geography are those of degree, rather than the historian's view of the exceptional individual.

The historical geographer is also a creature of the time in which she or he lives as the questions posed are framed by contemporary paradigms. “The past is necessarily reappraised in the framework of present thinking, conditioned by present needs and present problems”.³⁰ Sometimes when projected into the past modern intellectual concerns fail to develop the sense of the “real world” as it was in the past, rather than the perceived theories devised from out of historical context material used to validate a theme. If a history is seen through modern perceptions, it produces distortions, which interfere with sound understanding of life as it existed in historic times.³¹

²⁸Baker, A., Butlin, R., Philips, A., Prince, H., *The Future of the Past*, AREA, *Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 4. 1969. p. 47.

²⁹Harris, C., *Theory and Synthesis in Historical Geography*, *Canadian Geographer*, Vol. 15: part 3. 1971. p. 168.

³⁰Baker, A., Butlin, R., Philips, A., Prince, H., *The Future of the Past*, AREA, *Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 4. 1969. p. 48.

1.3 Data Sources and Methodology

For any historical geographer, the primary sources are expected to be a Pandora's box of timely colonial industrial accounts. For this thesis, material written before 1830 was considered primary sources, being recorded at the time and indicating attitudes current before 1830. Historical secondary sources were categorised as those accounts written between 1830 and 1900, with everything after 1900 considered as modern secondary sources.³² It was newspapers, journals, dairies and colonial letters of the times that filled blanks left by the official records, where "survivals from the past compromise a complex, scattered always incomplete and often contradictory record that is itself a formidable challenge."³³

However, as Harris notes "comprehension of the data grows with familiarity and in direct proportion to a scholar's knowledge of the people and place that produced them. Isolated facts acquire meaning in context" verifying that "an initially meaningless document is understandable later on".³⁴ At the same time showing that "data from the past is neither static nor separate from the interpretation" providing evidence that historical myths often arise on limited accessibility.³⁵

³¹This distortion of history by the modern perceived themes of some historians, has resulted in the attempted genocide of Lia Pootah Tasmanian Aboriginal.

³²A considerable amount of data written within the historical secondary source category was written by people who included their memories of actual events prior to 1830. Some of the historical secondary sources were written by people who arrived decades after the events they were writing about and were relying on local knowledge, not necessarily from people who had lived it.

³³Harris, C., *The Historical Mind and the Practice of Geography, Humanistic Geography Prospects and Problems*, Edited D., Ley and M., Samuels. London. 1978

³⁴Harris, C., *The Historical Mind and the Practice of Geography, Humanistic Geography Prospects and Problems*. Edited D., Ley and M., Samuels. London. 1978.

³⁵Harris, C., *The Historical Mind and the Practice of Geography, Humanistic Geography Prospects and Problems*. Edited D., Ley and M., Samuels. London. 1978.

Myths can also arise when research is dominated by secondary sources. The primary material indicated in secondary sources rarely satisfied my expectations, as the original references often only contained either a 'throwaway line' or at best a paragraph. The majority of secondary sources about colonial industry tended to be either superficial in detail or completely ignored industrial processing procedures. Possibly the most significant problems of secondary sources occurred in publications printed during the twentieth century, when the fashion of the time considered it was irrelevant for original sources to be referenced. Although with writers who published oral histories, such as von Steglitz and Bonwick, the information could often be verified through other sources.³⁶

Colonial newspapers make direct or veiled mention of industries in advertisements, editorials and letters to the editor. It was through the newspaper advertisements concerning Wattle bark strippers that locations of the industry could be traced. Private papers and collections gave the more basic grassroots information concerning the ordinary colonist struggling with the cottage industrial replacements for British items, which were considered essential for comfort. Letters such as those written by Mr Williams to his sister, and Mr Harris to his family in England, detailed colonial life from the perspective of a temporary resident and government employee.³⁷ The more formal repositories in the archives offered government data on industrial progress, licensees, shipping information for local use and exported colonial made materials. Private and administrative letters to the Colonial Secretaries

³⁶Bonwick used material from the nineteenth century and von Steglitz the twentieth century.

³⁷The contents of these letters are discussed within the chapters of salt, timber and fauna.

Office occasionally offered insights into the historical geography of Van Diemen's Land industries, such as when Governor Arthur refused the expansion of a bark distillery. Collections held by historical associations offered information from numerous sources often not held in Tasmania, as with the Ceres Medal for industry performance.³⁸

Gaps, inaccuracies and ambiguities in primary sources were both the bane and spice for this researcher. Convict employment and especially the listing of work placements of the convicts, indicated in Muster Lists, was one of the main clues to industries and provided indirect industrial records. In the same manner, secondary sources of compiled government accounts and statistics were found to be useful in providing both the positive and negative search results. Clues to industrial activities were followed up, then after searching census rolls, parish records, Muster Lists and *Blue Books* it was discovered that the data do not now exist, or was never recorded in the government records.³⁹

In areas other than government records, the broad sweep of primary sources resulted in accumulations of material listed under separate industrial or unrelated headings. This is understandable, because over time a certain amount of confusion and blurring could occur within the historical record of the period researched. This blurring was compounded by the similarity of names of persons and locations. Thomas Kent is one such historical figure, the two Simeon Lords another. However, it was found that records of an individual

³⁸From the Lady Nelson Sailing Group member Irene Schaffer's personal records.

³⁹The *Blue Books* contain a variety of information collated from government papers and statistics on Van Diemen's Land/Tasmania. However, they are not a reliable source as often the newspapers contain information not noted in the *Blue Books*.

person were usually associated with the place where they gathered their raw material, for example John Petchey at Petchey's Bay, these locations sometimes varied according to the source of the information. It was the same with material from the *Historical Records of Australia*, discrepancies occurred depending on which Series, whether series 1-2 or 3, was accessed. Personal experience of reading *Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol.1 from cover to cover, revealed information included within dispatches, but not noted in either the index or the side notes. Likewise, not all historical documents are recorded within the government records of *Historical Records of Australia*.

The *Blue Books* and the *Tasmanian Statistics* are two other problematic resources. They offer quantified information, which has astounding gaps, where the data could easily be filled from other contemporary sources. In the case of the Wattle bark industry both the *Blue Books* and the *Tasmanian Statistics* these official records did not include information readily available from such sources as newspapers of the times, due to the fact that the *Blue Books* and *Tasmanian Statistics* are derived from government records. These records do not include shipping news from the newspapers and their results are often in complete variance with cargo manifests. It is possible that the gaps could be accounted for by loss of government correspondence.

Geographical locations of the past also become problematic in both original and secondary sources, as location names were continuously altered with the passage of time. Modern writers are inclined to use contemporary names for some locations, such as Sorell, which is a town today, replacing the

geographical location of Pittwater. This also occurred with the land settlement around the mouth of the Coal River, which has become confused with the township of Richmond, which was built inland on the banks of the Coal River, thus losing the original meaning of the place where an industry was located. Some early locations were named after a property land grant, and in a number of instances a property became a town that is recognised today. With the example of the use of modern names, Sorell and Richmond, the fact that this area was actually a crucial part of Van Diemen's Land's history, as well as being the wheat belt district called Pitt Water prior to 1830, becomes hidden.

Coal River Valley, The Carlton and Muddy Plains were important industrial sources when they were part of Pitt Water. Pitt Water itself was also a significant source of Wattle bark and meat. In the Aboriginal landscape, the European Pitt Water was originally grasslands for Aboriginal hunting, surrounded by Wattle copses, a very different view to the current historical perceptions of today's towns Richmond and Sorell and the estuary known as Pitt Water.

At other times it was difficult to determine where an actual location described within the historical record actually was. Kangaroo Island, Kangaroo Bluff, Kangaroo Point and Kangaroo River were names located all over both Van Diemen's Land and the mainland of Australia. Kangaroo Bluff and Kangaroo Point were interchangeable names for the place today called Bellerive. Boundaries altered as new colonies formed, and geographical boundaries of the past affect the accessibility and location of data in the present.

Before 1830, Van Diemen's Land was an appendage of New South Wales, with much of the administration based in Sydney. Often the early records show Van Diemen's Land as Van Diemen's Land New South Wales, one name inferring one location.⁴⁰ As such the Government of New South Wales controlled all things Vandemonian, therefore Van Diemen's Land records became part of the New South Wales repositories. However, when looking backward into history from the present it is easy to distinguish Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, and overlook the fact that only Western Australia had a fledgling colony prior to 1830. Victoria became a colony in the early 1830s.

Another problematic discovery was the geographical industrial bias in both secondary and primary sources, especially for fauna. Sealing is recorded almost exclusively in Bass Strait, with a limited amount of data from the East Coast of Tasmania. Whaling occurs only in the Derwent River, Channel and southern bays with only occasional references to the East Coast and none for the eastern Bass Strait.⁴¹ This inadvertent bias for industrial locations was later compounded by modern historians, seemingly to only accept sites with archaeological evidence, apparently ignoring subsidiary evidence. In the same way, data for harvesting of muttonbirds/Yolla only occurs for the Bass Straits, ignoring the hundreds, if not thousands, of mutton bird/Yolla rookeries around

⁴⁰*Transactions of the Society of Arts Colonies and Trade*, No. 11, Vol. 43. 1825.

⁴¹Whalers hunting the whale followed the migratory route for the Southern Right and Sperm whale. It was known the whale moved from south of Van Diemen's Land (the Antarctic) to the east coast of Van Diemen's Land and included the eastern part of the Bass Strait where the route branched between the Bass Strait Islands and the Great Australian Bight and up the east coast of Australia.

the entire Van Diemen's Land coastline and all the offshore islands. The swan industry, we are led to believe, was apparently exclusive to the East Coast, even though journals of seafarers and surveyors describe tens of thousands of swans on all sheltered coastal areas, lagoons, inland lakes and rivers. Sometimes the bias is a result of a natural occurrence, as documentation for official records were usually in multiple copies, having a better survival ratio than private letters or a personal journal on a farm prone to bushfires.

There are the oblique references within personal letters and diaries, suggesting that some events were so commonplace that they were never recorded and ultimately became either omitted historically or became anecdotal.

Circumstance plays an important part in document survival. Literacy rates varied among the free settlers, many of whom had a limited education, and the convicts, many of whom though highly literate, had little or no access to pen and paper. In other instances, both convicts and colonists were illiterate. In many ways this conundrum of literacy was a basis for the documented laments concerning the lack of documentation on paper.⁴² However many historical records provide an inbuilt bias solely as a result of their survival, where data from the more densely populated areas form a number of localised accounts, often to the detriment of the more remote areas.⁴³

For the historical geographer a basic tool is the primary archival record.

Knopwood's journal offers first hand perspectives as the colony expanded from

⁴²Pers com. Freda Gray, President Historian, Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association, 2000.

⁴³The term bias within the text shows just how with survival data can prejudice a theory by weighting the evidence.

1804.⁴⁴ Historical books similar to that written by the surveyor Evans and published in 1824 form both a starting point and a working base for insights into Van Diemen's Land industry.⁴⁵ Hellyer's surveying journals covering three separate surveys between 1826 and 1829, unpublished and available only in hand written form, are solid sources for research leading on to original interpretation of the historical Aboriginal managed landscape.⁴⁶ However, newspapers are a mainstay for giving a contemporary overview of a time. Such diverse sources and media, form a strong base from which the historical geographer begins.

Each reference source has its own peculiarities and problems for data retrieval, with access to known material often difficult. For any form of data retrieval the greatest aid is a cataloguing system that is workable, but filing systems used in many archives have developed over time, resulting in overlapping and confusing indexing systems. Many archival collections have not been fully catalogued therefore remaining almost unavailable to the public.⁴⁷ A significant amount of material is held as private archival deposits and collections, some of which are difficult to access. The Catholic Church has its own collection, as do the Royal Society of Tasmania, the Quaker Society, and museums (both private and public), including the extensive military collection at Anglesea Barracks. All of these sources have to be tracked down, followed up and searched.

⁴⁴ Reverend Robert Knopwood, the only clergy that serviced the colony from 1804 until 1823, he left a number of journals and letters describing Van Diemen's Land from the beginning until his death in 1838.

⁴⁵ Evans was a surveyor and author of a book for emigrants

⁴⁶ Hellyer was the Van Diemen's Land Company surveyor.

⁴⁷ Pers. com. Brian Diamond retired archivist, Archives Office of Tasmania. 2002.

Many collections of historical material relating to Van Diemen's Land are housed out of the state. Often they are uncatalogued, or the material is catalogued with the use of a modern place name, which then hides the original colonial name, effectively 'losing' the data. The most common problems are that the material is not catalogued by subject, or that the public or private collection caretakers are awaiting funds to catalogue them for public access. The Mitchell Library of New South Wales is one such repository of data dealing with Van Diemen's Land, as are the La Trobe Library and the Australian National Library in Canberra.

One of the better sources of information on Van Diemen's Land history is the historical collection of individuals or historical societies. Small town or local community history rooms house material concerning the localised history of their area. These collections contain a wealth of information, much in photocopy form, that often is not found in the larger and more public collections. Some local history rooms have historical material from all over the world about local people or events. An individual researching a family or specific area, for example, can be extremely focused and amass a collection of facts that often hold information about industrial activity. It was a family historian in New South Wales who solved the confusion of Wattle bark processing plants owned by Simeon Lord, where accounts obtained in Tasmania were so confused they placed him as being in two places at once.

Often an obscure private letter or journal would contradict an official account giving additional depth to the point in question. However, in one instance it

was the 'throw away line', "Murder Most Horrible" in a newspaper, which showed that Robert Roberts had a furnace to distill salt at Bruny Island, when archaeological evidence showed the contrary.

There are some collections that through global interlibrary exchange programs are available on microfilm, but the dreadful state of many reading machines makes the research difficult. Again these exchange programs are biased towards the user needs of the family historian, not a researcher's broad historical requirement. In the Archive Offices of Tasmania the exchange has two main focuses - family history and the narrow time frame of Governor Arthur, with very limited broad colonial material held out of Tasmania available in microfilm. In a number of cases the material in collections held outside of Tasmania has not been microfilmed.

Microfilm records have indexing difficulties similar to those for government records, appearing to have no rhyme or reason in the cataloguing. An index by definition alone is either chronological, numerical or alphabetical. Some of the records are listed in alphabetical order and others are in a numerical system by year of acquisition, others by date and some a mixture of both numerical and alphabetical. With poor to nonexistent indexing, material is almost impossible to find. Confused catalogue records in some of the larger collections obscures access to known material. The Colonial Secretaries Office has thousands and thousands of letters and documents accessible in hundreds of feet of microfilm. As the material is handwritten and often difficult to read, a reliable index should

be considered mandatory. The more popular historical themes tend to have material that is better indexed, often including supplementary attachments.

Similarly, Supreme Court papers, military, or police reports are at risk of not surviving over a long period of time. It is known that many public records holding certain persons in poor light, or recording they were of convict descent, were destroyed in the mid twentieth century, by individuals who were intent on maintaining family secrets.⁴⁸ In some instances small government collections were lost when a person died, changed appointment or moved office. As a result important material could be left in drawers and cabinets and thrown out as rubbish by the next incumbent. Fires and floods also took their toll on day-by-day government material. Surprisingly there are great gaps even in the convict records.

In my review of secondary sources for industries, historians' moving back from the present, tended to rely on the government musters and the records of the military police, finding limited information they sometimes assumed the information does not exist. However by moving forward from the past to the present, the government musters and police records do prove to be valueless for definite industrial information. What is of value in the government musters are the records of convict placement, where convict musters offer locational information that alludes to industrial activities, for example quarrying and timber workers.

⁴⁸Pers. com. Brain Diamond retired archivist. Archive Office of Tasmanian. 2002

Diaries, journals, and letters showing personal accounts from a various social perspectives, including the day by day commonality of events, fill in many gaps. It is these ordinary every day occurrences which open the window to our historical past. Many letters written at the time contain information often not recorded in any other source. In many cases these private sources have been long forgotten or lost, belonging as they do to what is considered by many high profile historians historically minor or nobody players. Historical editors often reproduce journals or diaries of those historically known leaving material belonging to those considered nonentities to be accounts of less interest. Fortunately, to the historical geographer, the local amateur historians, many of whom are retired professionals, consider these personal documents important and self publish them as in the case of the letters George Prideaux Harris wrote to his family in 1804.

A significant number of the contemporary journals and diaries reproduced in print are quite specific and often of limited value to physical geographers, as they contain mostly political or social information. Often their value is for age, not necessarily historical content. In terms of Van Diemen's Land the journal of Abel Tasman has limited historical documentary information, concerning only the landscape at the single location of the east coast of the island. Researchers often lament the lack of specific information in journals, forgetting that a journal or diary was for the writer themselves, not some historical document to benefit a researcher in the future. Few personal accounts are recorded for public posterity.

Then there are other problems with edited publications of personal records. Sometimes a modern edited version of a journal, diary or papers can show unintentional bias when additional material is included from later time frames to prove a perceived aspect in the past. This practice is particularly problematic when the editor interprets what the original writer was saying or meaning within a passage of the original text. However the modern explanations used to clarify a past point contain the bias and distortions of the present, rather than the historical account of the past. When a researcher predominately uses edited journals, such as those of Robinson in Brian Plomley's *Friendly Mission* or *Weep in Silence*, distortions result in both the history of the time and descriptions of the Aboriginal landscape. George Augustus Robinson wrote about a very narrow timeframe between 1829-1832, on a very limited area of Tasmania. This narrowness is often ignored, resulting in unsubstantiated historical claims. Robinson's journals offer some valuable landscape descriptions, the majority of which are about the land after modification by Europeans.

When using edited journals as a primary source the researcher can be placed in danger of perpetuating biased material, as a result from the editorial bias contained within the secondary source becoming entrenched within the users' research. Depending on the reasons for publication, an edited version can also censor either deliberately or unintentionally, distort what the original writer had to say and will often only include what the editor thinks is important.

Facsimiles are something very different to an edited publication. Facsimiles of

field journals by surveyors, explorers, and personal diaries, impart the writers' perceptions and give an ongoing, sometimes day by day, view to a specific window in time offering an *in situ* perspective of landscape and place.

Though not commonly surviving, it is the letters sent to family and friends that offer a true historical sense of the time. This is why a personal account in the form of a family letter is so exciting to discover. The letter will often moan about trivialities and common problems, or offer exuberance about the mundane, information not recorded anywhere else.⁴⁹

The local historical society is another useful resource often ignored by the 'professional historian' who considers the collectors to be amateurs. Individual members usually have "hobby horses" that they have researched to the level of experts. Guest speakers at historical society meetings bring to light additional forgotten aspects of history that weave the fabric for the historical geographer. One bounty from the local historical society is that much of the research of the society is self published into books and booklets with schematic themes. If a member does not know an answer to an historical question, then they will know someone who does. My experience with these small groups has shown they are an invaluable resource. When it came to industries, it was often descendants of an ancestral family member in a particular profession, who remembered accounts told within the family, which were later verified. An example was with Freda Gray, President/historian of the Hobart Town 1804 First Settlers

⁴⁹It could be argued that an historical letter contains bias, and this is possibly true, but it is a personal bias of the writer about their perceptions within a particular period in time. Therefore, it is not necessarily a bias, based on other peoples perceptions, but a personal perception that is of value to the historical geographer.

Association, concerning the Cambridge location of Petchey's Wattle bark. This type of information was sometimes the base from which my research was started. The local historical societies are possibly the most under used resource available to any one interested in history.

However, colonial newspapers are probably the best, most easily accessible and most reliable source of primary information, and this was obvious when researching the evolution of Van Diemen's Land industries. Between 1810 and 1830 Van Diemen's Land had fifteen newspapers that were regularly in print and the copies are all available on microfilm. Many of the newspapers prior to 1830 had very short lives. The longest running newspaper was possibly the *Government Gazette*, and this may have been due to its official status.

Newspaper research is an incredibly time consuming and ultimately very sidetracking task. Allowances must be made for bias, limited perspectives and inaccuracies printed for many reasons and usually based on social niceties of the time or prejudices of the editor. Almost all of the newspapers in circulation before 1830 were read page by page, and this is where a large proportion of material significant to my thesis was found.

'Demands and Departures', a shipping column that tracked people and cargo, offering shipping news about many vessels which berthed in the Derwent and Tamar Rivers, filled in many blanks left by the *Blue Books* or the *Tasmanian Statistics*. Lists concerning the comings and goings of the early colonists often give a depth to their industrial contribution. Gossip, tit bits, advertisements and

articles added their depth to the industries in question by making personal remarks a person, as in the case of Thomas Kent or noting who was traveling to where. The advertisements imparted other information, offering geographical data not included elsewhere. The passenger list, cargo and the ship's destination said who was exporting timber and shingles to Isle of France. It was through the advertisements that I was able to trace the problems of theft in the Wattle bark industry, which in turn geographically located the bark resources. No mention of bark theft appears in any other account. Likewise data concerning the increase of fencing due to straying cattle, and timber thieves looking for fuel, helped define specific timber localities and problems with the salt pans. It was found that industrial locations could be mapped just by newspaper advertisements or editorial comment, while sales of property often listed forges, mills, breweries, or candle-making establishments, adjoined to outbuildings. References to many industries, such as trunk making, appear nowhere else but the newspaper. However it was the newspapers that were the main contributors of the avalanche of data that swamped the original theme of research, making it necessary to refine my thesis to four industries, by offering the historical geographer the clearest window into the past.

There are other sources available to the modern researcher. The much-touted 'Internet access' as a research tool is basically pointless to an historical researcher. While there are literally thousands of academic papers online on almost every topic imaginable and form the basis of many research projects they are usually American in origin. When it comes to archival primary

documentation of the colonial period, especially for Tasmania, there is a definite lack of online material.

Family historians and the 'amateur historian' showed me that with apparent unlimited time the Internet could be of limited use. Some private or personal web pages and/or genealogical sites offered broad additional data and/or industrial information concerning an individual person. Some home pages give colonial lists of licenses for carts, hotels, and boats where a person has found material during family research and the person has put the information online on a private web page. In the same way some web addresses give lists of people who played a role in the history of Van Diemen's Land and can offer unknown information. This was the case with Simeon Lord and Wattle bark. However if I were not a member of the same society as the descendant of Simeon Lord then in all probability I would never have found the information on line. Unfortunately in my experience, on-line does not reach its potential for archival researchers and perhaps never will.

While some historical Australian journal publications of the early nineteenth century are available on line, they tend to be the well used editions. These are the easily accessible publications, rather than those obscure journals that may never be placed online. Thus electronic research is possibly encouraging a modern bias to form because of limitations of the source.

A fact of life for the historical geographer is that archival research in any medium is not about published material, no matter what the age. It is not about

the Registrar General's information, nor the Colonial Secretaries Office. It is about amassing data on a topic and subjectively retrieving what is valuable and essential to the topic.

1.4: The Transplanting of Values

Nothing in history occurs in isolation or without repercussions. The impact of global interactions and influences of the time are often overlooked when historical perceptions are considered. In his introduction Hartwell shows a poor understanding of the global conditions of the time as he asserts that the acquisition of Van Diemen's Land by the British makes no sense.⁵⁰ Flanagan incorporates smidgens of information concerning Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century; the dual revolutions, the French political revolution and the British industrial revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and it is discovered they are two sides of the same coin.⁵¹ By “unleashing the powers of production and forces of destruction” the unwitting result was Britain dominating the world economically, militarily, politically and intellectually by 1830.⁵² Therefore, Colonial Van Diemen's Land becoming a penal colony was in many ways a by-product of interaction between France and Britain.

The invasion, which led to the colonisation of Van Diemen's Land, is a direct result of the first Napoleonic War 1793-1802 and the resulting lull thereafter.

⁵⁰Hartwell, R., *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 1954.

⁵¹Flanagan, R., Wilderness and History, *Public History Review* 1. 1992. pp. 103-117.

⁵²Flanagan, R., Wilderness and History, *Public History Review* 1. 1992. p. 108.

The onset of peace and the temporary 'friendship' between the French and the British allowed the 1802 French scientific expedition led by Nicholas Baudin to visit the islands of the southern seal fisheries. Mistrust of French intentions saw Governor King send Lieutenant Bowen to stake the claim of Van Diemen's Land for England. With the resumption of war in 1803 Britain had the island to herself. Between 1812 and 1815 Britain was fighting both the French and the Americas, ultimately resulting in an economic crisis for raw materials of timber and skins. Some consider Van Diemen's Land offered a place where Britain could be rid of the overcrowded gaols and prison hulks in the Thames.⁵³ The pre 1830 influences on Van Diemen's Land was a compilation of British social conditions, Robespierre's terror of Paris and the revolution of society, entwining the French land power and the British sea power of the Napoleonic Wars.

Van Diemen's Land was rich in natural resources. As an island it offered the potential advantage of security for a prison colony. Ultimately, with convicts used as free government labour, combined with the toll from the war effort, the way was opened for the exportation of food, timber, leather and grain. Van Diemen's Land between 1804 and 1817 was therefore little more than a known port and prison farm.⁵⁴

⁵³Linge. G., *Industrial Awakening: a Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788-1890*, Australian National University Press, Canberra. 1979.

⁵⁴Linge. G., *Industrial Awakening: a Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788-1890*, Australian National University Press, Canberra. 1979.

Water transport was most efficient in the fledgling colony and Hartwell notes that for this reason all industry was close to the coast.⁵⁵ Land alienation in Van Diemen's Land differed from any other British colony. With two invasion points, the Derwent and Port Dalrymple as spearheads, settlement extended inland from two distinct and isolated points, rather than the single point of entry, as with Port Jackson, and the abandoned Port Philip, which was used for every other colonial invasion point of Australia. This dual spearhead was the result of the sealing industry in the north of the state and the penal colony in the south. By 1819 the middle and lower reaches of the Derwent River and the mouth of the Coal and Tamar Rivers were all settled. By 1823 six hundred and seventy eight square miles of land had been granted through the center of the island, and multiple industrial activities were underway. The alienated land is shown in map 1.⁵⁶

The titanic impact of settlement on the landscape of Van Diemen's Land in the forms of farms, towns, the public works of bridges, wharves and roads was a direct result of enforced convict labour epitomising the transplanted British culture. The Irish political exile John Mitchell wrote in his journal that “every sight and sound reminds me that I am in a small misshapen transported bastard England”.⁵⁷ Van Diemen's Lands prided itself in its Britishness and this was the main achievement from colonisation as the outpost became self sustaining

⁵⁵Hartwell, R., *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 1954.

⁵⁶Linge, G., *Industrial Awakening: a Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788-1890*, Australian National University Press, Canberra. 1979.

⁵⁷*The Citizen*, 20 May 1854, Serialised journal account of *Jail Journal, or 5 years in British Prisons* New York 1854, in Flanagan, R., *Wilderness and History, Public History Review*

By 1814, the ports of Hobart Town and Launceston had equal status to that of Sydney Town and Port Jackson in New South Wales with the export trade. Originally Hobart Town handled the majority of the shipping to and from Britain and serviced the ships working the southern fisheries. By 1828, four fifths of all colonial import/export trade went through Hobart Town. Even with the increase of commercial usage and the influx of colonists, very little of Van Diemen's Land had been alienated by 1830.

Originally Van Diemen's Land developed where: “whales and seals gamboling in the Van Diemen's Land seas invited capture” and as “a prison farm on subsistence basis to a self assertive colony with an agricultural and pastoral economy”.⁵⁸

For the first decades a lack of currency was a problem for trade in both Van Diemen's Land and to England, where economic problems and no ready money for making payment lay behind the introduction of “promissory notes”, which worked satisfactorily in England but caused problems in the antipodes. Even the establishment of a bank was a problem as some colonists were concerned that it would lead to the unwise creation of “accommodation paper” that would place “needy adventurer upon the footing of the respectable merchant”. This was despite the consensus that the banks would have a self-regulation mechanism via daily exchanges that would restrict the unwise creation of extra money.⁵⁹

Vol. 1. 1992. p. 109.

⁵⁸Hartwell, R., *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 1954. pp. 11-12.

⁵⁹*Independent*, 2 May 1831.

What was Van Diemen's Land like prior to 1830? It was not the frontier town or landscape of the Americas. Britain had learnt considerably from its first attempt at colonization, and had even learnt from the problems which beset Port Jackson. When it came to Hobart Town, it was to be a penal colony. So it was in theory, but whales, seals, timber, unlimited fertile land easily accessible for crops, combined with an apparent inexhaustible supply of fresh meat and fish saw industries emerge. Being considered an "uninhabited land" made the transportation of British culture a simple transition.⁶⁰ The labour source of the convict was inexhaustible and free, other than requiring the supply of bed, lodging and cloth.

But, what was Van Diemen's Land like? One very early civilian observation of the area of Hobart Town notes in 1805 that the Derwent:

is formed into numerous bays and coves and is large enough to anchor the entire navy of Great Britain. The shores rise gradually into hills covered with fine grass and noble trees. The hills and sides of Table Mount are covered with trees of incredible size. One tree which was hollow measured 14 feet 8 inches from side to side inside and 44 foot around and 160 feet to the first branch.

Thousands of flowering shrubs grow to a great size ... six to seven species of mimosa are flowering in August (winter). Animals like forest kangaroos weigh 150 to 200 pounds and the bush abounds with ground kangaroos and kangaroo rabbits.⁶¹

The contradiction of cultural expectations for sustenance between the Aboriginal plenty and the deprivations of the British invaders is recorded in Harris' letters of 1806, where he discussed starvation and famine prevailing the

⁶⁰The Tasmanian Aboriginal people according to many early publications of Robinson, Roth, Bonwick and Calder, in the notions of the time, were not considered as "human" only children of nature and the landscape untouched by the hand of man.

⁶¹Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p 66.

land because there has been no grain and no bread for two weeks. "There is no tea, sugar, coffee, soap, candles, oil, wine, spirits, beer, paper, cheese butter or money"⁶². Starvation consisted of no acceptable British produce, not a lack of edible food. By 1808, Harris had traveled to Launceston noting that it took 12 days the first time and 10 days six months later through the

finest country in the world. The whole road from one place to another being through the most fertile valleys and plains without a hill to cross. The centre of the island we found several very extensive fresh water lakes (one a hundred miles in circumference) and also some salt lakes which yield some fine white salt in immense quantities besides discovering several rivers ... The quantities of kangaroo, emu, and wild ducks we saw and killed were incredible.⁶³

The British never saw the connection between the Aboriginal grasslands and the survival of fauna. They saw farmland:

large tracts of land, perfectly free from timber or underwood, and covered with the most luxuriant herbage, are to be found in all directions ... millions of acres, which are capable of being instantly converted to all purposes of husbandry ... he only has to set fire to the grass, to prepare his land for the immediate reception of the ploughshare.⁶⁴

Plains were to be found all over the island, with other good areas of pasture, thinly interspersed with trees smaller in area than the extensive plains.⁶⁵

Everything was bigger and better in Van Diemen's Land where carrots were

⁶²H Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 85.

⁶³H Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 98.

⁶⁴Evans, G., *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Descriptions of Van Diemen's Land with Important Hints to Emigrants and Useful Information Respecting the Application for Grants of Land Together with a list of the Most Necessary Articles for a Person to Take Out*, London. 1822. p. 28.

⁶⁵Evans, G., *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with Important Hints to Emigrants and Useful Information Respecting the Application for Grants of Land Together with a list of the Most Necessary Articles for a Person to Take Out*, London. 1822. p. 26.

recorded as 18 inches long, 9-10 inches around the top, and Swedish turnips weighed 5 pound each.⁶⁶

The need to establish 'Britishness', as in an English landscape, was a compulsion for many settlers. Van Diemen's Land vegetation became the "victim of the anti-ecological approach where any understanding of the environment has been overlooked".⁶⁷ Flanagan notes that this is shown by the mass plantings of the European flora, "where respectable houses had flower gardens" and the introduction of rabbits, deer, cats and dogs and blackbirds. The records indicate that more than any other reason, it was ignorance and a fear of an unknown alien landscape that became was the motivation for change to a more familiar home-style landscape. Colonial scientists and artists "systematically set about altering" their Van Diemen's Land experience to fit "prevailing European concepts of order". This practice is "exemplified by the fact they planted native honeysuckle in rows and kept them well trimmed to create impervious hedges not surpassed by hawthorn and holly".⁶⁸

What was Van Diemen's Land like?

It is summed up in possibly the most tragic reference to Van Diemen's Land, that of Lieutenant Breton:

It is certainly a remarkable feature in the character of the quadrupeds, and in many of the birds of these colonies, that they can be so easily

⁶⁶Evans, G., *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with Important Hints to Emigrants and Useful Information Respecting the Application for Grants of Land Together with a list of the Most Necessary Articles for a Person to Take Out*, London. 1822. p. 94.

⁶⁷Flanagan, R., *Wilderness and History*, *Public History Review*, Vol. 1. 1992. pp. 103-117.

⁶⁸Flanagan, R., *Wilderness and History*, *Public History Review*, Vol. 1. 1992. p. 115.

tamed. In other countries, both time and attention are required to subdue the natural ferocity or wildness of the animals, while here it is done without trouble, and in a very short time. The kangaroo, wombat, and many others become reconciled to captivity in the course of a day or two, and will then follow a person like a dog. Even the native tiger and some of the animals called native cats, can be reclaimed.⁶⁹

Breton provides an insight into Trowernna (Van Diemen's Land) and an Aboriginal managed landscape that has eluded other writers.⁷⁰

The Aboriginal landscape and the British transformation of it to an acceptable Britishness via industrial endeavors, has not been previously considered in relation to the early period of modification. To the Aboriginal, the land was an extension of who they were and what they needed to maintain a continuing satisfying lifestyle. To the British, it was a natural landscape that offered unlimited raw materials to feed the trappings of their Britishness.

By using the constructs of the historical geographer as perceived by Moodie and Lehr, a distinctive flow of geographical ideas melded with historical data, ultimately developing into a theme that flowed forward from 1803; thus offering a very different view of the interface for the landscape change between Trowernna and Van Diemen's Land.⁷¹ Thus confirming Meinig's perspective of seeing, thinking and recognising the essential depth of geography in the past.⁷²

⁶⁹Breton, R., *Excursions in New South Wales Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land During the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833*, London. 1834. pp. 360-361.

⁷⁰It is important to reflect that the landscape and animals had been managed and sustained to the levels that were exploited by the Europeans. Animal husbandry cultivated by Aboriginal methods are usually ignored by researchers and historians.

⁷¹Moodie, D., and Lehr, J., Fact and Theory in Historical Geography, *Professional Geographer*, Vol. 28. 1976. pp. 132-135.

⁷²Meinig, D., The Historical Geography Imperative, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 79: part 1. 1989. pp. 79-87.

The loom of the historical geographer weaves a tapestry to portray the past, of the collision between two different cultures. The research demonstrated there was no common denominator to make any transition understandable to the British of the time, nor the historian of the future. The only words today that can be used to describe what occurred in the past are those recorded by the invader. The perception to be used in this thesis, shown in this long introduction, is of the three dimensional view of the historical geographer, time space and phenomena. It will offer a very different view on the “environmental impact” of British industry on the Aboriginal managed landscape.

CHAPTER 2

TIMBER

2.1 Introduction

Timber was the basis of the Aboriginal landscape as it was fundamental to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their cultural practices. The Aboriginal managed landscape of Van Diemen’s Land from 1642 offered visiting ships useful timber resources of firewood and wood for ships’ repairs, plus a variety of materials prior to the 1803 invasion. Later the timbered landscape provided for the needs of the British parties of Bowen, Collins and Paterson and those who joined the fledgling settlements. The trees became a basis of the visual sense of landscape for the colonists. Clearing land in 1803 and 1804 for ‘settlement’ provided timber for both survival and domestic uses. Timber usage was so diverse that separating its uses for needs, domestic usage and

commercial exploitation was difficult for the years after 1803. Uncontrolled and unmonitored harvesting of timber had occurred for the necessary repairs on all visiting ships, as well as the wood being utilised as fuel, especially for the sealers and whaling vessels with their try pots. For the next thirty years, as colonists took up land, inland away from the settlements and in isolated areas around the coast and accessible only from the sea, land clearing continued. Timber as wood for fuel dominated all industries in Van Diemen's Land for the first three decades. Despite coal being known as plentiful from November 1803, the freely available and cheap supplies of wood made mining and transport of coal an unnecessary expense.

Timber production was one of the few industries where government and private enterprise successfully competed, as both the government and free settlers used convict labour, with most convicts in early times being encouraged to work on their own free time for firewood and personal income. "Until the time of Governor Sorell, there was no secure night asylum for the convicts employed by the government, who were thus at liberty".⁷³ Descriptions of any industry need clear demarcation lines between private and government enterprise, but when both endeavors use the same labour force and the same raw material, an historical blurring occurs, making it difficult to separate out the extent of both government and private timber enterprises. It is obvious that timber harvesting and processing had a profound effect on the landscape.

⁷³ Bonwick, J., *Curious Facts of Colonial Days*, Sampson Low, Son & Marston, London. 1870. P. 266.

Contemporary accounts of the land prior to clearing, by surveyors, colonists, and government dispatches, offer an insight into the changes to Aboriginal landscape that are not recorded even by the earlier historians like John West, James Bonwick or the later nineteenth historian James Fenton. Distortions within Van Diemen's Land's history occur because modern writers have a tendency to view Van Diemen's Land from a global theme of British exploration and landscape change when they use modern terms such as environmental impacts, which homogenise geographical timelines out of historical context.

Tasman's 1642 account of "the Great Southland" landscape, together with those of expeditions of 1772 onwards, provide the initial written reference material of coastal Aboriginal landscape descriptions. Accounts from Baudin's 1802 visit left detailed landscape descriptions of coastal areas on Van Diemen's Land's east and northwest coasts with adjacent islands. Until 1825 the limited white population mainly exploited coastal areas, as sea transport was simple and cheap. Even the early colonists such as the Norfolk Islanders, who arrived in 1806 and settled at New Norfolk, Longford and Clarence Plains, used boats and ferries in areas accessible by water. Governor Arthur's arrival in 1824, his uncompromising restructuring of the colony, together with the increasing influx of convicts and free settlers, saw the end of the Aboriginal people having access to manage their open woodland landscape.

Timber products marked the colony as civilized. The social structure of the colony demanded an infrastructure comparable to "home" that was the England

they had left. People needed homes, barns, fences, boats, furniture and other timber articles. The timber industry, however, utilized a variety of species in various localities for the raw material. Van Diemen's Land had a diverse climate, aspect and soil conditions which governed the geographical spread of different tree species and landscape types.

It was contemporary accounts by eyewitnesses that placed most of the harvesting areas in their proper geographical locations and gave some indication of the times over which the timber operations were carried out. Trees used for timber were only viewed as trees, and their placement within the existing Aboriginal managed landscape was not a consideration, and documentation usually only comments on the potential market or construction uses for the timber. This was shown in Bligh's journal entry for 1787, where he wrote of trees and their building potential, mentioning "one measuring 29 feet in circumference", which was considered "a building tree".⁷⁴ The carpenter who was to use this material, however, claimed the same tree was "too heavy for masts and yards".⁷⁵ While Adventure Bay on Bruny Island grew trees unsuitable for naval usage, so did other areas. Lieutenant Governor Sorell wrote in 1820:

I do not think that the other woods of this country are very valuable for naval purposes. *Spars* do not appear to be found of large size, except of the Stringy Bark which is very heavy, unless in McQuarie Harbr., where spars of the largest size and finest pine, of a species different from the Huon, can be procured.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Mackaness, G., *Captain William Bligh's Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land*, Sydney, New South Wales. 1943

⁷⁵Mackaness, G., *Captain William Bligh's Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land*, Sydney, New South Wales. 1943

Very early the durability and unusual and useful aspects of Van Diemen's Land timber were recognised. In 1787 Bligh examined some of the old stumps cut down by Captain Cook's party in January 1777, finding shoots 20 to 30 feet high and 14 inches round. Bligh considered the trees were in a very healthy state, noting that one was 33 and a half feet in girth with its height proportional.⁷⁷ In 1792 Bligh was back, again wooding in the same place as in 1777. Interestingly, he did note that the wood from some trees was of a durable nature, since exposed marks carved by Furneaux in March 1773, were still visible 19 years later.⁷⁸

Use of the abundant raw materials was dependent on the types and densities of forests and woodlands prior to European exploitation. The reason Latin names did not appear to be commonly used in the early accounts of the timber landscape was because the records were written by ordinary people working at harvesting or utilizing the harvested timber. The numerous early records describing how the wood was used are by Superintendents of Convicts, convicts, surveyors and colonists, rarely by botanists. Specific varieties of trees were given capital letters such as Sassafras, Blue Gum, Black Wattle, as was found in the records of the times.

To the British, the Aboriginal managed landscape offered unlimited raw material. The British legal alienation of land in Van Diemen's Land was actually very limited until 1820, increasing during the 1820s, then in a much

⁷⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: A private letter from Lieutenant Governor Sorell to Mr R Skinner, 18 January 1820. p. 150.

⁷⁷Mackaness, G., *Captain William Bligh's Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land*, Sydney, New South Wales. 1943.

more extensive way beyond 1830. Few histories of Van Diemen's Land cover the broad activities of the existing European population prior to 1830, a year that arguably forms an historical boundary in the pattern of land redistribution by the British. Historians tend to use the blanket term "Van Diemen's Land", implying that the whole island had been occupied, rather than paying attention to the real situation, where a quite limited area was occupied as map 1 clearly shows. Very little of the overall landmass had become alienated land, had been impacted upon and even then only a narrow slice of the hinterland. Even map 9, compiled in 1846, indicated little variation from the alienated land shown in map 1.

The landscape considered in chapter 2 is only the part of the coast affected by the British timber activities. The timber industry records divided into one part that was government controlled with a labour force exclusively convict, and another operated by commercial timber merchants using assigned convict labour. Also included are some domestic aspects of the harvesting of timber in a landscape continuing to be maintained by the original Aboriginal owners.

2.2 The Aboriginal Landscape

The Aboriginal managed landscape can only be known from contemporary accounts, sketches and paintings recorded by those people who moved around the land, especially those surveying or clearing the land for 'settlement' or

⁷⁸Bligh's Log Books 1777 – 1787 - 1792, Mitchell Library New South Wales.

looking for suitable areas for expansion, or by those exploring for marketable resources (figure 2.1).

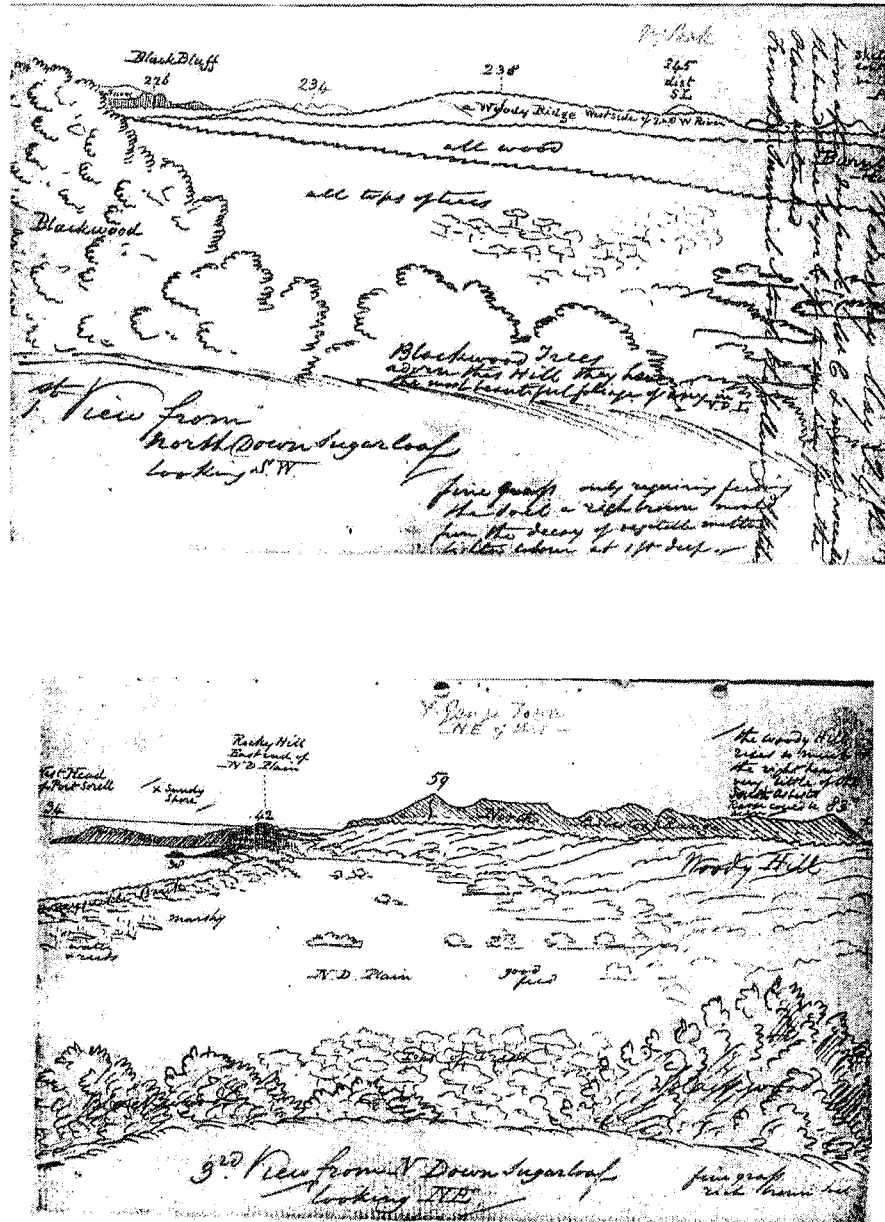


Figure 2.1: Two surveyor sketches of northern Van Diemen's Land in 1826 showing Aboriginal managed landscape prior to British modification.

Source: Field Journal of Henry Hellyer 1826.

When the *Heemskirk* and the *Zeehaen* reached the coast of the ‘Great South Land’, gales prevented any landing on the west or south coasts of Van Diemen's Land. Eventually improving weather allowed Tasman to land on 2 December 1642 at what is today called Blackman Bay on the east coast, to discover “what necessities (fresh water, refreshments, timber and the like) were available”.⁷⁹ Initially only the mate, the Pilot-major and the second mate went ashore reporting back to Tasman describing for the first time an Aboriginal landscape:

[the] point which, although high, was level land and covered with greenery (not planted, but growing naturally with God's will), plenty of timber, and a sloping watercourse.⁸⁰

They went on to describe how:

the land was mostly covered with trees, spaced well apart, so that one [may] pass everywhere and look far ahead, such that [one] could see any natives or wild beasts unhindered by thick scrub and undergrowth, which should allow exploration.

That in the interior, a large number of trees had been observed which had been burnt deep inside, above the roots, while the earth had become as hard as flint because of the continual effect of the fire.⁸¹

Two trees measured 12 to 15 feet in diameter, and from 60 to 65 feet high from ground to branches.⁸²

⁷⁹Tasman's journal was written by either Coomens his secretary or Visscher the navigator and if both wrote the daily entries then this could account for the modern confusion of the actual place recorded. In the journal the area is called the ‘inlet’ which is now Blackman Bay at Dunally on the maps Fredrick Hendrick Bay is actually written on land. Marion Bay is part of Tasman's Fredrick Hendrick Bay. Pers. Com. Lex Johnson 2001, Abel Tasman Society.

⁸⁰Duyker, E., Editor. *The Discovery of Tasmania Journal and Extracts for the Expedition of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 and 1772*, Translated by E. Hernen and M. Duyker, St. David's Park Publishers, Tasmania. 1992. p. 13.

⁸¹Duyker, E., Editor, *The Discovery of Tasmania Journal and Extracts for the Expedition of Abel Janszoon Tasman and Marc-Joseph Marion Dufresne 1642 and 1772*, Translated by E. Hernen and M. Duyker, St. David's Park Publishers, Tasmania. 1992. p.14.

⁸²Gell, J., (Reverend) On the First Discovery of Tasmania in the Months of November and December 1642, *The Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*, July 1845. pp. 324-325.



Figure 2.2: Adventure Bay in 1792 sketched by George Tobin

Source: BHP History of Bass Strait Series Number 3, Adventure Bay. Private Collection.

Many of these early visitors seeking new lands arrived with charts showing locations of safe anchorage, fresh water, food supplies, grass and wood.

Sometimes the journal accounts are confusing about aspects of an area.

Bligh's 1792 entry off Southwest Cape notes for Adventure Bay that it was "hilly and free from wood". At the same time Lieutenant Tobin comments "the country is hilly and richly clothed with wood" (see figure 2.2):

Some of these [blue gums] are of a great height and magnitude. One not far from the beach measured twenty-nine feet in circumference. These large trees are all of the same kind, and do not branch off till at more than half their height . . . The wood being tough and close-grained, in some degree like the American hickory, it might answer for building. For masts and yards the carpenter deemed it too heavy.⁸³

⁸³Mackaness, G., *Captain William Bligh's Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land*, Sydney, 1943, p. 24.

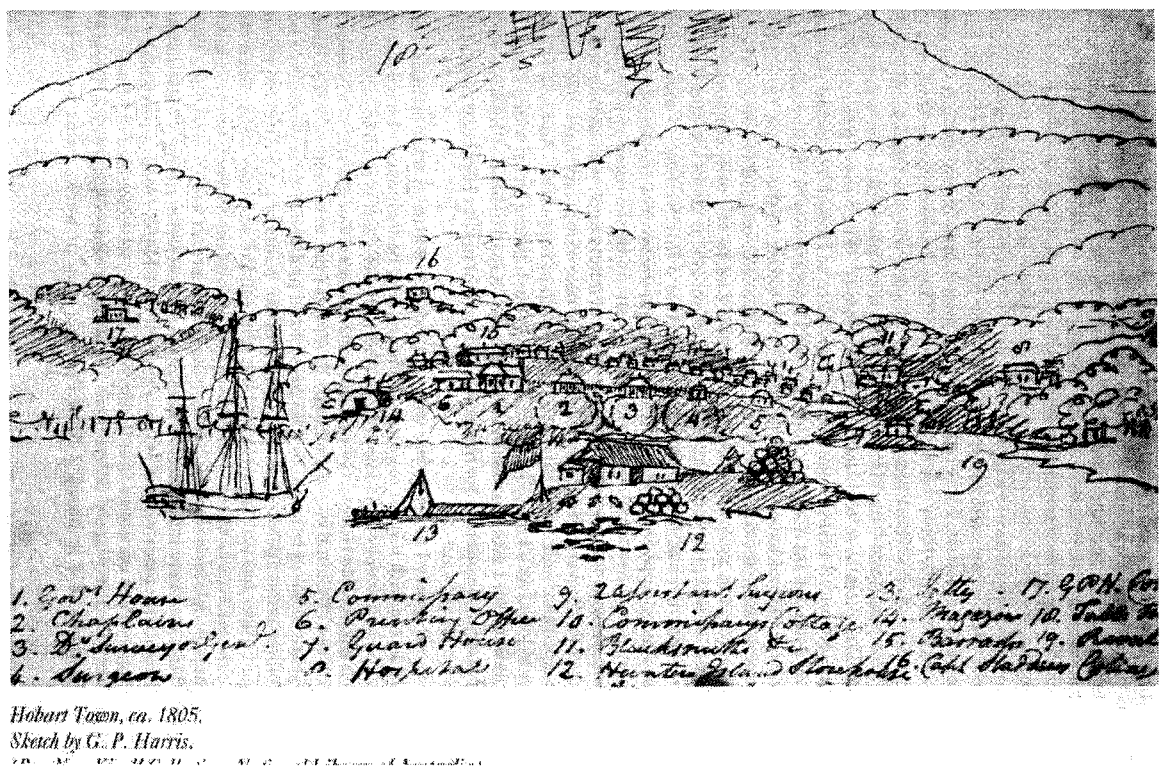


Figure 2.3: Sullivans Cove 1805.

Source: Freda Gray, from Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994.

Bligh's log notes possible uses for the trees, such as where a fir tree was described as having wood of deep mahogany colour; while snake wood, which has a kind of wavy grain running through it, would be good for veneering⁸⁴ After the 1803 invasion the records are more related to description of land clearing and immediate use of the wood.

Governor David Collins 1804 site for the Hobart Town, chosen with some influence for intended international whaling port facilities, had limited cleared

space, being a densely wooded area which was quickly cleared for settlement (figure 2.3).⁸⁵ William Collins, who recommended the Tamar as a site for settlement, described the eastern side of the lower Tamar as: “the timber in general is diminutive, although there are some large trees of the gum kind.”⁸⁶ From the north of the island Lieutenant Colonel Paterson, in November 1804, wrote to Governor King detailing the exploration of Ensign R.(probably Robert) Anderson and two soldiers who examined the area to the west of the Outer Cove Camp. Anderson described the trees as “lofty and apparently sound”.⁸⁷

In 1804, when writing about the Huon River, George Prideaux Harris, the Deputy Surveyor-General, offered a description of a “landscape created by God”, after passing a wooded island Harris named Chapman’s Island:

we ascended a very steep rocky hill in a direction for Adventure Bay. This was so thickly covered with immense fallen trees, large rocks, and thick brushwood, that after several hours’ fatigue we were compelled to return. The country that we saw here was similar to the banks of the Huon. On the highest part of the hills were very large tall trees of a species of *Birch Sasafras* and the Red Wood before mentioned.⁸⁸

In 1810 Lieutenant Oxley RN recorded that the country at the Derwent:

on the higher grounds is thickly cloathed with timber and some of the trees in the vallies are of immense magnitude; the largest trees are generally of the Gum and Stringy Bark species. ... an immense variety of flowering shrubs are found in every part of the country, and unlike those found on the Continent, perfume the air with their odor.⁸⁹

⁸⁴Mackaness, G., *Captain William Bligh’s Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemens Land*, Sydney, New South Wales. 1943. p. 24.

⁸⁵*Historical Records of New South Wales*, Vol. V: William Collins statement on the settlement at the Derwent. 4 August 1804. pp. 407-409.

⁸⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol.1: Report of the survey made by Mr William Collins. January 1804. p. 583.

⁸⁷*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 2 Vol. 3: Lieutenant Governor Paterson to Governor King . 26 November 1804. p. 611.

⁸⁸*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Deputy Surveyor-General Harris Report of Survey. 8 December 1804. p 296.

⁸⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol 1: J. Oxley, An Account of the Settlement at the Derwent 1810. p. 571.

In the north of the state conflicting descriptions occur with the trees growing on the banks of the Tamar River. Oxley considered other species in the area, such as the “Oak Trees or Beech Wood generally speaking are very diminutive and unfit for any useful purpose”. William Collins moved up river recording various locations on the western side of the Tamar River notes “the timber hereabouts is very large, of the gum and Stringy Bark kind” where “timber of all sizes and apparently good” quality and that the banks are “covered in large timber”.⁹⁰ In November 1804 Port Dalrymple at the mouth of the Tamar River was ‘settled’ (figure 2.4).

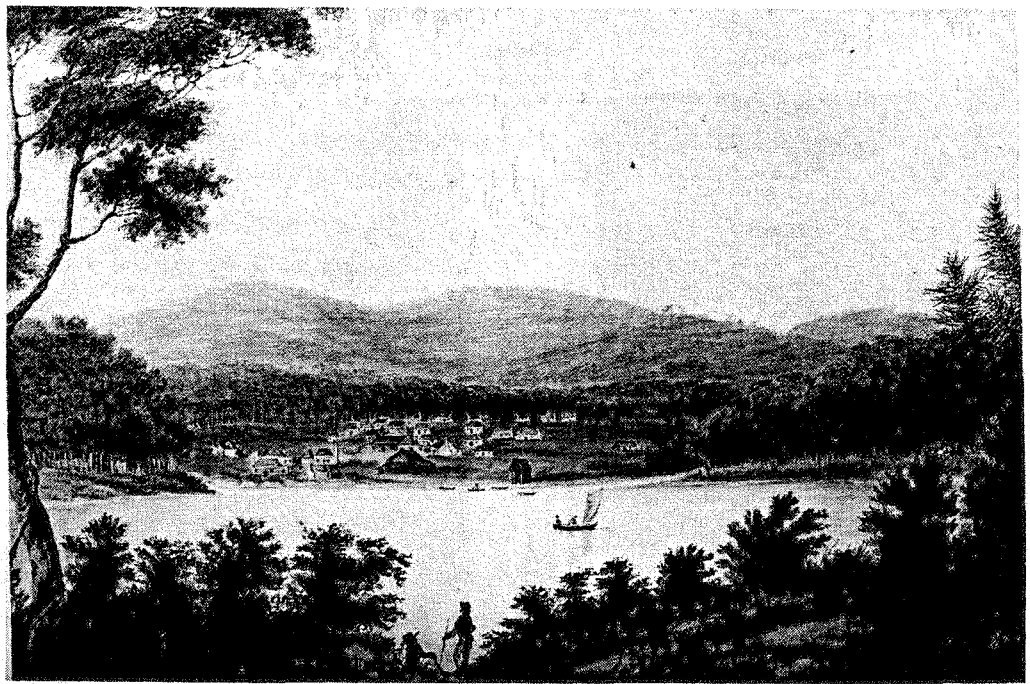


Figure 2.4: Port Dalrymple 1809.

Source: Freda Gray from Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994.

⁹⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol.1: Report of the survey made by Mr William Collins, January 1804. p. 583.

Oxley left an account about the Huon River in 1810, where he described quantities of Huon Pine a valuable timber of infinite importance to the settler:⁹¹

Vast trees of this curious wood have been discovered on the shores of an island at the entrance of the river, And from their situation must have been brought down in some violent flood; they had apparently laid there for years ... 7 feet in diameter ten feet from the root; And it s not unreasonable to conclude that the forest where they grow contains many even of superior size.⁹²

Sometimes a landscape description results from exploitation of a particular species:

The Cedar found here, Pencil Cedar ... is the only sort known in VDL. This is to be got in large quantities and in logs of great size near the banks of the River Huon, at about 30 or 40 miles from its entrance in Storm Bay passage. A large ship can go up 9 miles, beyond which the river has a succession of shallows, which only a small boat can pass, and the timber is rafted down.⁹³

By 1820, the area was still virtually untouched, with Huon Pine the only useful timber being collected from the lower Huon.

In his exploration for natural resources the boat voyage of Mr Hobbs gives interesting descriptive insights into the variations of an Aboriginal landscape.⁹⁴

In 1824 when Hobbs was at Esperance Bay, he recorded in his journal that some of the finest Stringy Barks ever seen could easily be brought down the

⁹¹*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol.1: J. Oxley, Accounts of the Settlement at the Derwent 1810. p. 571.

⁹²*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol.1: J. Oxley, Accounts of the Settlement at the Derwent 1810. p. 572.

⁹³*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 3: Governor Sorell to H R R Skinner. 18 January 1820. p. 149.

⁹⁴Hobbs, J., Mr J. Hobbs' Boat Voyage round Tasmania in 1824. *The Log of the Circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land by Captain James Kelly 1814-1815 and other accounts of early exploration of the West and North West Coast of Tasmania taken from Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers*, Government Printer. 1986. p. 19.

river by boats.⁹⁵ This was despite the fact that he described the riverbanks and countryside as being where:

the bush was so very thick, that small spaces, (whereon timber was not growing) so covered with water and marshes, that I found it impossible to proceed without a great loss of time. I traveled several miles under the foot of the mountains which are very high: during the whole of this time, consisting of the greatest part of a day, I never saw a blade of grass. Such are the beautiful plains and clear hills described by a settler. From Southport to Recherché Bay the country throughout is like that I have just mentioned, presenting an undesirable bareness.⁹⁶

Hobbs commented on 7th February that Esperance Bay was an excellent harbour:

Up the river, which enters the bay on the south-west side, are some of the finest stringy-bark trees I ever saw; they could be easily bought down by boat. The countryside is covered with most impenetrable scrub; ... From this place I proceeded to Southport went up river as far as the boats would go, four and a half miles; [walking westward towards the Huon River] the brush so very thick, the small spaces (whereon timber was not growing) so covered with water and rushes ... area of coarse herbage eg: button grass forms a plain which extends from Southport to Recherché Bay good for cattle ... 7,000 acres in extent good black soil improved with drainage. From Southport to Recherché Bay from the sea the land is completely barren.⁹⁷

It was a conundrum where Aboriginal managed land was described as being barren even though the 'bush is so very thick' he never saw a 'blade of grass'. Presumably grass made the land fertile in 1824 as it was then viewed as fertile land either for grazing or ploughing.

⁹⁵Hobbs, J., Mr J. Hobbs' Boat Voyage round Tasmania in 1824. *The Log of the Circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land by Captain James Kelly 1814-1815 and other accounts of early exploration of the West and North West Coast of Tasmania taken from Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers*, Government Printer. 1986. p. 19.

⁹⁶Hobbs, J., Surveyors field journal 1824. p. 152.

⁹⁷Hobbs, J., Mr J. Hobbs' Boat Voyage round Tasmania in 1824. *The Log of the Circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land by Captain James Kelly 1814-1815 and other accounts of early exploration of the West and North West Coast of Tasmania taken from Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers*, Government Printer. 1986.

P. 20. Part of the quote is taken from the footnote on the same page.

River frontage at Huonfernlands (today called Franklin) “was a tee tree swamp and impossible to land anywhere between Castle Forbes bay and South Port”, its only redeeming feature a few “redwood trees, called at Hobart Town the mahogany tree”.⁹⁸ Logging began in the area in 1829, with the first shipment leaving on the *Harcourt*, which took 200 tons of timber to London. The density of the bush forced a situation of accessibility only by boat, enforcing an isolation of the area that remained until the early 1850s.

On 28 March 1824 Hobbs described Van Diemen's Land's west-coast with Huon Pine forests on the plains between Pieman River to Mt Heemskirk as “the finest Huon Pine and Lightwood”. Near West Point on a river similar to the Pieman River, Hobbs noted very fine Stringy Bark and Lightwood near Mt Norfolk. One observation was that “lofty Gums and Stringy Bark grow well together”. The western side of Macquarie Harbour was aptly named Pine Cove. Governor Sorell remarked that Pencil Cedar was only known to grow at Macquarie Harbour, Port Davey. “Very thick groves of five or six different species of tree, from 40 to 60 feet high, the Huon Pines from two to two and a half feet or three feet in diameter”.⁹⁹ At the Huon River, Huon Pine was found only as “drift logs which are now believed to be brought around the Capes” by ocean currents.¹⁰⁰

With the land at Little Mussel Row Creek on Van Diemen's Land's north east “the trees are almost exclusively sheoak”, for Pipers River at

⁹⁸*Centenary of the Settlement of the Huon*, Huon Newspaper Co. Ltd., Tasmania. Thursday 17 December 1936.

⁹⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Examination of Lieutenant King, Co. No. 128. 27 January 1821. p. 507.

¹⁰⁰*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 3: Governor Sorell to H R R Skinner. 18 January 1820. p. 149.

the southern part of the Bay of Fires Hobbs describes heavy timber the smallest of which is 43 foot in diameter.¹⁰¹

Then on the 18 February 1824, Hobbs notes in his journal that on the river between South and West Capes the scrub was so close that it was impossible to walk on the land and impossible to enter with boats. Hobbs describes how he could only get the boat five or six miles up the river, because of swamps and extremely thick timber on each side. Logs from Port Davey River came from a forest, were carried down stream by the current and picked up as driftwood by colonial craft. It appeared as though the Huon Pine was a natural phenomenon and “it would be greatly desirable to know the real situation of this forest, lest the pine details what an Aboriginal forest actually looked like. In northern Tasmania at Emu Bay, Henry Hellyer recorded the only known reference, which actually should fail at Macquarie Harbour”.¹⁰² Huon Pine sold for one shilling to one and six pence per foot and could be provided by the government logging camp from Macquarie Harbour.¹⁰³

Perhaps the best, and possibly the only surviving geographical description of an Aboriginal landscape are those of the surveyor of the Van Diemen's Land Company, Henry Hellyer. While there are any variety of landscape accounts by early residents, there are only a few accounts describing in any detail a living Aboriginal managed forest. This area was one surveyed and recorded in the late

¹⁰¹Hobbs, J., Surveyors field journal. 1824. p. 152.

¹⁰²Hobbs, J., Mr J. Hobbs' Boat Voyage round Tasmania in 1824, *The Log of the Circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land by Captain James Kelly 1814-1815 and other accounts of early exploration of the West and North West Coast of Tasmania taken from Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers*. Government Printer. 1986. p 21.

¹⁰³*Tasmanian*, 4 March 1828.

"Copy of
Timber as
Reported"
to 11/1/1911

Copy of Timber on Reported to 11/1/1907	No. of Trees	Girth at Bull end	Contents Cubic feet
Upon Acre A	500	Less than 12	250
	992	12 to 2 1/2	2976
	716	2 1/2 to 3 1/2	6444
	56	3 1/2 to 6 1/2	1456
	20	6 1/2 to 12 1/2	1600
	12	12 1/2 to 21 1/2	4800
	4	30 1/2	9600
			27,126

File
File
102
and
regarding
the 301-

8 1/2 Fern Trees
14,336 Cubic feet Logs.

704	less than 12	352
880	12 to 2 ft	2640
148	2 ft to 3 ft	1332
56	3 ft to 6 ft	1456
32	6 ft to 12 ft	2560
28	12 ft to 21 ft	11200
8	21 ft to 30 ft	8000
8	30 ft	19200
		<hr/>
		46,740
112 Farm Trees		
34,360 Cubic feet Logs		

١٠٠

112 Firm Trees
34, 360 Cubic feet Logs

Thursday Augth 16th

a clear & beautiful Morning & not a cloud to be seen — Took some Flour and some Tea and went down to the Hut at the mouth of the Enne River with the 3 men (McDonald Jones & Higginson) McDonald & Higginson went out with the Dogs to look for a K I went out with Jones upon the Rocks fishing I soon became very cold after having walked so far and having no luck I told Jones to fill the Tinkelole with Muscles & Periwinkles and I returned to the Hut 1/2 mile from the Hut at 4 o'clock I saw the whale but lost

Figure 2.5 Trees in two acres.

Source: Hellyer, H., Journal of Operation in Opening a Road from Emu bay Towards Hampshire Hills, 1827.

1820s, and which was not systematically logged until the 1880s (figure 2.5 & 2.5a).¹⁰⁴

1 st acre	
500 trees under 12'' in girth	
922	1-2'
716	2-3'
56	3-6'
20	6-12'
12	13-21'
4	30'
84	fern trees
Total number of trees for the acre 2,384	
2nd acre	
704 trees under 12'' in girth	
880	1-2'
149	2-3'
56	3-6'
32	6-12'
28	12-21'
8	21-30'
8	30' and upwards
112	tree ferns
Total number of trees for the acre 1,976	

Figure 2.5a: Trees per acre.

Source: Hellyer, H., Journal of Operation in Opening a Road from Emu bay Towards Hampshire Hills, 1827.

His survey was the only account that included measurements and density of trees growing on two separate acres of forest in 1829.¹⁰⁵ The two sites of one acre each, recorded by Hellyer, allowed for a window to the past to be opened

¹⁰⁴Emu Bay is where today's Burnie stands on the geographical location of the Emu Bay settlement of the nineteenth century where the area was once described as both open woodland and a closed forest.

¹⁰⁵Hellyer, H., Journal of Operation in Opening a Road from Emu Bay Towards Hampshire Hills, 1827.

so that people would be able to glimpse in the future what parts of the Aboriginal landscape were like as the invading British saw them.¹⁰⁶

While Hellyer gave few details of the variation in species, he does note that some species of trees in the Emu Bay area were Sassafras that measured 6 foot around and 140 foot tall, and Myrtle measuring 32 foot high and 45 foot around. He also noted Myrtle had large fungal growths on the trunks. Tree Ferns had up to 32 old fronds and 26 new fronds that were nine foot long: usually the ferns had eight new and four old fronds exclusive of dead ones.¹⁰⁷

From his detailed journal entries we are given clear ideas of the density of timber in those acre plots and the northwest forest in general.

In another journal account, Hellyer recorded that the Hampshire Hills and Gooderich Plains, which are inland from Emu Bay, offered a different type of forest landscape where the trees varied between 10 to 30 trees per acre. Stringy barks were 70 to 100 feet high and between 20 and 30 feet around. At the Epping Forest area, Hellyer notes that there were Stringy Barks. His journal also records a variation of forest species in the adjacent forest, with the forest before Epping Forest (possibly north or north west of it) consisting of white and common gums.¹⁰⁸ Today the majority of this area has been cleared, leaving little indication that such a dense forest landscape ever existed.

¹⁰⁶Hellyer, H., *Journal of Operation in Opening a Road from Emu Bay Towards Hampshire Hills*, 1827.

¹⁰⁷Hellyer in Backhouse, G., *A Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843.

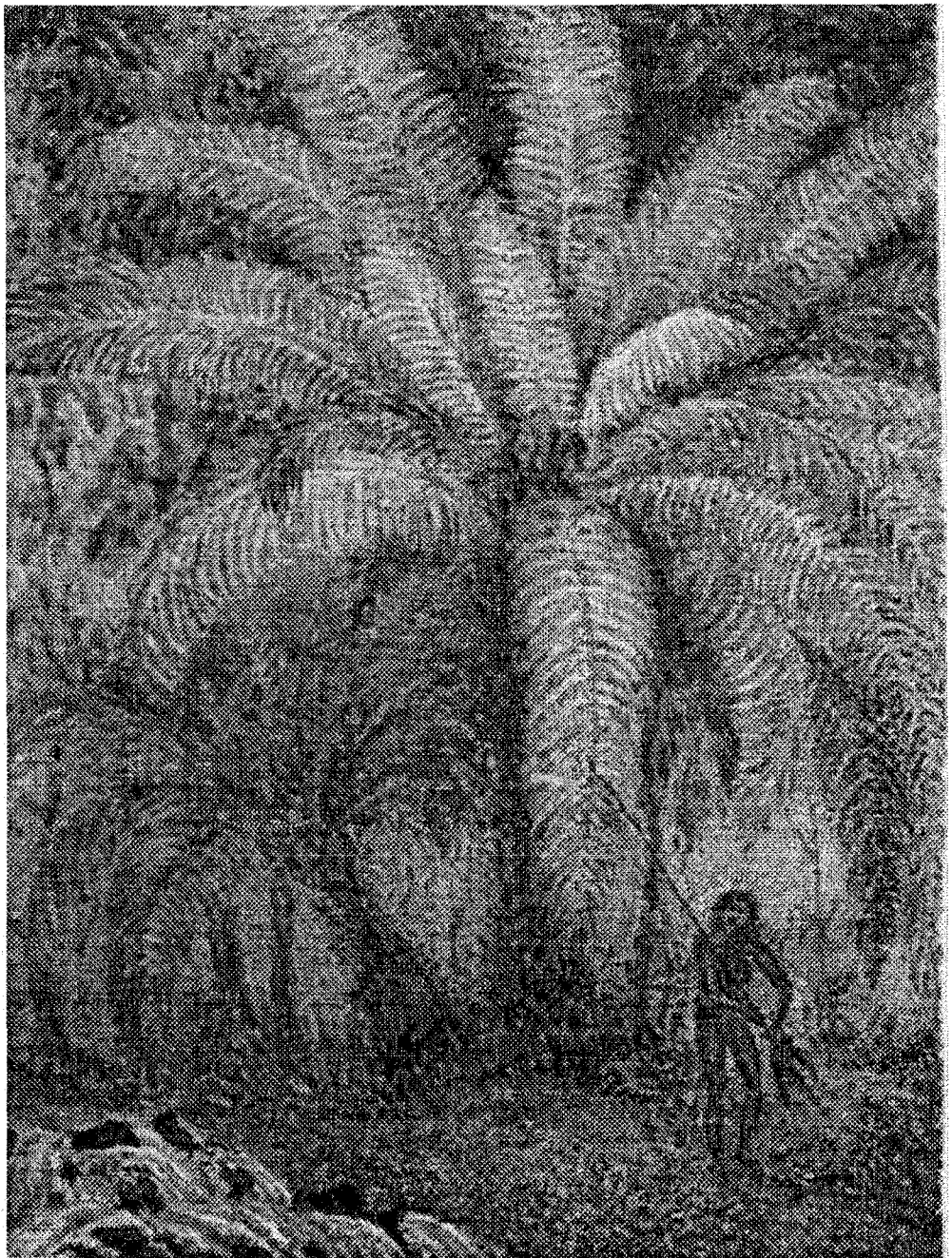


Figure 2.6: Fern valley

Source: State Library of Tasmania library images. Mary Allport lithograph

¹⁰⁸Hellyer in Backhouse , G., *A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843.

There is a considerable literature on the British naval needs and wants from the forested land. However, an aspect often ignored by historians is that the forested landscape was as an integral part of Aboriginal cultural needs, hence the destruction of the forests meant destruction of the framework of Aboriginal culture. The Tree Fern is one example of a plant harvested annually as a major seasonal food source. The Aboriginal harvesting methods did little damage to the continuation of the source of supply, as witnessed by the number recorded even though harvesting Tree Fern killed the plant.¹⁰⁹ It was the size of the fern, which offered raw material in plenty to the British. Most Tree Ferns grew to approximately 10 feet in height and five foot around their stems, with the leaf fronds in excess of 11 feet (figure 2.6).

The Macquarie Harbour variety grew 25 to 30 feet high, as stout as a man's body with fronds greater than 13 feet long.¹¹⁰ The fronds were stripped to the mid veins which were used as wicker and some were made into birdcages.

Even the black substance that formed part of the stem was used for reeding and for inlay that was superior to ebony, the uses for which were not specified. The Black Boy or Grass Tree, some parts of which were also eaten by the Aboriginals, was harvested to oblivion for the resin which was made into varnish. By destroying the Tree Fern and Black Boy forests, integral parts of the Aboriginal landscape used for food were permanently diminished or lost.

Government surveyors and free settlers saw the Aboriginal landscape very differently from those entrepreneurs considering the sorts of resources available

¹⁰⁹The use of the Tree Fern and the Black Boy are part of the Lia Poot ah oral traditions.

for developing industries. Louisa Meredith described the East Coast near Swansea as having “ponderous trees probably a 9 or 8 foot girth”.¹¹¹ She found the vegetation of Van Diemen's Land part of a landscape that often depressed her because of the density of the trees. Much of the forest was originally massive “trees that block out the sun making it dull even in bright sunshine”. While figure 2.7 is not Louisa Merideth’s house, its surrounds are probably the same as Louisa experienced and to some one from England’s treeless open paddocks the dense tree landscape would have been intimidating.

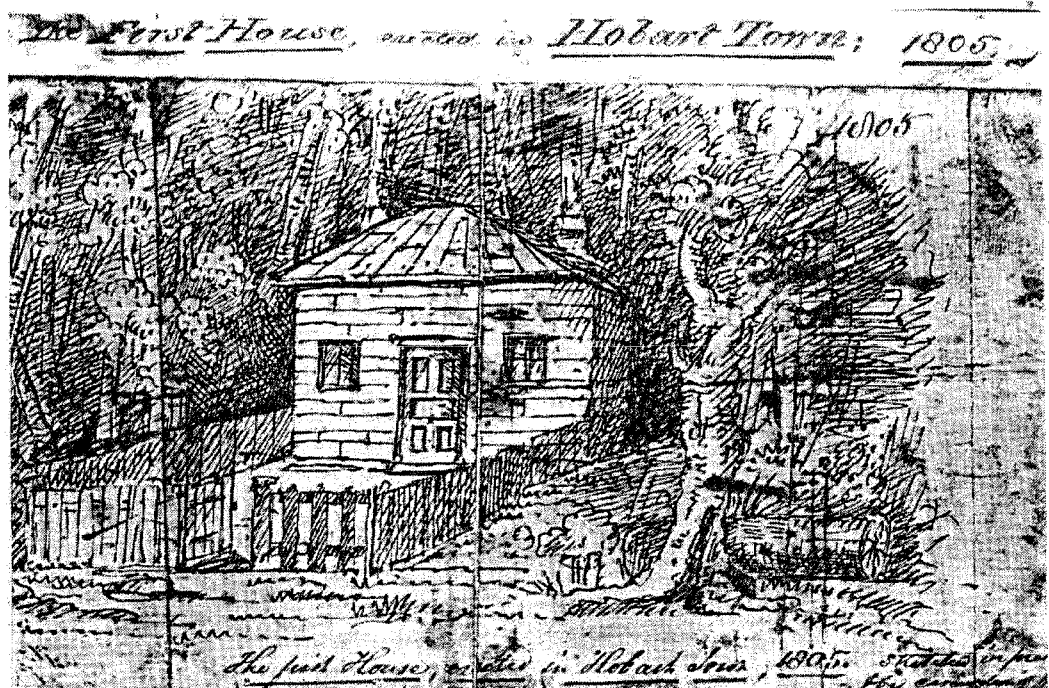


Figure 2.7: Edward Lord’s house in 1805.

Source: Freda Gray from Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994.

¹¹⁰ Backhouse, G., *Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843.

¹¹¹ Meredith, L., Journal account from 1841 in Thomas, B., *Forests to Field and Fencing the field, Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 47: No. 2 June 2000. p. 76.

Paradoxically, Meredith sometimes complained that although in England great emphasis was placed in the planting of groves and woods, in the colonies landowners insisted upon totally destroying every native tree and shrub, giving a most bare appearance.¹¹² On the 15 June 1816 the editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* described Van Diemen's Land as having “a grand picturesque and romantic scenery”.

A later historian noted that forests and blood go together in Tasmanian.

The deforested areas not only are blood soaked from the murdered Aborigines but: the grain of this beautiful timber [Huon Pine] now adorning the drawing room chambers of our Australian colonies may be said to be marked with tears of blood from the poor convict woodcutter.¹¹³

2.3 Convict Timber Harvesting

In the early stages of the colony there was such a surplus of human energy in the form of convicts that mechanised processes were unnecessary. The employment of convicts as labour gangs in the harvesting of forest products was an industry in itself. Dargavel describes what he calls a “prison farm mode of timber production”.¹¹⁴ At a time when there were no bullocks or draught horses, in Van Diemen's Land, convicts were the only source of power for the early decades of settlement. The social groupings, associations and socialisation of people in the colonial settlements during the first two decades

¹¹²Morgan, S., *Land Settlement in Early Tasmanian: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1992. p. 93.

¹¹³Bonwick, J., *The Bushrangers: illustrating the early days of Van Diemen's Land*, Melbourne. 1856. P. 21.

was very different from the community organisation that developed during the third decade settlement. In 1824 Governor Arthur enforced a formalisation of the lines between convicts, emancipists and settlers. In the first decades of settlement the majority of convicts were employed by both the government and free enterprise, under the reigns of Governors Collins, Davey and Sorell, primarily as indentured servants, encouraged to work for themselves in their free time. Governor Arthur's policies led to greater use of chain gangs, hard labour and assigned indoor and outdoor convict servants or indentured free settlers.

Exploration and at "Settlement":

According to most historical accounts, in September 1803 Lieutenant Bowen ordered the first sawpit to be dug in Van Diemen's Land at Risdon Cove, where he "set the sawyers to work" to produce timber for buildings and others to collect wood for fuel.¹¹⁵ However, the first sawpit was probably that mentioned in Bligh's journal, when his men dug a sawpit in 1788 to cut planks to repair the *Bounty*.¹¹⁶ There are other journal accounts in which timber harvesting was discussed for boat building and boat and ship repairs, but Bligh's is the only account that records the use of such an early sawpit. It is possible that other

¹¹⁴Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹¹⁵ *Historical Records of Australia*, Journal kept on HM brig *Lady Nelson*. Series 3 Vol. 1: 1803 – 1812. p.127.

¹¹⁶Graham, R., *Adventure Bay National Estate Study*, Prepared for the Municipality of Bruny. September. 1988.

ships arriving in Van Diemen's Land waters, the ship's crews built temporary sawpits to cut the timber to the required sizes.

Sometimes the records offer confusing or even conflicting historical accounts. The *Historical Records of Australia* list the first large-scale sawpit or pits, as that erected by Governor Collins in November 1804. Known as Kings Pits, they were set up approximately 5 miles from the centre of Hobart Town at the confluence of the Guy Fawkes and Wellington Rivulets, 2,000 feet up Mt Wellington, later called Cascades.¹¹⁷ Considering the density of the trees in the Aboriginal landscape as recorded by Harris in 1804 for Sullivans Cove (figure.2.8), an obvious question to ponder was the reason for Collins to have sawpits set up five miles out of town, especially when there were pits adjacent to the Wellington Bridge in the middle of town.



Figure 2.8 Sullivans Cove 1804.

Source: Freda Gray from Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994.

¹¹⁷*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, November 10 1804.

Another confusing account in the *Historical Records of Australia* related to Lieut. Gov. Collins' declaration of the Sullivans Cove area as Hobart Town, after which he immediately set convicts to work clearing the land so that tents could be pitched. Surely sawpits would have been used after clearing the land for cutting the timber to construct dwellings and other necessary structures. Protocol appears to demand that the military and convicts were housed in separately defined areas away from free settlers, many of whom were settled in Stainforth Cove and New Town Bay, several miles upriver from 'the Camp'.¹¹⁸ Many free settler family heads were immediately given land grants; hence, in the vicinity of Hobart Town, large areas of the dense forests were made 'private land' as opposed to Crown land (figure 2.3). It can be argued that the conundrum of the locations of the Kings Pits and other accounts of sawpits recorded in different forested areas may be clarified in the future. In the same year a proclamation was issued forbidding the felling of timber in the neighbourhood of the Hobart Town stream without Collins' permission.

The Moulton map (map 2), shows the overlay of later Hobart Town, while map 3 shows the intended settlement as drawn up by Meehan. Both maps clearly show the positions of dwellings. The local trees were considered necessary raw materials for construction of the settler's houses, other buildings, necessary furniture and firewood.

¹¹⁸The early maps of the settlements show that military and convicts and free settlers were allocated separate areas a considerable distance apart, indicating a protocol.

In 1804 the British population was 433 persons. The July 1804 quarterly records for the employment of prisoners shows a total of 52 people assigned as sawyers, timber measurer, carpenters and labourers.¹¹⁹ Another 8 convicts were associated with forges, and 5 were listed as working in lime burning and producing charcoal. The only nailor (the person who could make nails) in the colony at this time was John Pearsall, who was assigned to William Nicholls, Supervisor of Carpenters. The location of their carpentry and blacksmiths shops shown on map 3, indicates a central yard for stacking the freshly sawn planks to be used for such purposes as house building, fencing, outbuildings, farms, stores houses and so forth.¹²⁰ The labour arrangements for the sawpits show the division of free settlers and convicts in meeting the domestic needs and the commercialisation of the timber resources, both of which were convict labour driven, the labour arrangements are unclear. Another sawpit five miles away would have stretched the very limited convict labour necessary to clear the land.

Every aspect of the timber industry was labour intensive. Moving the logged trees manually was known to be very hard work; felling the trees was apparently a much easier and more skilled occupation:

It took four men twenty days to fall five hundred trees. ... They dig the roots up to one foot below the level of the ground.¹²¹ ... the usual way

¹¹⁹Schaffer, I., Editor. *Land Musters, Stock Returns and Lists Van Diemen's Land 1803-1822*. St. David's Park Publishing, 1991, p 30.

¹²⁰Gray, F., Editor, *We Shall do Well There: the story of William Nicholls and his family in Victoria and Van Diemen's Land for two hundred years 1803/4-2003/4*. Privately published 2003. The Supervisor of carpenters was a free settler, William Nicholls and the blacksmith nailor, convict John Pearsall, both of whom are my great, great, great grandfathers in my father's British ancestry.

¹²¹Thomas, B., Forests to Field and Fencing the field, *Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 47: No. 2. June 2000. p 75.

severed from its main supports by a great trench being dug round the foot of the tree and the roots chopped through.¹²²

The rough timber was either dragged onto the timber carriages by a gang of convicts, presumably from the Kings Pits, transported by a rough cart to the Hobart Town timber yard near Wellington Bridge or walked by the convicts to where it could be dealt with (see figure 2.9).¹²³



Figure 2.9: A typical convict logging camp with permanent huts circa 1830.

Source: Warwick Risby timber historian, Risby and Sons.

¹²²Thomas, B., Forests to Field and Fencing the field. *Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 47: No. 2. June 2000. p. 76.

¹²³It is possible that each of the saw pits were called the Kings Pits and the name has remained associated with the last and furthestmost pit.

Timber was sawn into planks, then re-sawn into various dimensions and racked until needed.¹²⁴ The level of production from the sawpits was controlled by the availability of sawyers. Lieutenant Governor Collins, in writing about his loss of artificers and mechanics, strongly implied that the loss of carpenters and sawyers made clear that:

I have sustained a great loss in this useful class of people by desertions, which it was impossible to prevent, by deaths, and by many having become free through having served their terms of transportation.¹²⁵

Timber production was finely balanced between efficiency, profitability for the free men involved and the constraints of maintaining convict order, discipline and punishment.¹²⁶ Convict timber mills were a later technological development.

From the settlement of Port Dalrymple in northern Van Diemen's Land, Lieutenant Colonel Paterson wrote to Governor King on 8 January 1805, concerning the different timbers that were suitable for various purposes. Such timber could be rafted down from Upper Island to Outer Cove, continuing on flat-bottomed boats to Green Island where the timber could be put aboard other vessels without assistance other than the common crane (figure 2.12).

Lieutenant Colonel Paterson assigned three soldiers to work as carpenters to put up temporary quarters at York Town across the river from Middle Arm. The trees on better than 40 acres (2 runs) had been cut down.¹²⁷

¹²⁴Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹²⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Governor Collins to Lord Castlereagh, 20 April 1808. p. 400.

¹²⁶Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹²⁷*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Patterson to Governor King, 8 January 1805.

On the 9th inst. (Feb'y), I discovered the Sassafras (as it is called) growing in considerable quantities and fit for many purposes. Indeed, should I find in abundance it will be [the best] for house building and boats for any yet found here.¹²⁸

How much timber constituted a “considerable quantity” was not made clear when Paterson concluded that he needed to find Sassafras “in abundance” for it to be of any use “for house-building and boats”, indicating different proportions of timber species growing in the landscape in the north. There was no mention of sawpits in the Port Dalrymple area in the first years. Though they were likely to have been there, perhaps they were too commonplace to be worthy of mention.

While the exclamations about enormous timbers were being gossiped about in the southern parts of the new colony at Port Dalrymple, Collins’ official papers recorded that “timber was of a diminutive size except for some gums”.¹²⁹

Conflicting descriptions are found showing that trees varied in size depending on the soil. At Egg Island near Swan Point, the timber was described as large and good. This contradicted T Clark’s report of 1804 that described Dalrymple River timber as oak, poor gum, 2 species of box, honeysuckle smaller than at Port Jackson, and the southwestern shore of the western arm as not having very good large timber.¹³⁰

¹²⁸*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Patterson to Governor King, 21 February, 1805. p. 631.

¹²⁹*Historical Record of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 1: Settlement of Northern Tasmania official papers made by Collins.

¹³⁰*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 1: Settlement of northern Tasmania from 1804 – 1812.

However the larger timber must have been there as the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* on the 29 March 1817 shows that not all trees were small in size:

timber stripped from Mt Stewart at Port Dalrymple is of a prodigious size. Some trees felled when clearing for the signal station measured 60 foot in diameter.¹³¹

It is possible that the tree was 60 foot in circumference. The early timber measurements rarely use the word circumference and this leads to modern confusion with sizing.

It was in the south of the colony that the majority of the timber was harvested, owing to better river access and safe harbours to load the ships. As the supply of trees close to the Hobart Town became exhausted, only the South West Passage (D'Entrecasteaux Channel) area, south of Sullivan's Cove, offered a convenient and inexhaustible supply of 'good trees' close to the settlement.¹³² O'May noted that the first settlements in the Channel area were the convict stations for the pitsawing:

where hundreds of convicts were employed felling the giant blue-gum and stringy-bark trees, which by pitsawing allowed them to be converted into marketable timber.¹³³

The cut timber was racked in yards on the coast, at places that were suitable for loading vessels, which then barged the timber to Hobart Town. Often temporary jetties were built, able to take boats up to a draft of twelve feet. These jetties were usually taken apart and reassembled in new locations, an example of careful use of a material. There were also government contracts

¹³¹*The Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 29 March 1817.

¹³²Both names are used for the same stretch of water in the early documents.

offering a set price of 5 shillings per 100 feet for the timber cut by convicts or free people in their own time, which enabled men to earn money for their own needs. As the sawyers were generally considered rough, tough men, independent of the law, attempts to stop any pilfering of the cut timber, was ensured by each timber trader being issued with a license.¹³⁴

The amount of timber harvested was considerable. In the year 1828 alone, the following was produced from Birches Bay:

371,947 feet of timber

25,000 shingles

48 split posts

800 split spokes

plus the private cuts of 321,000 shingles and 134,418 feet of timber.

Palings were five to six feet long and used in the building of houses, “stacked in bundles of ten to form a flat”. It was a standard measurement for ten flats to make a ‘stack’ representing 1,000 palings. Split palings have a longer life than sawn timber, as sawing tears the cell walls and are then more likely to trap fungal spores and moisture, which in turn hastens decay of the timber. Shingle splitters made 633 shingles per week or the same quantity of laths, with sawyers cutting 450 feet of Stringy Bark or 500 feet of softer wood.¹³⁵ While some of the Gum and Blackwood was split for staves used in the making of casks and barrels, specialised stave splitters had established themselves all along the Channel area. Shingle splitters worked about three miles from Hobart Town

¹³³O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printers. (circa 1959) p. 24.

¹³⁴Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay. A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992.

and when they had made about 3,000 shingles, a cart was sent and they were transported to the lumberyard. Except for the shingle splitters, all other convict timber workers had an overseer.¹³⁶

With so much timber available for harvesting production was limited by the ability of the labourers. Progress encouraged economical turnover and new inventions were sent from England, as shown in an account reported in the local press of a new sawing machine that could cut shingles. The straightness of the grain of Stringy Bark would have been an additional bonus when mechanically cutting shingles. Good shingles of Stringy Bark and Peppermint timber split in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel were sold at 10 shillings per thousand.

Considerable quantities were sent to the Isle of France.¹³⁷

North West Bay

The first government sawing station on the shores of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel was set up at Northwest Bay 32 miles by sea from Hobart Town in 1820, where according to Dargavel it consisted of:

an emancipist overseer, 7 labourers 6 - 8 pairs of sawyers. The logs were almost certainly dragged manually to the saw pits and the timbers carried on human backs to the beach¹³⁸

¹³⁵*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 3: Examination of Mr John Lakeland Assistant Inspector of Public Works in Hobart Town, 23 March 1820. p. 329.

¹³⁶*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 3: C. No. 35 Examination of Mr John Lakeland Assistant Inspector of Public Works in Hobart Town, 23 March 1820. pp. 328-331.

¹³⁷*Hobart Town Courier*, 28 February 1829.

¹³⁸Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988. p. 9.

Gradually the convict sawyers moved their pits down the North West Bay coastline towards the mouth of the Huon River.

The area Peppermint Bay, now called Woodbridge, was given its name from the Black Peppermint Gum tree because it was fancied that the tree “resembled an almond tree”, which was a very odd comment.¹³⁹ It is unfortunate that the area given its name for the enormous number of trees today has almost none surviving in the area. The Peppermint Gum was resistant to rot and particularly sought after for fence post and railings as well as shingles. The number of Peppermint Gums felled must have been staggering, especially if the account of “one dozen men split 2,000 palings a week for two years” is accurate.¹⁴⁰ This gang also produced posts, rails and shingles during the same two year period. However, by 1826 the main government sawmill was moved to Birches Bay, 16 kilometres further south than Peppermint Bay, employing 16 men (map 5).

Peppermint Bay was set up as a Probation Station to solve the problem of:

convicts sent to Van Diemen's Land proved a drain on the public purse and the probation system represented a means whereby the convict system earned some income, thus defraying expenses.¹⁴¹

Over the following years several hundred convicts were employed in the area felling the giant Blue Gums and Stringy Barks, and converting them into marketable timber.

¹³⁹Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay, A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992.

¹⁴⁰Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay, A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992. p. 13.

On average, 40-60 men at a time were engaged in cutting and splitting timber at Birches Bay. The site employed as cutting and timber splitters, 3 boatmen, 12 sawyers, 1 file cutter, 1 blacksmith, 1 tailor, 1 shoemaker, 1 saw sharpener, 20 labourers, as well as 6 signal men being based there. Between 1824 and 1826, Gunn was in charge and the men worked in groups of between 2 and 34 pairs to each sawpit.¹⁴² These solidly constructed sawpits were initially assembled for a central site. Each pit was erected with considerable labour, and consisted of a dugout approximately six feet deep and twenty feet long, with side strops, skids and uprights made from heavy timber.¹⁴³ For each pit:

strong lengths of timber were placed across the pit, and the logs were rolled on and lined up. The sawyer entered the pit while his mate remained on top of the log. The mate passed the end of the saw down to the man in the pit, and the laborious work of cutting the log into lengths began. When the first "cross bearer" was reached another was placed behind the saw, and the first one was withdrawn. The man in the pit got all the saw-dust over him, and usually fixed a bag over his head to keep it out of his eyes and nostrils.¹⁴⁴

It took considerable energy to roll the logs by human effort to the pits. The log was rolled longitudinally over: a dugout on wooden cross pieces. Sawing lines were drawn along the log. Then the sawing commenced with the man in the sawpit making the cut and the man above pulling up the saw and guiding the cut.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay, A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992. p. 8.

¹⁴²Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay, A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires* Self Published. 1992. p. 8.

¹⁴³Presumably this description is the same as what would have been the Kings Pits.

¹⁴⁴O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printers. (circa 1959). p. 26.

¹⁴⁵Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay. A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992. p. 8.

River a good space from deep Ravines and gullies to interfere as little as possible with our work — how unfortunate it is that we are now arrived at that part of the Forest where we can make good progress and are obliged to stop for want of meat and other articles as I expect we shall for there appears to be no alternative but for me to send my Boat as once to Lunenburg.

The Eof mild and pleasant I think just my (I have proceeded a few miles this afternoon

We have now completed the Road to a mile beyond our present Camp as far as a remarkably large Stringybark Tree measuring upwards of 60 feet in circumference at 4 feet above the ground it stands on the left hand side of the road

Saturday Aug 11

Cloudy morning mild air the wind appears to come from SE and we think the whole Boat must arrive to night

Went out with all the Roadmen and kept them hard at work all day we this day made upwards of 300 yds beyond the 60 feet tree mentioned above, had some enormous logs to roll out of the way I found the Cautious Dog a great assistance in taking the weight off the shoulders of those who use the barpoles



The whole of our ground to day has been a gentle undulity we distinctly heard the roar of the Sea while the Easterly wind brought far into the Forest

We left off in a complete Grove of Fern Trees they appear like those trimmed evergreens which thereby have grown so close as to be impervious to the light and on their tops appear forth magnificent leaves resembling ostrich feathers dyed green or brown (if decayed) caught one of those curious spiders with claws which I brought to the Forest to preserve if possible — found Pepper Trees on the Hill we are now ascending
Met Eng — it rains every day now

Figure 2.10: Moving a log with the use of poles
Source: Hellyer's Journal August 1828

With the rapid clearance of locally accessible timber:

it became necessary to open a road eight to ten feet wide to allow access for timber further distant. This timber had to be either rolled down skids or car.to get to the pit. Carrying meant using a team of pairs of men, each pair manning a short pole which was put under the log. Upon command the team, all facing the direction of the lift, would lift the log onto these poles and carry it to the pit.¹⁴⁶

Moving the large logs is shown in figure 2.10. A green log, six feet in diameter, according to Dargavel, weighed approximately three ton, per yard? (Dargavel quotes per linear metre). With “six trees occupying the average sawyer pair for a month. A good average pair would saw 600 feet in a day”. Dargavel notes that this system proved inefficient, as all the timber around the mill settlement was soon gone.¹⁴⁷ A different method used a system of temporary pits constructed from lighter material, with the timber being brought to yards for the construction of temporary jetties nearer the beach. This was still a considerable task as the timber had to be carried for a mile, and bullocks were not introduced into the timber industry until 1828.¹⁴⁸ Carrying the timber to the sawpits was a process where the timber was ‘walked’ to its destination. Sixty to 70 men then carried the logged tree on their shoulders, presenting the appearance of a giant caterpillar, as they swayed to and fro beneath the weight (figure 2.11). Unequal distribution of load was a common feature, due to some of the convicts supporting the weight of as little as 40 pounds, while others carried as much as 200 pounds on their shoulders.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay. A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992. p. 9.

¹⁴⁷Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen’s Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹⁴⁸Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen’s Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra,. 1988.

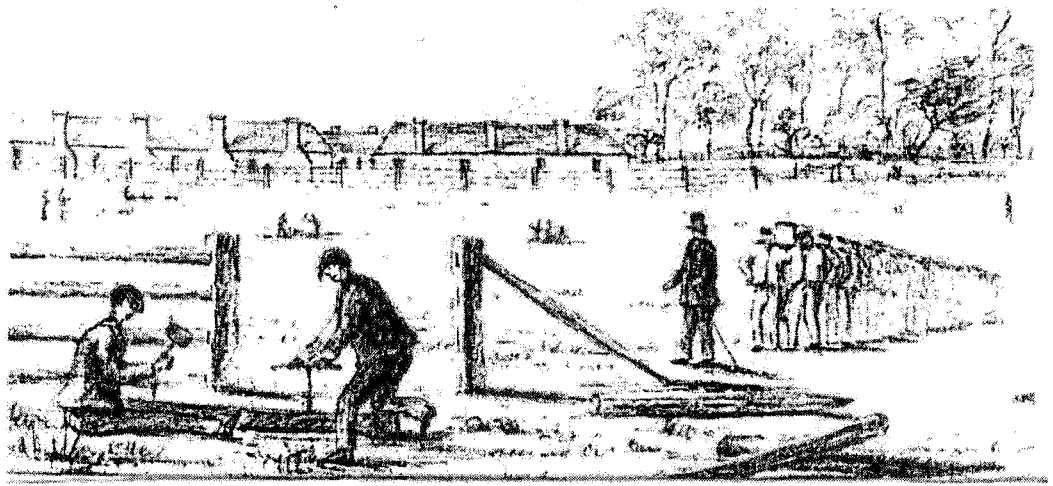


Figure 2.11: The human caterpillar. Convicts moving a log on their shoulders

Source: Warwick Risby timber historian, Risby and Sons

The realities of convict control and supervision had become a major problem with the isolated sawpits until the establishment of task work. Isolated sawpits had other colonial disadvantages quickly recognised with the arrival of Governor Arthur. Under his General Orders a compulsory task of 50 cubic feet for able hands and 40 cubic feet for the less expert was set for each week. Thus allowing the convicts to produce a surplus which was bought by the government. The labourers were allowed to cut shingles on their own account on Saturday afternoons.¹⁵⁰

In an effort to control theft, the government order of 1828 saw splitters and sawyers reporting their name and usual address or last place of abode to the local district police magistrate. Birches Bay was a closed area where the public

¹⁴⁹Bonwick, J., *The Bushrangers; illustrating the early days of Van Diemen's Land*, Melbourne. 1856.

¹⁵⁰Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

was prohibited from going, although this did not stop unauthorised visits of merchants, thieves or interaction between the convicts and the local Aboriginal community. The area was exceedingly problematic with control of the convicts becoming less secure, thus initiating the need to move.¹⁵¹

Two sawpits at Birches Bay were destroyed by fire in December 1827, including 4,000 super feet of timber. For reasons not explained it was thought that the fire was started by the local Aboriginals because their dogs were seen in the area at the time.¹⁵² A major problem for Governor Arthur was the increase in fraternization, both at Birches Bay and Peppermint Bay, between sawyers, convicts and free persons in the area with the local Aboriginal community which was creating a number of discipline problems, where the convicts were once again confined to a barracks. These problems were not new, but the changes in control of convicts under the administration of Governor Arthur saw more restrictions than under previous governors. It was the desire by Arthur to isolate convicts that resulted in the establishment of Port Arthur.

Huon River

When Deputy Surveyor-General Harris explored the Huon River in December 1804, he wrote “at the mouth of the River Huon is an island thickly wooded and

¹⁵¹Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay. A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992.

¹⁵²Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay, A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992.

exhibiting a romantic appearance”.¹⁵³ The banks of the river were described as a series of marshy islands covered with:

scarcely a blade of grass on it, but thickly covered with fern or scrubby brush. The trees principally Blue-Gum and Stringy-Bark, but not of any considerable size; a few Red Wood Trees, called at Hobart Town the Mahogany, grow near the fall.¹⁵⁴

It is interesting that Harris apparently made no attempt to go further up the river in a small boat, as there is no mention of Huon Pine or the Pencil Cedar. In 1810 Oxley lamented that the upper parts of the Huon River “have not been accurately explored”.¹⁵⁵ Later, Sorell considered that the Huon Pine found there were brought as drift logs to the Huon mouth by ocean currents.¹⁵⁶ However, it was realised later that the Huon Pine grew in the area in abundance. Owing to the trees found along the Huon River being in abundance in other more accessible areas, the Huon area was not worked in any significant way prior to 1830.

Macquarie Harbour

Sarah Island, located in Macquarie Harbour, was the largest settlement outside Hobart Town and Launceston, and it flourished as a logging area for Huon Pine between 1822 and 1833, with a temporary reopening of the settlement between 1846 and 1847.

¹⁵³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Deputy Surveyor-General Harris’s Report of Survey, 8 December 1804. pp. 295.

¹⁵⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Deputy Surveyor-General Harris’s Report of Survey, 8 December 1804. p. 296.

¹⁵⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: An Account of the Settlement at the Derwent by J. Oxley. 1810.

The timber harvested and shipped to the open market from this one area was staggering. Its potential was discovered in December 1815 when Captain James Kelly sailed into Macquarie Harbour and “found plenty of Huon Pine growing on the banks of the harbour”.¹⁵⁷ A place usually remembered as a notorious penal settlement, Macquarie Harbour has had two distinct convict phases. Initially the entrepreneurs Birch and Kelly saw the timber as a resource waiting to be harvested, while the Government saw Macquarie Harbour as a potentially lucrative government saw mill in the guise of a penal settlement for troublesome convicts. While local sawpits were constructed in the D’Entrecasteaux Channel and convicts were able to harvest timber in relative freedom, construction of the buildings was underway for the main penal settlement, taking six years before Macquarie Harbour was fully set up when “the first party of 110 soldiers and convicts was sent to Macquarie Harbour in 1821”.¹⁵⁸ Beginning on 12 December 1821, the thick covering of trees at Sarah Island was rapidly removed leaving clear ground, and huts were built in their place.

A survey of Macquarie Harbour showed that at Pine Cove on the western bank of the harbour was “a very thick grove of five or six different species of trees” ranging “from 40 to 60 feet high. The Huon Pines measured from two to two

¹⁵⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Examination of Lieutenant King, 27 January 1821. p. 507.

¹⁵⁷Kelly, J. *Journal of the Visit to Macquarie harbour and North East Van Diemen's Land 1814 - 1815*.

¹⁵⁸Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988. p. 11.

and a half and three feet in diameter”.¹⁵⁹ The survey undertaken by T Florence at the request of Governor Sorell recorded “no doubt of there being great abundance especially of the Huon Pine” on the low lands, with very large gum trees on the higher land. In 1816 Birch and Kelly wanted to harvest the timber. Then in 1818 Merssers Florence and Barnard applied for permission to build a sawmill, to cut the stands of Huon Pine at Macquarie Harbour, which was immediately vetoed by Governor Sorell, who wanted Macquarie Harbour as a punishment station.¹⁶⁰ The shipping company contract was awarded to Mr Birch’s ship *Sophia*, captained by Kelly. During the intervening years between 1818 and 1821 Macquarie Harbour was systematically logged of pine under government contract by Mr T W Birch.¹⁶¹ It was apparent that Birch had contacts in the government. By being allowed to ship the harvested timber he made a profit without the expenditure of sawmill and convict upkeep.

By 1822 a pier was already in place, possibly the same pier that Captain Butler built when he had a large shallow area filled in at the mainland end of Sarah Island, extending it into a dockland area.¹⁶² It was historically the harshest convict settlement in Van Diemen's Land. A number of the convicts transported to Macquarie Harbour were convicts being punished for colonial offences, many from New South Wales. The sick and the weak were set to

¹⁵⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Survey of Macquarie Harbour, 27 January 1821. p. 506.

¹⁶⁰Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen’s Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹⁶¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: Lieutenant Governor Sorell to Mr Thomas Florance, 24 October 1818.

¹⁶²Brand, I., *Sarah Island Penal Settlements 1822-1833 and 1846-1847*, Regal Publishers, Launceston, Tasmania. 1990.

sawing fine wood, piling boards and spreading lime.¹⁶³ It was a penal settlement where convicts were constantly wet, lived under appalling conditions, and were subjected to the severest treatment of unremitting, continuous hard labour on little rations.

In this service, life was sometimes lost; and the miserable workmen diseased and weakened by hunger, while performing these tasks often passed hours in the water.¹⁶⁴

While geographically the same place, Sarah Island and Macquarie Harbour functioned as separate labour areas.¹⁶⁵ Macquarie Harbour was chiefly for the harvesting of timber while Sarah Island was for shipbuilding. Pine roads were used to get the timber to the water from the bogs and marshes, where they grew. The convict workers at Macquarie Harbour “worked up to their middles in water and swamp”. They were fed a dish of porridge in the morning made from flour, water and a little salt, and given nothing else to eat all day.¹⁶⁶ Initially, only 70 convicts cut timber at Macquarie Harbour, later they were divided into teams. By May 1822 the first raft of timber was floated to Sarah Island (figure 2.12).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³Brand, I., *Sarah Island Penal Settlements 1822-1833 and 1846-1847*, Regal Publishers, Launceston, Tasmania. 1990.

¹⁶⁴Backhouse, G., *A Narrative Visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843. p. 56

¹⁶⁵Sarah Island was the central point of the harvesting areas of Macquarie Harbour.

¹⁶⁶NS 21/66/1 1827. p. 255.

¹⁶⁷Lempriere, T., *Account of Macquarie Harbour*, *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science and Agriculture and Statistics &c.*, Vol. 1: Government Printer, Hobart. 1842.

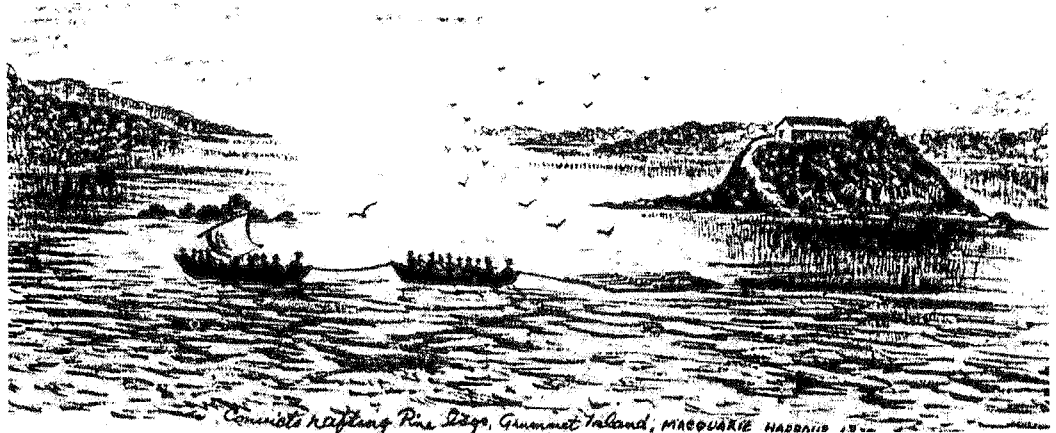


Figure 2.12: Towing a raft of Huon Pine to Sarah Island.

Source: *Against the Odds*, booklet draft, Warwick Risby timber historian, Risby and Sons.

The Quaker James Backhouse described the logging operations:

In order to get the felled timber to the water, a way had to be cleared, and to be formed with logs and branches; over this straight trunks of trees were laid in the manner of slips or skids, used in the launching of ships. Upon these the timber was rolled by the prisoners sometimes to a great distance.¹⁶⁸

These logs were then formed into rafts and floated down to the depot at the harbour mouth (figure 2.13).

AGAINST THE ODDS

WEST COAST SAGA



Figure 2.13 A stockpile of Huon Pine Logs at Sarah island

Source: *Against the Odds*, booklet draft Warwick Risby timber historian, Risby and Sons.

¹⁶⁸Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988. p. 11.

Numerous buildings had been erected on Sarah Island by 1825, with fences being constructed of successive tiers of palings some 30 foot high at the rear of the settlement to protect it from the blustery winds. In later years the fences became taller and were built without nails and supported by wooden pegs similar to those used in shipbuilding. The first boat was built for Governor Sorell in 1823, with much of the timber used to build Government House and its furniture. Raft after raft of Huon Pine came floating down the Gordon River and the adjacent banks. Boats, cutters, schooners and brigs left the dockyard where from the point of view of the ship's captains "excellent quays were built".¹⁶⁹ Every ship brought back Huon Pine to be auctioned in Hobart Town.¹⁷⁰

By 1829 the wood cutting gangs were working 16 to 22 kilometres away from the settlement and lived close to their work. The sight of rafts of a hundred logs being taken to the settlement became common place. They were then towed by ship, with the heavy timber that would not float being attached to boats. An indication of the possible number of trees in Macquarie Harbour before James Kelly started harvesting in 1816 can be gleaned from an 1827 production record for Sarah Island:

- ◆ 2,869 pine logs were rafted to the settlement
- ◆ 743 gums
- ◆ 333,775 superficial feet of sawn timber
- ◆ 157,050 split shingles
- ◆ 197 celery top oars
- ◆ 3,710 bushels of charcoal

¹⁶⁹Lempriere, T., Account of Macquarie Harbour, *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science and Agriculture and Statistics &c.*, Vol. 1: Government Printer, Hobart. 1842.

¹⁷⁰Brand, I., *Sarah Island Penal Settlements 1822-1833 and 1846-1847*, Regal Publishers Launceston, Tasmania. 1990.

- ◆ 1 brig *Derwent*
- ◆ 1 ship *Opossum*
- ◆ 1 lighter
- ◆ 2, 4 oared
- ◆ 2, 5 oared gigs,
- ◆ 2, 4 oared
- ◆ 2, 5 oared whaleboats
- ◆ 3 dinghies
- ◆ 1, 4 oared launch,
- ◆ 1, water boat.

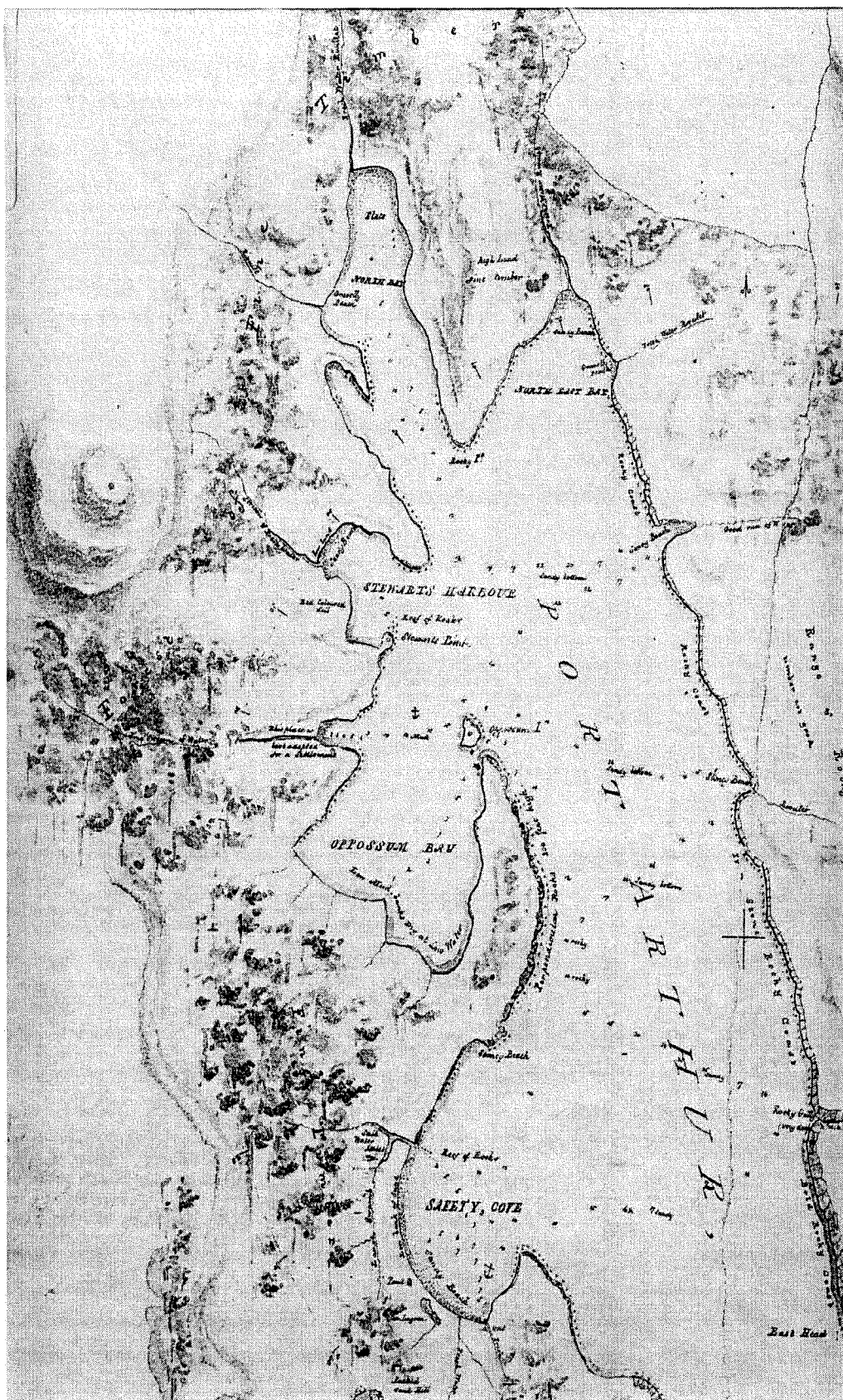
The above 1827 record does not take into account the amount of timber cut for use as household fuel, or for convict domestic use, nor does it consider the amount of firewood necessary to bake bread in huge ovens, or how much wood was used to fire 84,000 bricks needed to build the convict station, or to burn 2,345 bushels of lime. Nor does it include the timber used to repair the *Cyprus*.¹⁷¹

Stewart's Bay

In November 1827, Captain Welsh, returning with persons from Maria Island onboard the *Opossum*, was forced to shelter at Stewart's Harbour, above Safety Cove, which he found to be "safe and capacious".

The whole north side of the harbour is covered with stately timber of the finest description down to the waters edge, and offers a desirable situation for the secondary kind of penal settlement such as Birches Bay.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹Brand, I., *Sarah Island Penal Settlements 1822-1833 and 1846-1847*, Regal Publishers Launceston, Tasmania. 1990.



Map 4: Stewarts Bay, T. Scott surveyor 1826.
Source: Lands Department Hobart.

¹⁷²*Hobart Town Courier*, 17 November 1827.

With his description of the area, Captain Welsh's report helped Governor Arthur solve the problem of what to do with the convicts who were moving into the Aboriginal communities from the timber camps. Governor Arthur's Stewart Harbour has turned out well with the usual sort of wood available, plus "abundance of a kind of timber called Myrtle tree which is from two to recognised that Stewart's Bay on the Tasman Peninsula, shown in map 4, was a more secure site than those already in use. The surveyors sent out in 1827 reported the area had good stands of timber."¹⁷³ The *Tasmanian* newspaper noted that inspection of three feet in diameter".¹⁷⁴ Instructions were given for the Birches Bay sawpits to be moved to Stewart's Bay and Van Diemen's Land's last punishment facility was set up and under way by 1830 under the name of Port Arthur.

2.4 Commercial Timber Mills

In today's modified landscape, with easy access to everywhere, it is often forgotten just how isolated the early sawmills were. Even the mill of Degraes and Mackintosh at the Cascades was an isolated area at a distance from what was considered 'civilisation'. The loggers, sawyers and splitters had to live on site in 'bush huts' relying on provisions sent to them from time to time, and on what they could obtain for themselves. They worked in small groups varying from between 4 to 6, sometimes in pairs or alone. Most of the timber cutters were ticket-of-leave men and emancipists who had learnt to work timber at

¹⁷³Now called Port Arthur.

¹⁷⁴*Tasmanian*, 8 February 1828.

convict settlements. The sawyers and splitters worked on a piece work basis on processed items where the rates were set for each:

- ◆ 100 feet sawn
- ◆ per bundle of 100 shingles
- ◆ 100 palings
- ◆ bundles of 200 laths etc.

The merchant in free logging areas or the authorities in convict camps oversaw all this work.¹⁷⁵ During this period of relative freedom many men aligned themselves with Aboriginal women and became integrated into the wider Aboriginal community in the areas surrounding the timber workings.¹⁷⁶

Under what is known as the ‘truck system’, a merchant would set up camp and provide supplies on credit, ship the timber and deliver further provisions against the amounts due to the men.¹⁷⁷ Contracting by piece work rates removed the need for supervisors and set rates were implemented for snagging, hauling, and shipping of the timber. Equipment was minimal and a merchant could set himself up in business with only a small cash outlay.¹⁷⁸

Possibly the first recorded privately owned sawpit was that of Mr William Patterson, who arrived with the second group of settlers in 1804. Owing to a

¹⁷⁵Pers. Com Peter McFie Coal River Historical Society.2000.

¹⁷⁶This is oral history of the Aboriginal people who are part of the Lia Pootah Community. Integration between the Aboriginal people and the European formed the ancestors of many of today’s Aboriginal communities in the Huon/Cygnnet/Tasman Peninsular areas. There is documentation of this for the area of Birches bay in Gardam, J., *Peppermint Bay. A History of Woodbridge area from Settlement to 1967 Bushfires*, Self Published. 1992.

¹⁷⁷Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen’s Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹⁷⁸Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen’s Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

dispute in 1816 with the surveyor Evans over land entitlement from Governor Collins, we have the record of the sawpit.

The Bigge Report of 1820 has a description of Mr. Patterson's problem. In the evidence recorded, Mr. Patterson is noted as the owner of the land and sawpit, a statement from William Bligh, dated 6 May 1810, relates to the good character of Mr. Patterson. Sometime prior to 1809 William Patterson was preparing to build: "having 2 gate posts in Argyle Street, 2 gate posts in Collins Street, and a corner post in Argyle and Collins Streets and a saw pit on the ground to cut timber".¹⁷⁹ Where does the boundary of industry, domestic need and convict employment diverge? Was Mr Patterson's sawpit a private domestic industry just set up for the building of his premises, or was it a government subsidised commercial venture, as he would almost certainly have had convict labourers?

By 1812 there was a lumberyard, on the west side of the Wellington Rivulet (later called Hobart Town Rivulet), which was given orders to erect a signal station on Mt Nelson. The "summit of the mountain is to be entirely cleared of wood for that purpose".¹⁸⁰ The first known non-government timber yard open to the public appears in 1825. George Stokell's timber yard in Macquarie Street advertised in two local papers, indicating his yard had a good turnover. The advertisements showed he sold Cedar, Pine, Stringy Bark and other timbers, both seasoned and cut to all breadths and thickness for sale. The usual stock was noted as including Huon Pine, Pencil Pine, Lightwood, plus Gums of all

¹⁷⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 4: William Patterson to Mr J T Bigge 30 March 1820 with enclosures dated from 1810. C. p. 840-846. From the collection of Freda Gray Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association.

sorts. Perhaps it was his terms of sale, which at the same time threw a light on Van Diemen's Land economy in 1825, consisted of “cash, cattle, grain or potatoes” suggesting a shortage of local currency and an effective bartering system.¹⁸¹ It was the encouragement of free emigration and industrial opportunities in the mid 1820s that gave a boost to the economy, making currency more common. However, the government timber mills maintained the heavy manual usage of the supplies of convicts coming into Van Diemen's Land.

Meanwhile, free enterprises began the introduction of mechanical mills. The building of a millrace meant the land had to be surveyed, resulting in one of the few timber mills that can be geographically located. Taking advantage of the free land offer Peter Degraives, his wife and eight children, along with his brother-in-law Major Hugh Macintosh, became the first timber millers to set up in Australia using a water powered mill. In 1824, Degraives and Mackintosh arrived in Hobart Town with their saw-milling machinery and a letter from Lord Bathurst instructing the governor to give them 830 hectares of land:

convict carpenters and 1 smith, together with rations for the purpose of working the mill during a period of six months” plus rations for both families.¹⁸²

The Surveyor General Mr Evans, surveyed the property owned by Degraives and Macintosh. The map showed the area as being the southeastern slopes of Mt Wellington, between Wellington River/Rivulet and Guy Fawkes Rivulet on the

¹⁸⁰*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 1: 8 February 1812. As a fax from Freda Gray Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association.

¹⁸¹*Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 15 July 1825.

¹⁸²Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

northern side, and the Sandy Bay Rivulet on the southern side, between Lowe's distillery and Table Mountain. Messrs. Robert Murray and Thomas Lowes owned the boundaries on the eastern side. Evans described the land for the proposed sawmill as "in every way suitable for the purpose of being thickly covered with timber, and with a waterfall running through it." The area was "wild primeval forest untouched by the hand of man".¹⁸³ An interesting statement as the Kings pits of Lieutenant Governor Collins must have gathered their timber in the same area. Perhaps the "wild primeval forest" is regrowth?

An overseer and a gang of 20 men cleared the land, dug the foundations and formed the millrace.

The water of the tributary stream known as Guy Fawkes Rivulet was led into the town Rivulet above the site marked out for the mill. A dam was constructed and the combined water flowed to the wheel that worked sawmill.¹⁸⁴ The newspaper's editor expounded the virtues of them using the "most advanced machinery available anywhere".¹⁸⁵ The "requisite of machinery for sawing boards ... a capital of £3-4,000 might employ his funds very advantageously by establishing a timber yard."¹⁸⁶

Although this mill was in operation by 1825, Evans could not have been a good surveyor as he made a mistake in the Murray boundary and on 19 January 1827 the Surveyor General, Dumaresq, reported to the Colonial Secretary Burnett that the sawmill was actually on Murray's land grant. It was a number of years

¹⁸³Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹⁸⁴Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988.

¹⁸⁵*Hobart Town Gazette*, 10 September 1825.

¹⁸⁶Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988. p. 19.

before the problem was settled by private arrangement between them. For the remainder of his life Degraives blamed Evans:

and on more than one occasion used his facile and often caustic pen to refer to Evans in terms of the most unqualified vituperation and invective.¹⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that a newspaper article reported that the mill owned by Degraives and Macintosh needed to be repaired by the new superintendent as the machinery had suffered through mismanagement, probably while Murray was proprietor.¹⁸⁸

When the mill began re-operation the editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette* ran a story acclaiming the mill and its making:

It is one of the most complete machines of its kind in any country, and timber is cut by it with astonishing nicety and rapidity. The public are called upon to patronise such patriotic and beneficial undertakings.¹⁸⁹

By 1828 their other mills were either water or animal powered.¹⁹⁰ The importation from England of a new sawing machine that cut shingles would in all probability not have been considered a benefit by those splitters put out of work.¹⁹¹

The colonial newspapers show how the timbers were used at a local level.

Advertisements start to appear requiring timber for a windmill “must be Stringy

¹⁸⁷Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The first Timber firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environmental Studies, Canberra. 1988. p. 24.

¹⁸⁸*Tasmanian*, 25 January 1828.

¹⁸⁹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 13 August 1825.

¹⁹⁰*Tasmanian*, 25 January 1828.

¹⁹¹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 7 June 1823.

Bark and Blood Leaf Gum of the best quality”.¹⁹² The newspapers are a source for information on timber uses when there are advertisements, such as the one for six or eight good hands at making dry casks needed by the Supply Mills.¹⁹³ The editors call for ships to abandon the use of rocks for ballast and to load with coal or timber (Gums, Sheaoak, Lightwood etc.) which could be loaded at 10 or 12 shillings a ton and sold at a profit in London.¹⁹⁴ George Stokell is known to have bought Stace’s Upper Sawmill on the Hobart Town Rivulet after Stace got into financial difficulties.¹⁹⁵ However, there were other timber merchants working in Hobart Town according to the newspaper advertisements “Cedar in plank or log on sale at the Wharf apply James Grant Macquarie Street”, while another advertisement showed that “George Stockwell of Macquarie Street sold timber cut into lengths at my shop”.

Then on 1 November 1827 the same paper advertised that Henry Chapman carpenter, builder, undertaker, has made for a regular supply of pine, Cedar, Stringy Bark, and Gum of every description:

laths, shingles, etc. has opened a yard on his premises opposite the stone quarry at the top of Elizabeth Street.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹²*Hobart Town Gazette*, 2 December 1826.

¹⁹³*Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 December 1826.

¹⁹⁴*Hobart Town Gazette*, 18 November 1826.

¹⁹⁵*Tasmanian*, 25 January 1828.

¹⁹⁶*Hobart Town Courier*, 16 October 1827.

2.5 Specific Purposes

The durability and growth patterns of a tree species determined to what purpose a tree was used for until the twentieth century. In the past every tree had a specific use (figure 2.13).

No.	Local Names.	General Height.	Usual Dimensions.	Where Procured.	Quantity.	To what purpose applied.
1	Stringy Bark.....	80 ft.	1 foot to 7	All parts of the Isl'd	Plentiful	Buildings of all descriptions.
2	Oum.....	Do	Do	Do	Do	Do much harder quality.
3	Peppermint.....	40	3 or 4 ft.	Do	Do	Shingles.
4	Adventure Bay Pine ..	40	2 or 3 ft.	Several places on ye Coast.	Do	Flooring, Buildings and Furniture.
5	Huon Pine.....	40	3 or 4 Do	Macquarie Harb'r.....	Do	Inside work of Buildings and Furniture.
6	Box Pine.....	20	1 or 2 Do	Devil's Den.....	Scarce	Mill Cogs, Sheaves, etc.
7	Black Wattle.....	15 to 30	1 or 2 Do	All parts of the Isl'd	Plentiful	Do the Bark for Tanning.
8	Silver Wattle.....	80	1 to 3 ft.	Huon River	Do	Inside work, Boats, fine Spars.
9	Forest Oak.....	30	1 to 2	All parts of the Isl'd	Do	Furniture and Firewood.
10	Swamp Oak.....	do	do	Do	Do	Firewood.
11	Pink wood.....	10	1 Ft.	Devil's den	Scarce	Furniture.
12	Black wood.....	20	1 - 3 ft.	Diff't Valleys	Do	Do
13	Light wood.....	do	do	Do	Do	Do
14	Parrell Cedar.....	40	do	Huon River; Macq's Harb.	Plentiful	Do
15	Honey suckle.....	10 or 15	1 to 2	All parts	Scarce	Seldom used.
16	Sassafras.....	50 or 60	1 to 2	Diff't Valleys	Plentiful	Flooring Boards and inside work.
17	Cherry Tree.....	10 or 15	Do	All parts	Do but small.	Furniture.
18	Kern Trees.....	20	6 to 9 in.	Deep Valleys	Plentiful	Laying, prepared with Oil and Turpentine.

From J. MEDDELL, Overseer of Sawyers.

Figure 2.13: Specific timber uses.

Source: *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Specimens of timber growing in Van Diemen's Land. 1820. p. 563.

The Mimosa was undoubtedly one of the most versatile trees with uses in multiple industries. Presumably, or at least it was hoped, that at the same time as they were harvesting wattle bark in the Huon River area, they were also collecting staves for casks and barrels. Delivery of bark and staves arriving at the same destination could explain why “coopering sheds were constructed on New Wharf and the tap, tap, tap of coopers hammers could be heard all day”.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printer. (circa 1959).

Although Mimosa was a multi purpose tree, some trees were acquired for their specific densities within the grain of the tree. For this reason Blue Gums, which grew on the hills, had a much closer grain and closely resembled the Oak of Britain. Other Gum trees were considered of a better quality than those Gums harvested from ravines or gullies.¹⁹⁸ A letter from Messrs. Buckles, Bagaster and Buckles in London dated 1829 contained information on how to prepare colonial goods for the British market. Buckles and Bagaster recommended that Blue Gum: “by no means in high esteem with our ship builders” if exported, should be in good lengths, that Cedar should be cut “8 to 10 inches thick and between 22 and 27 inches wide”. They also commented that the timber worker should be aware that timber “8 inches by 8 inches minimum are admitted duty free and therefore will sell better than boards”.¹⁹⁹

The Stringy Bark was prized for the straightness of the grain, splitting at a shingle thickness for the whole length of the tree. Stringy Bark shingles were a sought after export, “cut especially large for the Isle of France trade” where they “sold for 28 to 30 shillings per 1000”, while in Van Diemen's Land they sold between 8 and 10 shillings for the same quantity.²⁰⁰ Another advantage was that the strength of the bark would run in strips from the butt 30 or 40 feet up the tree before being torn loose. It was then used to tie up bales of wool for shipment to Sydney.²⁰¹ It was probable that the use of the strips of Stringy Bark

¹⁹⁸Mitchel, D., On the Strength, Durability, and value of the Timber of the Blue Gum of Tasmania, and of some other Eucalyptus for Ship-Building, &c. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, read 12 November 1851, Vol.2: 1852-1854.

¹⁹⁹*Hobart Town Courier*, 16 June 1830.

²⁰⁰*Hobart Town Courier*, 21 March 1829.

²⁰¹Walker Backhouse, J., *Early Tasmania papers, read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1902.

for bale rope was taken from the Aboriginal use of the Stringy Bark for rope making.²⁰²

Colonial furniture is an area of timber use that is under recorded. Few of the immigrants brought their furniture with them, and most therefore either made their own or purchased locally made items. W. Williamson wrote to his sister in 1820 saying that he had only seen three bedsteads in the whole colony, and hardly a chair. Most of the wood he had seen was being burnt and “it is fine grained the colour of mahogany cedar, rosewood and many other beautiful woods”. Williamson described the Huon Pine as “much esteemed for its durability and exquisite fragrant smell”.²⁰³

In an economy dependent on wood, wheelbarrows were of paramount importance, as were wooden ploughs.²⁰⁴ Other more mundane wooden timber structures were important to the British view of being civilized. Residents of Hobart Town considered that the “mark of civilization the gallows” was missing from the settlement, a complaint that continued until 1816 when a gibbet was first erected on Hunter Island, at last indicating civilization had arrived in Hobart Town.²⁰⁵ However, Launceston did not become ‘civilized’ with a gibbet until 1829.²⁰⁶ It is known for example that the civilized punishment for misconduct was the convict being sent to the wooden tread wheel at New Town, rather than committed to working in irons, even though

²⁰² Wilson, E., (Worawee) *Traditional Fibre Uses*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers, Hobart. (in Press 2003).

²⁰³ Williamson, W., a private letter from Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land to his sister Miss Williamson, Castle Hill, Lancaster. 16 December 1820.

²⁰⁴ Hartwell, R., *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 1954.

the tread was a worse punishment.²⁰⁷ Another indication of civilization was the socially important timber structure of the stocks, commonly used as a punishment for drunkenness. Originally located outside the gaol in Murray Street the stocks were removed to the eastern side of Market Place opposite the tramway yard in Campbell Street.²⁰⁸

Every tree had a species-specific use. Even the:

useless smaller trees were useful by forming the post and rail fences that were the most common of country fences, and were formed by the log which was the trunk of the tree and the rail was formed by the branches.²⁰⁹

The *Historical Records of Australia* notes that only prime timber was used for palings, where the secondary or blemished timber became post and rail or firewood. However, by 1828 there was a major increase in property fencing and all town houses were being fenced in.²¹⁰ The colonies were beginning to take on the trappings of English towns with fenced gardens and clearly defined ownership of property.

There is however, one record that may be problematic concerning a stand of Huon Pine. In 1818, Huon Pine was discovered growing around the lakes in the interior of Van Diemen's Land by J. Beaumont. In the Bigge report of 1820 Beaumont described what was clearly Great Lake, noting:

²⁰⁵ *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 15 June 1816.

²⁰⁶ *Launceston Advertiser*, 23 February 1829.

²⁰⁷ Letter from the Civil Engineers Office in Hobart Town, 22 August 1831, to the Colonial Secretary. From the Bothwell History Room.

²⁰⁸ NS 21/66/1 1827. p. 255

²⁰⁹ Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania papers, read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1902.

²¹⁰ *Bents Monthly Advertiser*, May 1828.

There are Gum Trees, the Wild Cherry Tree, and to the westward of the large lake about 12 or fourteen miles, I observed three trees of Huon Pine. Further on I found more, and as I, proceeded, they increased in dimensions, and on the banks of the smaller lakes, I observed considerable quantities of the Huon Pine.²¹¹

A companion of Beaumont took five days to walk around the Great Lake, but today it is difficult to determine which are the smaller lakes, or where the Huon Pine was growing. Also were all the trees Huon Pine or is it possible those smaller in dimension were Pencil Pine? Locals in the area today however, believe the pines in question were King Billy. There is no record of any harvesting of timber in the Great Lake area prior to 1830.²¹²

2.6 Exports

Timber harvesting included public works as part of using the convict labour. Profitable production required maintaining convict discipline and punishment in combination with efficiency. Complications with records for early exports are compounded because Port Dalrymple and Hobart Town were governed as separate administrations until 1813, when they were amalgamated. With the completion of the overland route between the two cities in 1809, merchants began petitioning the British authorities to open the Van Diemen's Land ports to international trade. With Hobart Town, as a central administrative office,

²¹¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Examination of J. Beaumont, 10 May 1820. p. 344.

²¹²Pers Com. Mr Terry whose family have been in the Stepps/Great Lake area for generations. Bothwell Historical Society 2002.

combining the throwing open of the ports in 1813, merchant trade was able to flourish and the economy became less dependent on Britain.²¹³

A dispatch from Governor Macquarie in 1818 discussed the export importance of the timbers available in Van Diemen's Land:

it would be desirable to make first an experiment how the timber of Van Diemen's Land will sell in other countries, I request you will permit Messrs. Collins and Co. to ship the eighteen hundred spars they have already cut down for a foreign market as an experiment, without imposing any duty thereon.²¹⁴

However, timber produce was already being sold in Van Diemen's Land to merchants for the internal, foreign, and colonial markets. Macquarie Harbour and Port Davey were the main suppliers of commercial logs. In 1817 the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* reported that on the 2 February Captain Kelly sailed for Macquarie Harbour and Port Davey for another load of Huon Pine, returned on the 15 February and would be leaving again on 22 February. A month later on 22 March the paper notes that Captain Kelly returned with another valuable cargo of timber in the *Sophia* and would be sailing on the 23 March for his third trip since January 11. It would be interesting to know if convicts were stationed there to harvest the trees for Captain Kelly as a private labour force, or a convict labour gang transporting the government harvested logs.

Internal markets were limited and timber used for rural building and fencing rarely became a traded commodity. Hobart Town and Launceston timber

²¹³Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2: The First Timber Firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environment Studies, Canberra. 1988.

requirements were either self supplied or through local timber merchants. In the 1820s small parcels of timber baulks not attracting duty were sent to Britain, but profitable expansion into the foreign timber trade did not eventuate until the 1860s.²¹⁵ With such a poor economy as that noted by Dargavel, one can only wonder how many people supplemented their income by selling firewood, such as John Petchey, who supplemented his income by selling firewood to the gaol.²¹⁶

Dargavel indicates a small limited timber export, however, other data shows opposite results. Perhaps it is the type of export included for the statistical evidence that creates the confusion, such as when timber is broken down into processed items, like tree nails and shingles and are perceived as a different form of export to that of planks and logs. All manner of processed timber items were exported almost continuously to various exotic locations.

Reports in a local newspaper show a regular trade from 1819 of timber from Adventure Bay, involving HM brig *Prince Leopold* bound for Sydney.²¹⁷ Then it could be argued that 'is a wooden ship exported as timber or exported as a ship'? In 1822 *Governor Brisbane*, a 30 ton schooner, was launched at Brown River "believed by many to be the most attractive vessel yet launched in the colony".²¹⁸ From the beginning of the colony timber products were 'exported' to Port Jackson and Britain and this is not reflected within the *Blue Books* or

²¹⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: Governor Macquarie to Governor Davey, 26 October 1818. p. 44.

²¹⁵Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2: The First Timber Firm in Van Diemen's Land. Centre for Resources and Environment Studies Canberra .1988.

²¹⁶Read, C., *John Petchey: Handsome John*, Published by Norfolk Islander interest group. 1992.

later statistical accounts. In fact there appears to be no compilation of timber products processed or otherwise for Van Diemen's Land. However, incomplete lists of timber items showing separation of export materials was indicated in the statistical references in the *Blue Books* for casks and staves for the whaling, bark and skin industries.

The *Eliza* was believed to be the first ship to export colonial timber internationally when it sailed for the East Indies with a cargo of spars in 1821.²¹⁹ A single log was transported by the *Java Packet* as a sample to India “it is by no means impossible that this wood may become a valuable article of export”.²²⁰ The statistical returns for 1822 showed seven logs of Pine and two logs of Beef Wood, and in 1823 50 logs of Pine with 50 logs of Cedar.²²¹ In 1823 timber exports from Bruny Island were being sent to Indonesia and South America.²²²

Interested in exporting timbers, Mr Gellibrand called for suppliers in quantities greater than 50,000 feet in Sheaoak, Box, Cherry Tee and any quantity of well cut Gum tree nails.²²³ Unfortunately, it is unknown where the exports were intended. One question that needs asking is how long could an industry last that was exporting specific timbers in quantities of 50,000 feet? It is known that inter-colonial exports were a major part of the industry and that by 1830 there

²¹⁷*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 17 July 1819.

²¹⁸*Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 27 April 1822.

²¹⁹*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 21 April 1821.

²²⁰*Tasmanian*, 1 February 1828.

²²¹*Statistical Account of Van Diemen's Land or Tasmania from the Date of its First Occupation by the British Nation in 1804 to the end of the year 1823*. 1856.

²²²Graham, R., *Adventure Bay National Estate Study*, Prepared for the Municipality of Bruny, September, 1988.

²²³*Cornwall Press and Commercial Advertiser*, 17 February 1829.

was a profitable export industry to the Swan River in Western Australia. The newspapers show listings where not just timber was exported but also that a thriving trade of processed timber products were available. The *Lady of the Lake* carried a cargo that included 4,000 feet of timber and “one house frame” and other complex manufactured timber goods including 20 sets of bowls and yolks, one whale boat and two bullock carts”.²²⁴ The editor stated with some authority that “for some time export was consuming a large portion of the Van Diemen's Land produce that is manufactured”. Another newspaper indicated that Van Diemen's Land had a large trade to Britain and Quebec. The editor was very critical of importing Cedar “when we have such wood as this on the shores [Huon Pine] and in the rivers of our island”.²²⁵

The *Lady Harwood* shipped 200 tons from the Huon River and *Harcourt* shipped 200 tons from Southport, both cargoes bound for London. Captain Henniker of the *Mermaid* built his hut at One Tree Point and on 4 April 1829 shipped the following items to London.²²⁶

- 77 logs of Light wood
- 25 logs of Sheaoak
- 30 logs of Gum
- 20 logs of Stringy Bark
- 1 anchor stork
- 40 Sheaoak knees
- 40 Gum ships knees
- 66 oak planks
- 250 Stringy Bark nails
- 100 tons Mimosa bark

²²⁴*Hobart Town Courier*, 2 January 1830.

²²⁵*Tasmanian*, 4 March 1828.

²²⁶From the files of Irene Schaffer Norfolk island Group and *Lady Nelson* Sailing Group. Although unsourced the data is probably from the Colonial Secretary's Office.

Local uses for timber were also being encouraged. There was a large supply of Pine wood on the jetty and the editor of the *Tasmanian* had been told it was Port Davey Pine and “that its quality was far superior to Cedar for house building”.²²⁷ Internal sales were expected to encourage a better standard of living. If Huon Pine was used, there would be:

well furnished houses, good pine floors, in place of Stringy bark, which will gape and twist in all directions, unless we wait for several years to dry it, and then expense of working it is more than its worth.²²⁸

Nowhere is there any mention of how much timber was wasted processing trees.

2.7 Ship Building

Colonial shipbuilding, including timbers sent to the Naval Yards in England, was possibly the biggest consumer of timber in colonial Van Diemen's Land. The first small colonial boats were built in 1804, after the colonists were given permission to build them to assist in crossing the Derwent River.²²⁹ The first known shipbuilding yard was a sizable feature in the early colony. The Wellington River, flowing through the centre of Hobart Town in 1804, was a river of considerable depth. A ship building yard was situated near where the Wellington Bridge is in modern Elizabeth Street. As late as 1825, John Gray launched his 30 ton schooner *Industry* and another 50 ton schooner into the ‘rivulet’, from Old Wharf indicating that it was still navigable, at least towards

²²⁷ *Tasmanian*, 4 March 1828.

²²⁸ *Tasmanian*, 4 March 1828.

²²⁹ O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printer. (circa 1959).

the mouth.²³⁰ Later, after 1830 when the Wellington River had become the Hobart Town Rivulet it had become little more than a shallow drain because of the number of diversions to mill races and changes to the water course.

The processing of trees into timber for boat building achieved optimum usage if the trees were harvested by being ring barked first. The trees were then left to stand for six months, cut down and put into the water for another three months. The average breaking weight of Blue Gum was 1,225 pounds, making it valuable as a slip in the boating industry.²³¹

Surprisingly, the first master builder of boats was the convict Samuel Gunn while he was employed in public works, and in February 1813 W. Loane engaged him to build the first square rigged vessel, a 133 ton brig *Campbell Macquarie*.²³² Another exconvict, John Birchall, was a landowner at Pittwater who supplied meat and gum to the Commissariat. He built a schooner that was used as a ferry to transport his goods across the Pittwater to the other shore.²³³ In the early days of the colony, rafts were the commonest forms of watercraft associated with the timber industry.

Wooden shipbuilding however, started in earnest in 1813 and flourished.

Initially the wood made excellent whaleboats; then later, when the ban on boat

²³⁰Rivulet was the colonial term used for all the small seasonal rivers running into the larger Derwent River. Historical accounts show that these so called rivulets or small rivers were dammed or diverted in the first half of the nineteenth century, thus allowing for the historical misconception of shallow creeks based on what has survived.

²³¹O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printer. (circa 1959).

²³²Tipping, M., *Convicts Unbound: the story of the Calcutta convicts and their settlement in Australia*, Viking O'Neil, Ringwood, Victoria. 1988.

²³³Tipping, M., *Convicts Unbound: the story of the Calcutta convicts and their settlement in Australia*, Viking O'Neil, Ringwood, Victoria. 1988.

building was lifted, colonial sailing vessels, brigs and schooners capable of the long sea voyages to England were launched from the colonial shipyards of Van Diemen's Land. Huon Pine was known to be the best boat building material available, light enough to float and outstandingly durable against marine decay. Lesser trees were used for masts, while small vessels and later built colonial boats were made from Blue Gum. This timber was also used for oars, due to its long lasting retention of moisture.²³⁴ By 1817 Launceston had constructed a large punt for carrying carts, bullocks and horses across the Tamar River at Launceston.²³⁵ Around the 1820s productive boat building yards were located at a number of places. Browns River, North West Bay, Sarah Island, Bruny Island, Pittwater, New Town Bay, Kangaroo Point were just a few of the shipbuilding areas.

Many of the early boats were modelled on the small English craft, which were either chunky, shallow drafted, deep hulled cutters or similar to the Thames barge. The latter were used to travel up the rivers of Van Diemen's Land to collect timber. In 1814 escaped convicts built a small boat on Bruny Island, considered a "good model, big rigged with cordage made of twisted bark caulked with bullswool i.e. Stringy Bark".²³⁶ It is possible that the boat design was based on the Aboriginal boat or catamaran as one recorded design used Stringy Bark.²³⁷ The later boats were full sized brigs and schooners, such as the *Governor Brisbane*, 130 tons, built at Browns River for Kemp and Co. in

²³⁴Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2, The First Timber Firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environment Studies, Canberra. 1988.

²³⁵*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 22 March 1817.

²³⁶O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printer. (circa 1959).

²³⁷Roth, L., *The Tasmanian Aboriginal*. London. 1899.

1821.²³⁸ At Sarah Island small gigs and dinghies were built, the first boat being launched on 22 December 1822, and becoming a major ship building industry by 1826.²³⁹

In 1829 sawyers with boats used for transportation of raw materials had moved to the Huon River, and a coracle was built by Morgan: “12 feet long, the keel, gunwales, stern and stem post were formed from wattle tree, with smaller pieces of timber: this comprised the framework”, showing that not all boats built in the early years of Van Diemen's Land were made of Huon Pine timber²⁴⁰.

2.8 Wood as Fuel

One of the problems determining estimates for the amount of timber usage as fuel is the lack of records indicating how much fuel was needed for the most basic of requirements. Wood as fuel was such a common factor in all aspects of colonial life that it was unnecessary to either record or comment on its supply, unless there was a need to purchase. Initially there was timber aplenty for fuel and it was not until later, around 1816, when all the immediate timber sources were exhausted in the Hobart Town/Port Dalrymple/Launceston areas, that data begins to appear allowing some concept of the amount of wood fuel necessary for colonial survival.

²³⁸.O'May, H., *Hobart River Craft*, Tasmanian Government Printer. (circa 1959).

²³⁹Brand. I., *Sarah Island Penal Settlement 1822-1833 and 1846-1847*, Regal Publication, Launceston. 1990.

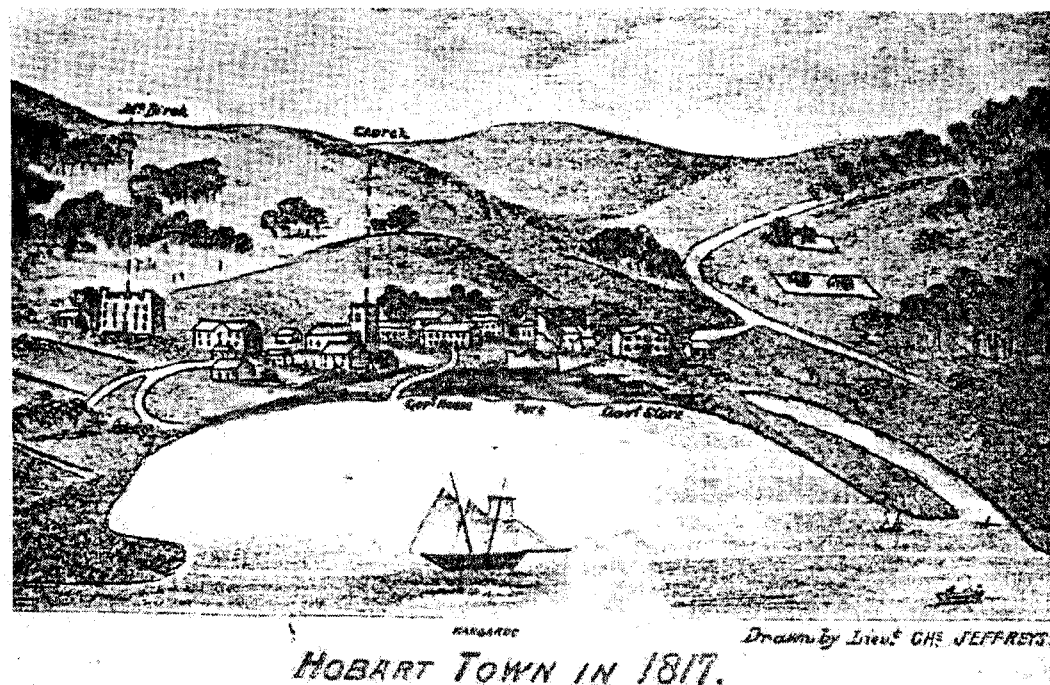


Figure 2.15: Hobart Town 1817.
Source: Private Collection.

However, small limbs not used for lumber would probably have ended up as an energy source. When wood was the only source for cooking food, or used to illuminate houses as firelight as well as offering warmth, the daily amount of wood would be significant for each 'settler'. It is forgotten just how dependent people were on wood as fuel between 1803 and 1830. That the coal beds were not mined until around 1850 is an indication of the number of trees available for fuel. As the population expanded isolated areas were being systematically cleared of trees for domestic or industrial usage. No estimates can be made as to the amount of timber used for the various types of fuel needs. The energy outputs of timber varies to such an extent that tree species would have to a factor in estimating wood use. A community notice appeared on 8 March 1817

²⁴⁰Lempriere, T., Account of Macquarie Harbour, *Tasmanian Journal of Natural and*

in the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* stating that there was to be no grazing of stock or cutting down or removing of trees from the farms known as Cove Point and Judges Farm. Shortages of local timber were becoming noticed, indicating timber was becoming scarce close to the settled areas (figure 2.15).

There was still accessible wood near population areas but cartage was involved. As more people became confined to the towns it became necessary to have the time and means of being able to go into the countryside to collect domestic firewood. Fewer and fewer people had the ways and means to obtain their own firewood as the population densities began to grow. Land had become owned and as according to British law removing wood was a criminal offence, it meant that trees close to the towns were only available to the 'owner' of the land. The geographical movements and density of the population can be mapped through the public notice advertisements and the sketches such as figure 2.15, show depletion of timber.

Advertisements were being placed in the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* as early as August 1816, warning people off the land.

- ◆ On 10 August 1816 notice was given where persons are cautioned against cutting down or removing timber at A Whiteheads farm at Newtown or grazing cattle.
- ◆ Then Gunning Farm at Newtown cautioned persons from cutting timber and grazing cattle, and the owner of Weston Lodge put in a similar notice.
- ◆ On 17 August Government farm at Coal River placed a notice along a similar vein. Logging is forbidden at the waterside of the Government Domain at New Town as someone had cut down and drawn away many of the most beautiful trees.

- ◆ On 31 August the public was forbidden to cut down timber or graze cattle at Folley Farm or on the farm belonging to Cpt. Folger which is bounded by Queensborough Bridge and John Halls farm.²⁴¹

The *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* 8 March 1817, had advertisements for

- ◆ 15 March Mullochs Farm at New Town placed a notice stating not to cut and carry away timber, as did the owner of Mitchels Farm at New Town.
- ◆ Kent Farm at New Town put an advertisement In 10 May stating no cutting down of trees.

A government proclamation was published in the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* on 31 May 1817 concerning the timber on the ground beyond the bridge at Cascades, and in line to the right and left of that place, being reserved for the Government. "All persons are prohibited from cutting any part there of". Timber was in short supply judging from the newspaper accounts.

Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter for July 1817 had even more advertisements

- ◆ on the 5th paling fences erected around the Government Garden and people are tearing down the palings.
- ◆ the 19th had two advertisements about no trees to be cut down at Barrets Farm in the Stranyfock(?) district bounded by Bagdad, nor at Tarretts Farm.

It was no wonder that by 1830 firewood had become scarce near the settled areas and expensive, as men will:

cut down the beautiful young trees and underwood which have grown to the height of 10 or 15 feet within these few years since the larger timber was cut down.²⁴²

²⁴¹*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, August 1816.

²⁴²*Hobart Town Courier*, 7 August 1830.

It was at that time that advertisements began to appear selling firewood. John Stacey placed an advertisement undertaking to supply good fuel of either oak or Gum to householders, cut into pieces of convenient size for the benefit “of families not keeping men servants”.²⁴³ A government tender shows how much wood was needed to help the settlement function:

The Commissariat office is looking for people to tender for the wood supply of the troops, colonial hospital and female factory. The timber must be She-oak and priced in “loads” with one load greater than 14 cwt. or half a ton. They require “600 loads per month in winter, 300 in summer”.²⁴⁴

The government tender does not include the timber necessary for domestic or industrial fuel usage. Tenders for firewood were in two editions in the *Tasmanian* of 1828. On the 14 November the Commissariat Office in Hobart Town ran an advertisement for firewood calling for tenders for delivery of Sheoak. The timber was to be cut into billets of three foot lengths, to be “delivered free of charge to the government establishments”. The tender calls for a price per 100 pounds of wood. On 21 November tenders were called for firewood for Launceston and George Town in an identical advertisement.

The records themselves make it very difficult to determine how much timber was actually used. It would be interesting to know how many is ‘numerous carts’, and what the weight was of ‘carts loaded with wood’. ‘Were all carts a regulation size’? In 1829 the *Hobart Town Courier* notes that numerous carts loaded with wood were arriving in the town with sales aimed at the poor in the community. All loads “properly got up” sold between five and seven pence per

²⁴³*Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 January 1828.

²⁴⁴*Hobart Town Gazette*, 2 December 1826.

pound. The “inferior looking wood goes for four pence a pound”.²⁴⁵ By March 1829 the same newspaper was noting that the prices of firewood for the wealthy had moderated and that buyers could get a “good cart load of Sheoak for six shillings in any part of town”.²⁴⁶ Wood was very expensive. Today heating an average family home would use nine tons of wood each winter, paid by the ton.

According to the *Hobart Town Courier* 14 March 1829, a man can earn 15 to 20 shillings a day selling “the faggots nefariously obtained”.²⁴⁷ There was one well known firewood merchant of the time, John Petchey, a convict who, after his pardon, became the ‘Keeper of the Gaol’, and in 1816 to supplement his income, began supplying firewood. By 1831 Petchey was supplying fuel to the Military Establishment in Hobart. However, there are no accounts for the amount of wood which fired the kilns that made bricks and pottery. Did Petchey supply the fuel for these government industries as well? His ability to supply such large quantities of firewood was from wood waste and timber harvesting at his Wattle Bark establishments.²⁴⁸

Besides domestic uses for fuel, other industrial processes used extensive amounts of firewood, such as producing the wattle bark extract, evaporating salt, rendering fat for candles, and to a lesser degree, rendering whale blubber. There is no information about how much fuel was needed to evaporate salt by distillation, but it could be argued that Roberts’ distilleries cleared all the land surrounding his salt works.

²⁴⁵*Hobart Town Courier*, 3 January 1829.

²⁴⁶*Hobart Town Courier*, 14 March 1829.

²⁴⁷Faggots were the kindling sticks.

It is impossible to estimate the firewood used by the two main producers of export bark. Kent and Petchey differed on bark production methods, despite similarity of distillation

Take a quantity of mimosa bark stripped from the trees in the spring months, August, September, October and after the rough or outward coat is cut off and whilst green, crush it through a mill ... the crushed bark is then put into a copper boiler of clean water, in the proportions of 100 pound of crushed bark to 100 gallons of water and boiled gently for two and a half hours; after which run off the decoction into broad flat copper pans, through a sieve or other strainer and evaporate to consistency required. One ton of bark produces four hundred weight of extract when brought to the consistency of tar and concentrated to a hard substance as pitch, the produce is three hundred weight, but the evaporation if carried to this extent is liable to scorch and particularly char the extract, and therefore to be avoided.²⁴⁹

To produce this amount of Wattle bark extract at exportable quantities must have used immense amount of timber, not all of which would have been the waste Wattle wood. Petchey and Kent were only two of many bark extract producers using timber for fuel.

Sometimes separating fuel and production wood is impossible. Whaling was another industry using significant timber resources, not just for barrels, but, with each shore station having two committed boats with crews, including a new boat in reserve. According to Evans even at the very beginning of whaling, shore based whaling was a labour intensive industry which needed considerable amounts of timber for a variety of purposes, the main one of which was firewood to render the blubber, a process that created the most

²⁴⁸Read, C., *John Petchey: Handsome John*, Van Diemen's Land Norfolk Islanders Interest Group. 1992.

²⁴⁹*Transactions of the Society of Arts, Colonies and Trade* Vol. 43: No. 11, 1825. p. 205.

‘noisome of pollution’.²⁵⁰ A small whaling station usually employed a minimum of 15 men for the season, all of whom used wood fuel for work processing, cooking and warmth. The records themselves show no mention of wood as fuel, though they often mention other wooden uses. Evans described one shore station at Adventure Bay in 1829, owned by George Robinson employed 80 - 90 men, two schooners, two sloops and a large number of whaleboats. By 1830 Port Davey, near the Spring River Basin, had a whaling station. A private letter notes if there were no whales; rather than let the men be idle, they would put them to work building underground sleds, huts for holding oil, collecting firewood or cooking meals.²⁵¹ The auxiliary men were usually coopers, carpenters and blacksmiths, all of whom used industrial amounts of timber fuel either as wood or charcoal.

By 1816 bay whaling was well established. Land based tryworks were set up burning thousands of tons of firewood and blubber, where:

the smoke from the tryworks smudged the coastline from Bicheno to Wineglass Bay on the east coast, along the shores of Bruny Island and south to Recherché Bay, at Port Davey and the west section and at many places on the north and north east.²⁵²

How many industries not considered in this work used fuel in their production, that have gone unrecorded? Thousands and possibly millions of tons of firewood were used during the three decades of early settlement, leaving a profound effect on the Aboriginal landscape. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to estimate how much firewood was used or which species of tree gave

²⁵⁰Evans, K., *Shore Based Whaling in Tasmania*, Historical Research Project, Vol. 1. A Social Economic History: Report for Parks and Wildlife Services. 1993.

²⁵¹NS 123/1.

the best heat for a particular industries fires. However, it is known that Sheaoak and Wattle offer hot fast burning fires and Peppermint a slower fire.

2.9 Industries Based on Timber

There were a number of early industries totally reliant on timber for their product. Coopers and wheelwrights are probably the better known users of wood, with possibly the oldest continuous industry being that of the Hop, begun in 1804 by Colonel Paterson when he brought hops to plant at Port Dalrymple.²⁵³ Richard Clark was granted 190 acres in the same year to grow crops of hops at Clarence Plains.²⁵⁴ Cataract Point was a hop growing area in 1825, as the *Tasmanian and Port Dalrymple Advertiser* newspaper carried an article about the hop ground being damaged by cattle.²⁵⁵ In the south of Van Diemen's Land, Mr J W Gunning (JP) was the principal grower of hops in 1827 with 10 acres of his property at Coal River under production. The *Tasmanian* reported that Mr Gunning was building a large hop stove and kiln for drying "them in the proper manner."²⁵⁶ It was known that settlers grew hops in possibly personal or limited sale quantities.²⁵⁷

²⁵²Philip, J., *Whaling Ways of Old Hobart Town*, J Walker and Sons Pty. Ltd., Hobart, Tasmania. 1936. p. 10.

²⁵³*Sydney Gazette*, 23 December 1804.

²⁵⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: p. 568. Received as a fax from Freda Gray Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association with who it was to missing and page number hand written.

²⁵⁵*Tasmanian and Port Dalrymple Advertiser Launceston*, 19 January 1825.

²⁵⁶*Tasmanian*, 25 October 1827.

²⁵⁷LSD 1/92 TA.

In 1816, the *Hobart Town Gazette* ran a series of articles about successful hop growing. It was the only colonial industry, other than shipbuilding, which relied solely on timber in its various processing stages. Bins, dredges, poles and kilns were all made from timber and the drying process was done with charcoal. There were a goodly number of hop farms all with their kiln, so large quantities of large timber were necessary. Each bin was eight feet long and three feet broad resting on “long square wooden frames” consisting of four pieces of timber joined together and supported by four legs. A prop at each end, to bear up another long piece of wood, was placed at a convenient height over the middle of the bin to lay the poles on and each bin supported two or more poles at a time.

The hop dredge consisted of a piece of wood shaped like a handspike with a strong hook of iron. It was well notched and used as a lever to draw the poles from the ground. In the first year the hops required poles twelve feet long, the second year sixteen feet long, with the average field using 1,225 holes six feet apart. Until the fifth year there were two poles per hill but after that there were three. The average kiln was a square, either ten, twelve, fourteen, or sixteen feet over the top where the hops were laid. If the kiln was twelve feet square then the hop drying area would be at least nine feet from the fire. All hops were dried with charcoal. Tea Tree was the main wood for the poles and the lengths indicated that it was what Aboriginal people cultivated and called Spear Wood, from which they made their spears and waddies.²⁵⁸ Developing a competitive

²⁵⁸ Wilson, E., (Worawee) *Traditional Forest Technique*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers, Hobart. [in press 2003].

use for the same timber meant that the resource was lost to the Aboriginal community.

2.10 Secondary Products from Timber

Charcoal Burners

Charcoal as a forest industry is elusive within the historical record and at the same time charcoal was the most necessary fuel source for the colony until the 1850s. It was the most wasteful and destructive use of timber. It possibly had an impact of greater devastation on the landscape than any other with the exception of Wattle bark. Tons of one species of timber, usually a soft wood, were used to burn tons of hardwood timber to form charcoal. It takes five or six ton of wood to produce one ton of charcoal.²⁵⁹ There was no available listing found during the research for timber to say which tree made the best charcoal, although it was possibly Black Peppermint, as even to day this wood burns to coals not ash. As an essential component of the forge, large amounts of charcoal would have been in every day use. The earliest record for charcoal burners is in the *Historical Records of Australia* where they are listed in the “quarterly employment of the prisoners in H M settlement Derwent River Van Diemen's Land July 1804”.²⁶⁰ Brand notes that charcoal burners are listed at the

²⁵⁹Pers. Com. Karl Stevenson Blacksmith Historian. Other than when specifically referenced the information concerning the use, and number of bags of charcoal used in smithing and forges the information is from Karl Stevenson.

²⁶⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Quarterly Employment of Prisoners, July 1804. p. 258.

mouth of the Gordon River in 1822.²⁶¹ By 1829 “charcoal is commonly burned on the hills around town where the soil is light, and sold in bags or bushels for blacksmiths or other purposes, at one shilling or one shilling and three pence each”.²⁶²

There are a limited number of recorded blacksmiths for the colony between 1804 and 1830, but the term ‘blacksmith’ was used for a general purpose forge worker. Many smiths were specialists in other areas of metal work such as wheelwrights and coopers. In the early nineteenth century, blacksmiths would have been more versatile than a ‘smith’ today. Some of the smiths who arrived in 1804 were already specialists, even though they could turn their hand at other work. Edward Guest was a general ironworker, John Pearsall the nailor, while Anthony Low had two forges by the 1820s, and was considered an excellent toolmaker. Another blacksmith, Peter Holms, included farriering.²⁶³

Then there were many properties whose owners their own forges where the farmer did his own smithing or employed a convict, so presumably the colonist also made their own charcoal. Places such as the Government Garden at New Town Bay had a forge to repair tools. The forge still exists today, as do the huge bellows.²⁶⁴ The Meredith and Cotton properties on the east coast are recorded as having forges where they would have done maintenance to tools and equipment. In 1821 the whole of Pittwater, which included what is today

²⁶¹Brand, I., *Sarah Island Penal Settlements 1822-1833 and 1846-1847* Regal Publishing, Launceston. 1990.

²⁶²*Hobart Town Courier*, 14 March 1829.

²⁶³Tipping, M., *Convicts Unbound: the story of the Calcutta convicts and their settlement in Australia*, Viking O’Neil, Ringwood, Victoria. 1988.

Sorell, Clarence Plains and Rokeby, had only one blacksmith, J. Gordon, who charged twelve shillings for a set of horseshoes, and was paid in wheat.²⁶⁵

Gordon gave the price of iron in Hobart Town as eight pence per pound for nail rods and nine pence a pound for flat bars and the cost of probably three bags or more of charcoal. It is understandable why the smith at Pittwater took his fee in wheat. The settlers of the Upper Clyde at Bothwell, offered the smith a town lot, patronage of the settlers and help in building his house.²⁶⁶

By the mid 1820s, the north of Van Diemen's Land had a number of smiths. Launceston in particular had a number of successful smiths, such as William Bonnily who publicly thanked his patron of the last five years. Bonnily made carts, ploughs, harrows and pumps, all of which could be made to order.²⁶⁷ He would have needed a regular supply of charcoal, as to make something as small as an axe would take about fifteen bags of charcoal.²⁶⁸ Thomas Coombs, a wheelwright, repaired "wagons, carts, harrows, ploughs and other implements of husbandry on the most reasonable terms, accepting wheat as payment."²⁶⁹ The same paper noted that Russell Cooper did all forms of coopering.

Surprisingly for charcoal burners it was a profession that had the potential to be dangerous in unexpected ways. There is a story that "three men who were burning charcoal at Bagdad were attacked by a dozen natives". Two of the men

²⁶⁴The government garden at Cornelian Bay is now the Hobart Cemetery. The original forge is still at the Cemetery and is opened during cemetery tours.

²⁶⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Examination of J. Gordon, 27 March 1821. p. 253.

²⁶⁶*Hobart Town Gazette*, 4 February 1826.

²⁶⁷*Launceston Advertiser*, 9 February 1829.

²⁶⁸Pers. Com. Karl Stevenson Blacksmith Historian 2003. Other than when specifically referenced the information concerning the use, and number of bags of charcoal used in smithing and forges the information is from Karl Stevenson.

escaped, one of who was severely wounded by spears. The third man, a smith called Brisco, was killed.²⁷⁰ On the 29 November 1828 “the boat that usually brings the charcoal from the opposite side of the river to the Engineer’s Stores at Hobart Town” set sail from Kangaroo Point in strong winds and the boat, top heavy with bags of charcoal, capsized and three of the crew died.²⁷¹

Pearl Ash

By 1829 shortages of pearl ash in Hobart Town had forced the price upwards until it was selling at four shillings a pound. Interestingly, the editor of the *Hobart Town Courier* encourages the making of pearl as a viable proposition. The editor notes it was simple to manufacture, there was an abundance of raw material and that financially it should be “a fine speculation”.²⁷² Pearl ash was the result of the “reduction of Mimosa wood to ashes” and was used in washing cloths.²⁷³ Another washing ash was made by “well burnt ashes, of Black Wattle or She-oak, mixed with Green Gum”, the final result being a liquor capable of frothing like soap water and effective in whitening linen.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ *Launceston Advertiser*, 9 February 1829.

²⁷⁰ *Tasmanian*, 28 February 1828.

²⁷¹ *Hobart Town Courier*, 29 November 1828.

²⁷² *Hobart Town Courier*, 28 March 1829.

²⁷³ Evidence of Thomas Kent during the Bigge Enquiry 1820, in Whinray, J., Barilla Production and Early Soap Making in Tasmania. Author’s Copy from Tasmanian Herbarium Hobart. No publication date. p. 282.

²⁷⁴ *Hobart Town Gazette* 1819 in Whinray, J., Barilla Production and Early Soap Making in Tasmania. Author’s Copy from Tasmanian Herbarium, Hobart. No publication date. p. 282.

Lime

For many years the sole source of lime was that obtained from shells.

Limestone has been found, but the labour of making it into lime has been found too inconvenient for the present wants of the settlement, as shells are much easier procured and make better lime.²⁷⁵

There were government operated lime burners huts near Muddy Plains (Sandford).²⁷⁶ So common were the huge shell piles, or middens, near the settlement of Hobart Town and along the banks of the Derwent River that they are rarely given references as to the areas of their location. Today only remnants of these middens are recorded.

Aspects of the shell lime industry are discussed in the chapter on fauna. There are no records that indicate the amount of timber used to burn the shells.

Limestone, quarried for burning into lime, occurred near inland towns, even though it was accepted that the limestone was inferior to shell lime. A limestone quarry one mile from Hobart Town was in operation by June 1816, and was considered extremely good for masons' work, but shell lime was better for plasterers.²⁷⁷ Early lime kilns are recorded on 16 acres of land between Brown Street and Lochner Street in the west of Hobart Town, and by 1816 there was a lime kiln at Burnett Street under John Dogget park.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: J. Oxley Account of the Settlement at Port Dalrymple, 1810. p. 770.

²⁷⁶*Hobart Town Gazette* 25 September 1819.

²⁷⁷*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 8 June 1816.

²⁷⁸Pers. Com. Max Banks Royal Society of Tasmania 2000.

2.11 Conclusion

Between 1804 and 1830 only the land claimed by Europeans was being affected and modified by the removal of timber, not the entire landmass of Van Diemen's Land that is usually implied by modern writers.

The one aspect of the timber industry that clearly developed was the progressive destruction and change of the original Aboriginal maintained landscape. The early journal and dairy accounts indicate a land heavily timbered with a variety of tree species. Descriptions viewed within the mind of the reader are difficult to perceive, and to visualise an 1804 dense forest covering the area of Hobart Town is impossible. There is no way a person in the present, looking backwards into the past, can visualise what the sketch by George Harris allows us to see. The destruction of the forests at Sullivans Cove as shown in the 1817 sketch figure 2.15, graphically compares the difference in a mere 13 years. In 1804 Sullivans Cove was an Aboriginal managed landscape, by 1817 it was a British landscape of bareness.

The density of the forests prior to 1803, with the size of the recorded trees, surpasses anything today called "old growth". This chapter has been no more than an overview of a very complex industry that began with the removal of the first dead tree for firewood by a visiting ship. By the end of 1830, other forested parts of Van Diemen's Land are not required for expansion or exploitation, and remained intact until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The original timbered landscape must have been an incredible sight to the original invaders arriving with Lieutenant Bowen in 1803.

Deforestation of land adjacent to the settled corridors occurred rapidly, as did the isolated coastal areas only accessible by sea. The records show that in 1818 the site of the Kings Pits to be “exhausted” of timber, and yet in 1825 it was where the first commercially owned sawmill was erected.²⁷⁹ Is this the same Kings Pits located five miles from ‘town’ when the landscape surrounding ‘town’ was densely forested? However, by 1829 Woodmans Hill, which is today Knocklofty Terrace just outside the city centre, had been cleared of all timber, though the road to Mount Wellington still had some Stringy Barks.

However:

with regards to the interior, we understand, that in various parts the wild savage woods are quite disappearing and giving way to fertile fields of wheat and other farm produce.²⁸⁰

At the same time, proclamations of government sovereignty were published in the local papers for specific tracts of land:

the timber on the tract of ground beyond the bridge at Cascades, an in line to the right and left of that place, being reserved for government, all persons are prohibited from cutting any part thereof.²⁸¹

So much of the timber industry was gleaned from peripheral records. A problem with discipline of both the convicts and their overseer processing procedures were determined. Lieutenant Vandermeulen frequently complained

²⁷⁹Dargavell (1988) argues that the site is close to where Degraives built the first saw mill six years later and was able to find enough logs. Perhaps the most sort after and the largest trees were exhausted and by the time Degeraves setup his mill lesser types of trees were being used.

²⁸⁰*Bents Monthly Advertiser*, May 1828. p. 72.

about the work attitude of his overseer Mr J B Boothman, and he complained about the way he did not watch the driver and:

the abuse of the timber carriages by the convicts and the bullocks when drawing timber, and I desired him to check it and he did not. ... they frequently bring in two logs instead of one, and not for Govt. use and overloaded their carriage. ... The wood is procured ... six miles in the summer, and three miles in winter [from the town].²⁸²

Vandermuelen noted that usually eight bullocks are employed in general to pull the carriage and ten bullocks when the roads are bad.

How much timber harvested was never accounted for, even when early on the convicts were able to earn a living by working after hours.

Timber prices were 1 pound 10 shillings per acre for felling and burning - 3 shillings per hundred for splitting palings 7 foot long - timber cut for lath returned 6 shillings and 8 pence per hundred per 1,000 and 3 shillings per 1,000 if they were 2 foot long.²⁸³

The problem of convict control and supervision became a major problem with the isolated pits until the establishment of task work. Under this arrangement a compulsory task of 50 cubic feet for able hands and 40 for less expert workers was set for each week. This allowed the convicts to produce a surplus, which was then bought by the government. The labourers were allowed to cut shingles on their own account on Saturday afternoons. Production records for 1827 - 1829 showed that one third of the timber was cut on the men's own account. Approximately 7,000 of timber was sawn in the three year period.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 31 May 1817.

²⁸²*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Bigge report Examination of Lieutenant C J Vandermeulen, 15 April 1820. p. 374.

²⁸³*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 1: Sawn Timber in Carpenters Shop at Different Sawpits to be accounted. 1 June 1804. Pp. 270-271.

Bent noted how Huon Pine was originally found in and on the River Huon, but is now known to exist in several parts of the island, particularly towards the south where the land is most rocky and sterile.²⁸⁵ In 1820 Hobart Town was still described as having trees of enormous girth and height, even when timber was in limited supply.²⁸⁶ There were problems with cattle grazing areas, which now had several miles of dead trees caused by cattle eating the grass around the trunks of trees and exposing the earth to the action of the sun and excessive dryness.²⁸⁷ Is it possible that the lament of timber was for particular species, and not trees in general, as records contradicting each other are common place?

Overall it was the newspaper advertisements that assisted in unraveling much of the history of timber. Mr R L Murray, owner of “Strathearn”, a property at the rear of the Sandy Bay farms, complained of the serious damage “by firewood collectors, shingle splitters & particularly by a whole colony of sawyers and charcoal burners”.

Murray complained that the men had established “a colony” in the middle of his land refusing to move, even making threats when he promises to:

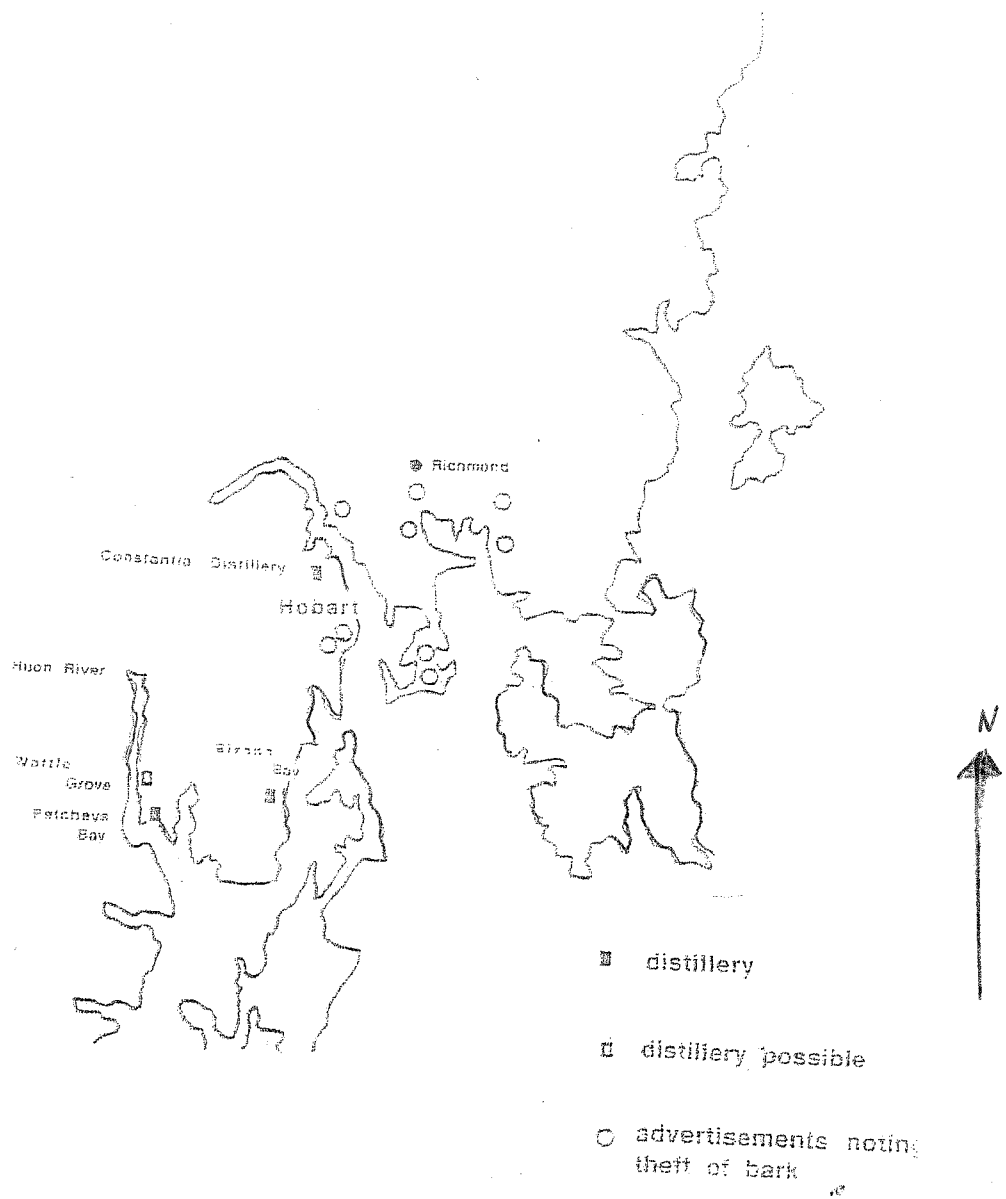
immediately commence the most rigorous offensive warfare in my power against the whole of this to me most annoying alliance²⁸⁸

thus showing that little could be done to protect any land close to settled areas.

²⁸⁴ Dargavel, J., *Sawing, Selling and Sons*, Chapter 2: The First Timber Firm in Van Diemen's Land, Centre for Resources and Environment Studies, Canberra. 1988.

²⁸⁵ *Bent's Monthly Advertiser*, May 1828.

²⁸⁶ Private letter from W Williams, in Sharman *Historical Records Society of Australia Bulletin Public Records Regional Survey*. 1959.



Map 5: Locations of some Wattle bark harvesting areas in southern Van Diemen's Land adapted from 1:25,000 map.

Source: K L McP.

Perhaps the best and final description of environmental modification and changes are those expressed by newspaper editors. By 1830 government orders prohibited the cutting down of timber within five miles of Hobart Town, with diligent constables bringing many sawyers and others before the police.

The editor of the *Hobart Town Courier* criticised the constables as not being vigilant as many instances of cutting had been seen. Land was becoming “devalued by the timber removal for use as suburban allotments, while timber would eventually grow into useful trees if left alone”.²⁸⁹

Using statistics as the only source to develop an argument on exports shows just how incomplete the statistics actually are. However, colonial newspapers as a research tool definitely prove the worth of using them as a primary source.

²⁸⁷Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania papers, read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1902.

²⁸⁸*Hobart Town Gazette*, 12 April 1823.

CHAPTER 3

WATTLE BARK

3.1 Introduction

On 1 March 1805, Lieutenant-Governor David Collins made an official complaint to Lord Hobart, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, about the problems with shoes provided in London for the new settlement on the Derwent:

They were of such wretched quality and so ill adapted to the use of the people, who were just landed in an uncleared country, that a pair of shoes were completely worn out in a fortnight, and as it was impossible for them to work in many situations without shoes, the whole having been issued.²⁹⁰

The entire two years' supply of English-made shoes provided to the colony had been exhausted. With no option, Collins was forced to rely on local resources. His objective was to produce one pair of shoes for each convict. The soles were to be made out of leather bags that had been used to ship wheat from Sydney, with Kangaroo skins for the uppers. This was the first mention of tanning in the historical record of Van Diemen's Land.

Towards the end of 1805, Collins followed up that dispatch with another, addressed to the Earl of Camden, newly appointed to replace Hobart following the return of the British prime Minister Pitt to power:

Finding that the bark of the trees called the Blue Gum and Black Wattle of this country, can be used successfully in tanning, I have employed some prisoners conversant in that business; and we get some

²⁸⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*, 7 August 1830.

²⁹⁰ *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Lord Hobart, 1 March 1805. p. 320.

very good upper leathers from the skins of the kangaroos, but we are not so well furnished with material for sole leather.²⁹¹ What is interesting with the dispatch is that the bark of the Blue Gum and the Black Wattle were specifically mentioned as the tanning agents as early as 1805.

How Collins obtained the knowledge to use these specific barks for tanning is not known. There are three viable hypotheses. The first involves the English background of the convict settlers. Although there were no tanners specifically mentioned among the *Calcutta* convicts, the use of oak bark for tanning hides would have been common knowledge among convicts with rural backgrounds.²⁹² It is also probable that the thin occupational data obscured the skills of men who may have worked as casual labour in a tannery. Collins, in fact, wrote of employing “prisoners conversant in that business”. These men could have experimented with the bark of several locally common trees, fortuitously chancing upon the species of *Mimosa* that would dominate the Tasmanian tannin bark industry for the next century.²⁹³

Secondly, Collins and others in the party had previous colonial experience in Port Jackson. By the time of the settlement of the Derwent, a government tannery had been erected at Parramatta and William Goff had established the

²⁹¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Earl Camden, 18 December 1805. p. 344. Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King on p. 331 offers a different view of experimental tanning.

²⁹²Tipping, M., *Convicts Unbound: the Story of the Calcutta Convicts and their Settlement in Australia*, Viking O’Neil, Ringwood, Victoria, 1988.

²⁹³In the historical record *Mimosa* and *Wattle* are interchangeable terms for what today is called *Acacia*. As no species name was recorded in the references of the time it was decided to leave the historical terms *Mimosa* and *Wattle*. The term *Mimosa* for the Australian wattle is a result of the British recognising the similarity of leaf and flower with the *Mimosa* tree that grew in Southern Europe.

first private tannery at 8 Pitts Row, Sydney.²⁹⁴ These tanneries would have been preceded by less formal tanning establishments producing the leather needed by the settlers and convicts in New South Wales. Although there is no formal documentation, New South Wales tanning must have started no later than 1790, as the poor quality English leather supplied to Lieutenant Governor Collins would have been the same as that supplied to Governor Philip. At some stage, the fact that the bark of many Australian trees was well adapted to the tanning of leather would have become known. It is conceivable that prior experience in New South Wales guided Collins to the two species used in Van Diemen's Land. Trial and error by the European colonists may have been the process involved in selecting the barks that had the best tanning properties.

Third, knowledge about the use of Wattle bark for the tanning of skins could have been obtained from the Aborigines. Ethnographical and anthropological sources note both the use of tanned leather by Aboriginal peoples and the existence of a number of different tanning techniques. One method to produce skin bags was to use a solution of sap within a closed skin container.²⁹⁵ Another observer recorded the skin being stretched over a bark sheath so that the tannin from the bark was absorbed into the skin.²⁹⁶ It is probable that Europeans observed these techniques and copied the use for particular species.

²⁹⁴Searle, S., *The Rise and Demise of the Black Wattle Industry in Australia*, Technical Paper No 1, CSIRO (Forestry). 1991. p. 3.

²⁹⁵O'Connell, J., Notes on the Manufacture and Use of a Kangaroo Skin Waterbag, *AIAS Newsletter*, No. 13, March 1980. pp. 26-29.

²⁹⁶Wright, R., A Modicum of Taste: Aboriginal Cloaks and Rugs, *AIAS Newsletter*, No. 11, March 1979. p. 55.

The knowledge transfer was more likely to have occurred in New South Wales than in Van Diemen's Land, and David Collins may have even played a role. The Lieutenant Governor has been described as a man “hungry for knowledge”.²⁹⁷ While in Port Jackson he collected information for a book on the Aboriginal people “for the benefit of curious Europeans”. For this reason, he sought an understanding of the *Eora* nation of Port Jackson and established a ‘friendship’ with Bennillong, who allowed him to watch ceremonies and participate in their preparation.²⁹⁸ These close dealings with a range of aspects of Aboriginal culture may have given Collins the information regarding tannin barks and methods necessary for tanning Kangaroo skins.

3.2 Thomas Kent and the Huon Distillery

The small population, less than 12,000, and even smaller free population of Van Diemen's Land before 1820, meant that there was a consistent if limited demand for leather products. Wattle bark could be gathered as needed by the cottage or domestic tanner from the outskirts of the town or from the bush surrounding the farm. The early colonial domestic or cottage industries leave virtually no mark in the Van Diemen's Land historical record. The transition, however, to an export industry is reasonably well documented.

Convict ships could return to England with a cargo of bark. The reasoning was fairly obvious, any cargo for ships that would otherwise return empty amortised

²⁹⁷Currey, J., *David Collins: a Colonial Life*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne. 2000. p. 92.

²⁹⁸Currey, J., *David Collins: a Colonial Life*, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne. 2000.

the costs of convict transportation. The possibility of exporting bark from Australia was first considered in 1802.²⁹⁹ Trial shipments were actually made in 1804 from New South Wales on the *Glatton* and the *Calcutta*.³⁰⁰ Other factors that may have played a role, were concerns about the declining supply of English bark and the loss of bark normally imported from Belgium following the renewal of the war with France. No shipments beyond the initial two trials appear to have been made at that time, although in 1805, the record shows Paterson at Port Dalrymple was collecting and sending various barks, to Governor Collins in Hobart Town for consideration as possible trade resources for shipment to England:

I have sent you four casks of bark. Should you find it in that condition so as to be sent to England, I think it might be worthy of notice. The cask No. 1 is the She-oak, said to be the best; No. 2, Honeysuckle; 3, Box; 4, Blue-Gum.³⁰¹

Knowing that Wattle or Mimosa grew in the region its absence from the list is curious.

The next appearance within the historical record of tannin bark, was again in New South Wales. In 1814, the transported scientist John Hutchison undertook experiments into the chemical properties of eucalyptus and Wattle barks on behalf of Governor Macquarie. His results with “Green Wattle (Number 5)” were particularly interesting, the tanning properties being described as “in

²⁹⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 1 Vol. 3: The Admiralty to Lord Pelham, 29 August 1802. p. 571.

³⁰⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 1 Vol. 5: Governor King to Lord Hobart, 20 December 1804. p. 205.

³⁰¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Paterson to Lieutenant Governor Collins, 14 November 1805. p. 646.

abundance perhaps exceeding anything ever sent to Europe”.³⁰² Searle suggests that Green Wattle was the contemporary common name in New South Wales for what is now known as Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*).³⁰³ The historical record actually indicates that it was the difference in bark colouration, which gave the Mimosa or Wattle its names, “Black Wattle” as a result of the black bark and “Green Wattle” because of the green bark. Leaf colour, as seen from a distance, may have influenced naming the green wattle to distinguish it from a similar tree with silver leaves.

At this stage the historical record becomes tangled because personalities and events in Port Jackson are easily confused with personalities and events in Van Diemen's Land. Part of this problem relates to the fact that the early records did not clearly note at which colonial settlement people were living in at particular times, especially when the people in question owned land in both Port Jackson and Van Diemen's Land. Simeon Lord senior was involved in the business activities of Thomas Kent, and Simeon Lord (both Simeon Lord the father and the son) straddled the two settlements with Lord senior holding land in the north and Lord the son in southern Van Diemen's Land.³⁰⁴ Simeon Lord senior also had a stepson with the surname Black who was associated with his Sydney storehouses and offices. To add further to the researcher's complications at least three other Lords unrelated to either Simeon or Edward Lord (Royal Navy

³⁰² *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 1 Vol. 8: Mr. Hutchison to Governor Macquarie, 30 April 1814. p. 223.

³⁰³ Searle, S., *The Rise and Demise of the Black Wattle Industry in Australia*, Technical Paper No 1, CSIRO (Forestry). 1991.

³⁰⁴ Pers. Com. Joan Nichols descended from Simeon Lord 1999 - 2003.

adjunct to Lieutenant Governor Collins) were operating as merchants at the settlement at Sullivans Cove on the Derwent River.³⁰⁵

Kent was a long-established colonist. He came to Sydney from England in 1808, regularly travelling back and forth between Sydney and Van Diemen's Land and also to Mauritius and London. He was engaged in many businesses and speculations, often but not always, in conjunction with the Sydney entrepreneur Simeon Lord senior. Thomas Kent's entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* alleged that Kent set up an establishment to collect and process tannin bark on the Huon River in 1818.³⁰⁶ The source for that date is not known. It is more likely to be 1819 or 1820 as his land at Herdsman Cove was most likely to be very rich in Wattle bark, therefore, the first location that he would exploit.

The historical basis for a date later than 1818 lies in the letter Kent wrote to Lieutenant -Governor Sorell on 19 April 1819 to inform him of experiments he had undertaken to find a substitute for oak in the tanning of leather in Britain.³⁰⁷ "Forests of young oaks", he observed, were being cut down "for the bark". The regeneration was unable to keep pace with demand. The bark of the Mimosa as a substitute would therefore, he argued, be a profitable export for the Colony. It is not recorded why Sorell was unwilling to provide any assistance.

³⁰⁵Where it is known if it was Simeon Lord, senior or junior, it is noted within the text. It is also noted which other Lord is mentioned when known.

³⁰⁶*Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 2: 1788-1850: Thomas Kent, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1967. pp. 44-46.

³⁰⁷*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: T. Kent to Governor Sorell, 19 April 1819. p. 639.

Local experiments in tanning may have begun as early as 1816. A letter dated 12 April, 1816, from William Collins, a merchant and former Harbourmaster of Hobart Town, to a man known only as “Dear Lord” from the salutation, described experiments undertaken on barilla and tannin bark.³⁰⁸ FitzSymonds interpreted the name Lord to mean Edward Lord but it was more probably Simeon Lord Senior. The name of Kent is not mentioned except in the explanatory notes. FitzSymonds presumably came to the conclusion that as Kent was involved with the same two materials in 1819, he would have been involved at the earlier date. FitzSymonds conclusions about who was the recipient of the letter is understandable as there are few links to merchants working or associated in both Port Jackson and Hobart Town settlements. As FitzSymonds was writing from Sydney it is clear to me why he interpreted the “Lord” to be Edward Lord. Not having all the background makes his assumption possible when only a surname is noted. However, while Edward Lord was considered a leading member of the Hobart Town commercial community, other unrelated ‘Lords’ well known within the historical content of the time should at least have been considered.

Edward Lord may have been involved in some manner with Wattle bark, as those two “Lords”, Edward and Simeon (senior / junior?) were linked in other speculations. However, there is no other mention of Edward Lord having involvement in the Wattle industry. Simeon Lord senior on the other hand is known to have provided the finance for Kent to set up the establishment in Van

³⁰⁸FitzSymonds, E., *A Looking Glass for Tasmania: Letters, Petitions and Other Manuscripts Relating to Van Diemen's Land 1808-1845*, Sullivans Cove, Adelaide. 1980. p. 14.

Diemen's Land.³⁰⁹ He also took over the enterprise when Kent returned temporarily to England in 1819.³¹⁰

Kent gave evidence to the Bigge Committee on 6 March 1820 on the Wattle bark industry.³¹¹ The evidence is not always easy to follow, due either to problems with the clerical record or with the evidence itself. The site of his works is known only as being “on the Huon River, about forty miles by water from Hobart Town”. Contemporary maps do not indicate any specific location. Wattle Grove and Petcheys Bay are two possible locations? Wattle Grove is more likely (see map 5).

This assumption is based on a known location of a distillery at Petcheys Bay in the mid 1820s which was established by a business rival of Kent, John Petchey, and that the listing of quantities of exports from both men indicates two different harvesting sites.

Kent employed a gang of 14 convicts to fell and strip the trees. The bark was cut into three feet lengths and stacked “in the same manner as staves for the purposes of preventing it from curling” (figure 3.1). He stated explicitly that he exported it as bark. He did not think there would be any advantage in reducing it to a powder, but agreed that its bulk per ton weight meant that it often did not fit into the space allowed on the ship. Resulting in extra freight costs being charged.

³⁰⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: T Kent to Bigge Inquiry, 20 October 1819. p. 639.

³¹⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: T Kent to Bigge Inquiry, 20 October 1819. p. 639.

³¹¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: The Bigge Report Examination No. 16 of Thomas Kent, 6 March 1820. pp. 255-257.

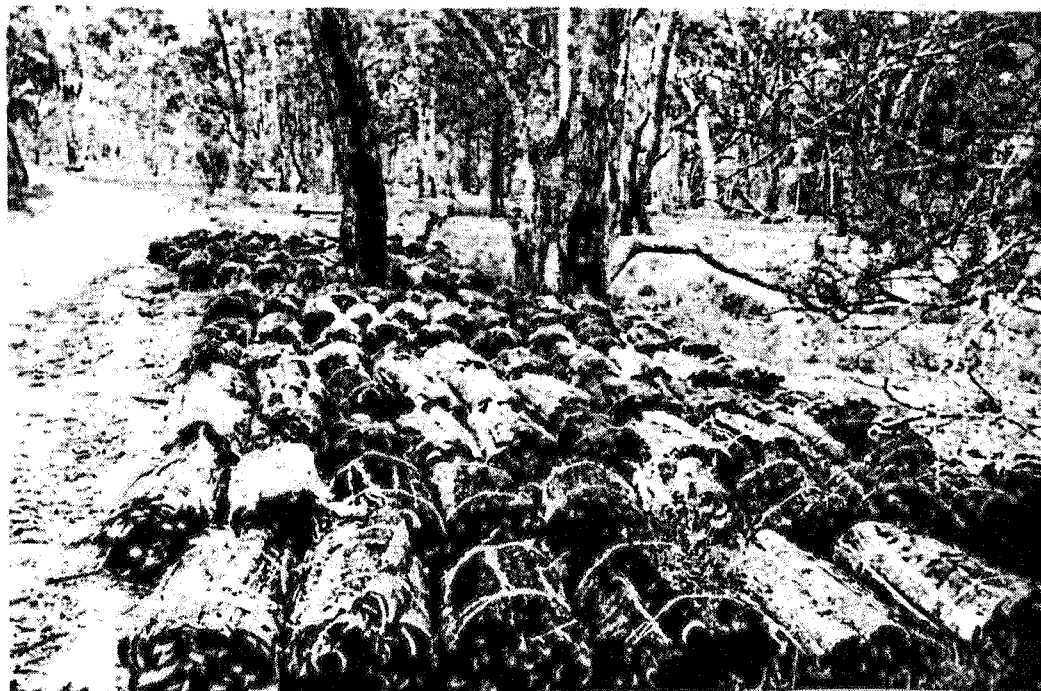


Figure 3.1: Rolls of Wattle bark.

Source: Searle, S., *The Rise and Demise of the Black Wattle Industry in Australia*, Technical Paper No. 1, CSIRO (Forestry). 1991. p.17

Kent stated that he exported bark due to “not having been able to obtain the necessary vessels and apparatus for the making of the extract”.³¹² He had, however, previously prepared samples of extract and described a process that seems of factory-scale:

After the bark is collected from the trees, I passed it through a crushing mill for the purpose of bruising it. The mill merely consisted of two wood cylinders placed horizontally and worked by horses. After being crushed, I put the bark into copper vessels and boiled it in water in the proportion of two pounds of bark to a gallon of water; after boiling about an hour, that operation is repeated a second time with the same quantity of fresh water; the decoction is then evaporated in pans to the consistence of tar and may be continued till it acquires the consistence of pitch.³¹³

³¹²*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: The Bigge Report Examination No. 16 of Thomas Kent, 6 March 1820.

³¹³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: The Bigge Report Examination No. 16 of Thomas Kent, 6 March 1820. p. 256.

The production of bark extract was, therefore, to be desirable by saving freight costs and allowing for more product to be exported. The reason was as Kent explained: three tons of bark would be reduced to one ton of extract, saving space on ships. Firewood was plentiful and the infrastructure was minimal. The only apparent difficulty was the availability of casks for the bark or extract. While Kent noted that wattle trees made “excellent hoops and staves”, it is unknown if wattle staves were used in any quantity. It is highly likely that not just to reduce costs, but because they were the only labour force, Kent had an assigned convict capable of making barrels. However, while skilled coopers that were free were at a premium, although not recorded, possibly convicts capable of making barrels, were assigned from the earliest times of Van Diemen's Land settlement. With the amount of supplies arriving and the amount of oil, bark extract and seal skins leaving from Hobart Town, a large percentage of barrels would have had to have been locally made. It is known from newspaper accounts that casks and barrels imported with supplies were reused as barrels were in demand for the oil and skin trades.

No records show what happened to Kent's establishment at the Huon River. However, Kent and a partner, R.W. Loane, are known to have had a distillery at Birchs Bay in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel from which “a considerable quantity of the extract of Mimosa bark was made and shipped, in 1821, for the Isle of France”.³¹⁴ It was to be forwarded on to London if not sold. There was apparently no problem in selling the extract in Mauritius.

³¹⁴*Hobart Town Gazette*, 17 December 1825.

Some of the records that have survived regarding Kent's later operations in Van Diemen's Land are problematic. Kent left the colony surreptitiously in 1822 on the *Lusitania*, a sealing vessel bound for Britain via Macquarie Island.³¹⁵ It is possible that he left in this secret fashion because he feared the wrath of Simeon Lord, who had lost:

upwards of £1,500 Stg principally through the misconduct of a Mr Tho^s Kent in the attempt of procuring the bark of the mimosa and manufacturing the extract thereof.³¹⁶

Some might consider that Simeon Lord was clearly preparing a legal case against Kent, with identical depositions taken from Blinkworth, Gully and Innis, three members from a Macquarie Island sealing gang, stating that they had recognised Kent onshore on Macquarie Island.³¹⁷ Simeon Lord needed these depositions to show that Kent had left the colony without the required clearance. It is doubtful that debts to Simeon Lord alone made Kent leave Van Diemen's Land in such a way. There was little cash in the colony and processed export items, such as bark, were sold through agents in London via credit or promissory notes. As Simeon Lord senior was a partner with Kent, from around 1818 in the production of Wattle bark and Wattle bark extract, it is unknown why Lord was considering a court case.

While a prominent merchant in New South Wales, Simeon Lord was known to be a difficult person to deal with and someone who held grudges for years on

³¹⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol.4: Lieutenant Governor Sorell to Under Secretary Wilmot, 10 November 1822. p. 63.

³¹⁶Colonial Secretary New South Wales, Memorials 4/1830 (fiche 3049 No. 216): Memorial of Simeon Lord, Merchant.

³¹⁷*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 4: Depositions of Blinkworth, Inns and Gully, 13 November 1822. pp. 436, 437.

perceived or real slights.³¹⁸ Kent would have been aware of the type of man Simeon Lord was, when he approached him for financial backing to develop his business venture to produce Mimosa extract. It is possible that Simeon Lord was putting steps in motion to protect his interests. It is difficult to understand why Kent had to leave Van Diemen's Land when credit and barter were the main means of exchange in Van Diemen's Land at this time and Kent's bark products were profitable. Therefore he should have had sufficient assets to allay the creditors.

What is known is that Kent left the colony with a number of small debts. What is not known is why he suddenly had no credit rating? The allegation of John Simons, one of Kent's creditors, was that Kent had undoubtedly lost money and may even have misappropriated some money although this is not obvious in the *Historical Records of Australia* or the colonial newspapers. When the *Lusitania* arrived at Green Island, Simons tried to board the vessel to demand:

a settlement of his account, being £10 for rafting timber; that Mr Kent told him he would pay him when he came back, but that at present he must pay him with the fore top sail.³¹⁹

A ten pound debt was relatively small to motivate such a stealthy exit, when Kent was reported to have sold "30 tons of bark and now lying in the Huon River; and a quantity of bark, at Port Dalrymple".³²⁰ That Kent owned Wattle bark at the Tamar is surprising given that the Tamar was known to be an area of Simeon Lord senior's operations whereas Kent's significant operations were in

³¹⁸Hainsworth, D., *The Sydney Traders Simeon Lord and his Contemporaries 1788-1821*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 1981.

³¹⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 4: Statement of John Simons, 11 March 1822. p. 423.

³²⁰*Hobart Town Gazette*, 23 February 1822.

the South. While it is known that Kent was working with the father it is not known if he was working with the son or with both father and son in single ventures, not necessarily in the Wattle industry. One possibility is that Kent preferred to work with the son and so incurred Simeon Lord senior's wrath, which might explain the improbability of incurring debts in a society maintained by credit. Kent is painted in some secondary sources as an amoral idealist, squandering money on ill conceived projects. There may have been greater problems for Kent. There is little evidence beyond circumstantial allusions, for any outright dishonesty on his part.³²¹ Other accounts indicate that Simeon Lord considered himself slighted or duped in some way by Thomas Kent, and that he eventually got retribution.³²²

History indicates that Simeon Lord had motives beside revenge - though revenge was to come years later in New South Wales - in the pursuit of Kent. After maligning Kent, Lords Memorial to Governor Brisbane went on to explain that he was interested in continuing with the Wattle bark enterprise, and that he had advanced £2,000 to a Mr Birrell who was "to proceed to Van Diemen's Land and there take upon himself the management of the concern".³²³ To assist with this project, Simeon Lord senior requested a grant of up to four thousand acres of land and convict labour to be assigned to him. A draft reply written at the bottom of the Memorial indicated a willingness to grant 2,000 acres but only upon the export of 200 tons of Wattle bark extract of

³²¹Limited research has been undertaken on Thomas Kent outside of the Wattle bark industry. Further research may contribute to an understanding of colonial industries. It is known that Kent continued to be a prominent figure after 1830.

³²²Hainsworth, D., *The Sydney Traders Simeon Lord and his contemporaries 1788-1821*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne. 1981.

merchantable quality. Both Simeon Lords are known to have held land in Van Diemen's Land. However, it is not recorded whether the father ever again participated in the wattle bark industry. The export of 200 tons of extract by Simeon Lord senior is extremely unlikely, and there is no record of Mr Birrell exporting bark.

3.3 The Wattle Boom 1824-1826

A significant export trade in wattle bark and tannin extract had developed by the mid 1820s as shown by scattered records, though the erratic nature of the official statistics contained in the *Blue Books* of Van Diemen's Land make it impossible to trace its extent with accuracy (figure 3.2).

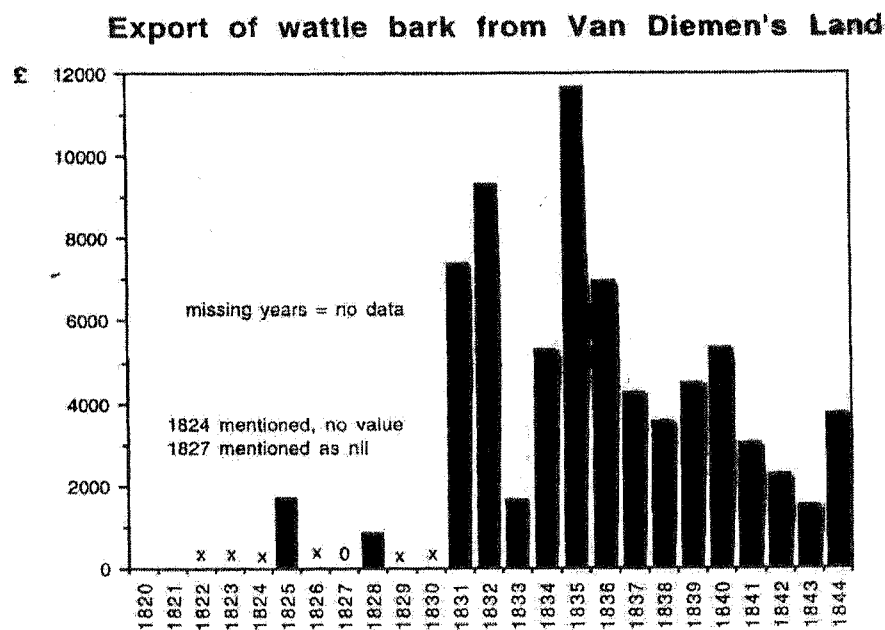


Figure 3.2: Graph from Government records. (K McP)

³²³Colonial Secretary New South Wales, Memorials 4/1830 (fiche 3049 No. 216): Memorial of

Bark is not officially mentioned as an export in these books, either in 1822 or 1823, even though the statistics in export returns for these two years appear systematic and complete. Wattle bark is mentioned in the *Blue Books* for the first time in 1824, though no value for any item of export was provided, although exports in 1823 are confirmed by the limited shipping data published in the *Hobart Town Gazette*.

It is arguable that significant bark exports began in 1824, rose in 1825 and probably peaked in 1826. The records within the *Blue Book* for 1826, however, are very unclear. Exports apparently ceased in 1827 according to the *Blue Book* (figure 3.2) but newspaper accounts for the same year show that both Wattle bark and Wattle extract were still being listed within cargo manifests of ships leaving for Britain.³²⁴

In any case, the trade revived in 1828. Despite the lack of official statistics for the next two years, exports continued at a significant level. An export value of £7,422 for 1831 was sufficient to place Wattle bark fourth in the list of exports from Van Diemen's Land, albeit considerably behind wool, wheat and whale oil.

The emergence of the Wattle bark industry in the north of Van Diemen's Land began in 1819. Bark collected from the coastal area between Circular Head and Port Sorell was exported along with other cargo. In 1820, six tons of Wattle bark was sent to London on a sealing ship, but no records have been found to

Simeon Lord, Merchant.

³²⁴*Colonial Times*, 23 March 1827.

indicate if other sealing ships took the northern bark to London or anywhere else. It was 1829 before regular direct shipments of bark were made between Port Dalrymple and London.³²⁵

Between 1824 and 1826 the industry had some of the attributes of a boom with an increased demand in exports. Wattle bark was being assessed as an industry with considerable potential for the colony as the increasing scale of the English tanning industry had led to an increase of 25 per cent in the consumption of English oak for tannin.³²⁶ It would be easier for producers of tannin in Van Diemen's Land to compete in an expanding market. A typical comment on the bark market was that by the editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette*, who stated that he had been paying attention to Mimosa bark "as it daily becomes more interesting to the colony as a palpable component of its future opulence".³²⁷ The editor went on to query the extent of the price difference between extract and dry bark. There was a need for the exporters of the bark extract to determine from their London agents whether the extra value of the extract would cover "the immense toil and expensive apparatus necessary to obtain it".³²⁸ Despite the uncertainty, the boom years were characterised by the production of extract.

³²⁵Bethell, L., *The Story of Port Dalrymple: Life and Work in Northern Tasmania*. Private publication with no date. Queen Victoria Community Museum history file. p. 43.

³²⁶*Hobart Town Gazette*, 28 June 1823.

³²⁷*Hobart Town Gazette*, 8 April 1825.

3.4 Distilleries

There appears to have been at least three bark distilleries operating in the mid-1820s. These were Petchey and Wood's operations at Petcheys Bay, Peet and Hume's Constantia Distillery at New Town, and another one at the Tamar, operator and location unknown. There were probably others. John Petchey, for instance, had a farm near Cambridge from which he stripped all the Wattle trees.³²⁹ No record is known of a distillery at this location. However, Petchey's bark could have been processed in Hobart Town. There is a mention of a "manufactory" on Davey Street in a document certifying that 15 hogsheads of extract were the product of Van Diemen's Land.³³⁰ Petchey was listed in 1824 as a brewer at Davey Street, probably operating at or near the Waterloo Tavern of which he was the licensee. This was located at the corner of Davey and Murray Streets, very near the waterfront of the period. A brewery was not an unlikely site for a distillery. Alternatively, the Davey Street site could have been nothing more than a warehouse used to store extract distilled in the bush.

In 1824 Petchey and Wood established their public profile of the industry initially shipping 100 tons of extract of mimosa bark to Britain on the *Guildford*.³³¹ It was sent to swan hide brokers, Dyster and Coker who must have been efficient promoters of the extract as it was this shipment that led to Petchey and Wood receiving the Ceres medal as an award.³³² The bark came

³²⁸*Hobart Town Gazette*, 8 April 1825.

³²⁹Pers. com. Freda Gray, President and historian for the Hobart Town (1804) First Settlers Association and living on part of Petchey's farm. 2000.

³³⁰*Transactions of the Society for Arts Colonies and Trade*, Vol. 43: No. 2, 1825. p. 206.

³³¹Read, C., *John Petchey: Handsome John*, Van Diemen's Land Norfolk Island Interest Group, New Town. 1992. pp. 4-5. The source states extract, but it is more likely to have been bark given the tonnage quoted.

³³²*Transactions of the Society for Arts etc. 1824-1825*. Private letter as a receipt of extract to John Petchey and William Wood from Dyster and Coker, London, 1 December 1824.



Figure 3.3: The Ceres gold medal.

Source: Read, C., *John Petchey Handsome John*, Van Diemen's Land Norfolk Island Interest group. 1992. p. 5.

from a place near Cygnet now known as Petcheys Bay. The shipment was a triumph. A Liverpool tanner promised to take all the extract that they could export, while H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex formally presented Petchey's agent with the Gold Ceres Medal of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in a formal ceremony at the Opera House (figure 3.3).³³³

Upon returning to Van Diemen's Land, Petchey and Wood applied for Crown land concessions at the Carlton and Oyster Bay, areas from which they wanted to strip the bark.³³⁴

³³³ *Colonial Time*, 30 September 1825.

Ironically, Thomas Kent, while in England, lobbied the government for support for his exports. The government turned to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce to assess the merits of wattle bark for tanning.

Extensive testing was done on the product by London tanners, and while Kent missed out on the Gold Ceres Medal, his efforts won the award of 30 guineas.³³⁵

There is no mention in the accounts of the Ceres Medal, of Kent's having a distillery, even though his distilled bark product enabled him to win his award

Messrs Peet and Hume acquired the Constantia Distillery at New Town probably in late 1825 and converted it into a Wattle extract plant operating under the name of the Constantia Extract Manufactory. There was a certain logic in this action as the local distilling industry had fallen off with the reduction of the excise on imported spirits and some similarities in equipment between the two processes. The operations of the Constantia Manufactory were outlined in a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur in May 1826, which stated that already a shipment of 200 hogsheads of bark essence apparently worth £1,400 in the colony had already been sent to England.³³⁶ With the recent installation of "a larger apparatus", Peet and Hume were planning to produce 300 to 400 hogsheads against firm orders and more on their own account to be shipped "in succession by the vessels that load here for Europe."³³⁷

³³⁴Read, C., *John Petchey: Handsome John*, Van Diemen's Land Norfolk Island Interest Group, New Town. 1992. p. 4.

³³⁵*Hobart Town Gazette*, 10 December 1824.

³³⁶200 hogsheads equals approximately 55 tons and 1 hogshead equals a 63 gallons

The above reference to a letter was in the form of a petition to Arthur for land on the Hobart waterfront to erect a jetty and warehouse. These buildings were needed to receive and store incoming shipments of bark, to store the trade goods that were used instead of money to pay suppliers of bark, and to handle the outgoing casks of extract. Despite the eloquence of Peet and Humes arguments, Arthur was apparently unimpressed, and the request was not granted.

A third distillery located in the north was indicated by two comments in the *Hobart Town Gazette*. The issue of 18 February 1826 noted the arrival in Hobart of the schooner *Darling* from Launceston with a cargo that included two hogsheads of mimosa extract. The next issue complimented the settlers of Port Dalrymple for at last paying attention to the merits of extract, whose London price was three times the price of bark.³³⁸ In the absence of a Launceston newspaper at that time, further information is unavailable.

Periodic notices in the press indicate where and when wattle bark was being collected. A typical example was inserted by William Gellibrand in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 17 September 1825:

MIMOSA, OR WATTLE BARK
TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD

All persons are hereby cautioned against trespassing on any part of the South Arm. Whoever is detected stripping any wattle trees and stealing the bark, will be prosecuted. A reward of Twenty Dollars will be given for such information as shall bring to conviction any person or persons so offending.³³⁹

Wattle bark had become a commodity worth stealing.

³³⁷LSD1/66/296, Peet and Hume to Arthur. 3 May 1826.

³³⁸*Hobart Town Gazette*, 25 February 1826.

³³⁹Spanish dollars were used as part of the early Van Diemen's Land currency.

Similar notices appearing through 1825 and 1826 roughly delimit the area from which bark was collected, although only from private land. Three sites, Sandy Bay, Mt Direction and South Arm were on the Derwent very close to Hobart. Also Pittwater and the Lower Coal Valley including Orielton Park, Richmond Park and the intriguingly named Wattle Bark Hill behind the modern town of Sorell, indicated other districts providing bark.

3.5 The Bust Year?

The Annual Report of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land for 1827 stated that the export "of bark and its extract has been entirely abandoned".³⁴⁰ This report was contradicted by shipping records that showed exports during that year. For instance, the *Hugh Crawford* sailed from Hobart in March 1827 with a full cargo of colonial products.³⁴¹ Listed as part of the cargo were 13 hogsheads of Mimosa extract per Mr T. Atkinson, 14 puncheons and 22 hogsheads of Mimosa extract per Mr J. Petchey and 6 hogsheads of Mimosa extract by Mr R.W. Fryett. There is even a record showing that later in the same year extract was exported to Calcutta, to the House of Alexander and Co. owned by a Mr Joshua Ferguson.³⁴²

³⁴⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Resumed Series 3 Vol. 7: Governor Arthur to Mr Huskisson, 1 May 1828. p. 295.

³⁴¹*Colonial Times*, 23 March 1827.

³⁴²*Hobart Town Courier*, 27 October 1827.

Nevertheless, such discrepancies cannot hide the fact that there was a collapse of the extract boom in late 1826. The *Colonial Times* printed a report that “letters received in the colony note that Mimosa bark fetched £25 per ton but the extract was unsaleable”.³⁴³ Nevertheless, shipments continued at a large scale for a period of time. On 22 September 1826, the *Atlanta* sailed with 8 casks of extract and 100 tons of dry bark shipped by Mr Bunster and 24 casks of Mimosa extract from Mr James Grant. Bunster forwarded more on the *Henry* in October, shipping out 110 tons of Mimosa bark and 30 casks of extract.³⁴⁴ Prices, however, were disastrously low. A large quantity of both bark and extract, shipped in September 1826, was reported by the *Colonial Times* in March of the following year as having been sold in London at a large loss.³⁴⁵ As the news was received, shipments declined but did not cease completely.

The problem was the colour of the leather. The red colour of the leather tanned with wattle bark was not as desirable as the buff colour produced by oak tannin. Tannin from wattle bark had a number of excellent properties, for instance, it was cheaper and tanned more quickly than oak bark to produce a leather that was more waterproof. These factors could make a significant reduction to the cost of tanning. However, the statement made decades later, in 1850, by Mr J. Mitchell that “colour is of no great importance in leather” is not borne out.³⁴⁶ It was not just “a mere fancy of the trade”. The English tanners had to meet the requirements fashion decreed. In the market of those times leather that was too dark or too red would not sell.

³⁴³*Colonial Times*, 15 September 1826.

³⁴⁴*Hobart Town Gazette*, 18 November 1826.

³⁴⁵*Colonial Times*, 3 March 1827.

In January 1827 the editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette* could see no reason to abandon the trade despite the recent reports from England that have “greatly discouraged the collectors of this article”, wattle bark.³⁴⁷ It could be argued that much of the Tasmanian product was of an inferior standard due to poor harvesting methods and storage practice. The editor went on to state that producers would need to take more care in producing a quality product. To him the main cause of the low prices received in 1826 had been claims of an inferior product where:

Men went into the woods without proper instruments or directions, stripped the trees at random, left the heaps of bark exposed to every vicissitude of weather, brought it into town and threw it in large unsheltered heaps to wait the loading of the vessel.³⁴⁸

However, it had already been claimed it was colour not harvesting methods that was the problem.

These consistent claims of rough handling given to the colonial bark product was unfairly contrasted with the methods used in England by villagers using generations of experience in the careful collection and processing of bark.

In Britain the “trade was done with great care”. “The women used proper mallets and peeling irons” and worked only when the sap was rising in the spring. Lofts were built in the woods for drying and extreme care was taken, as any bruise would cut the price.³⁴⁹ The workers were usually women but it was not the low number of women in the colony but the greater strength needed for

³⁴⁶Mitchell, J., On the Export and Consumption of Wattle Bark and the Process of Tanning &c., *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, Vol v: part 2, 1850. p. 220.

³⁴⁷*Hobart Town Gazette*, 20 January 1827.

³⁴⁸*Hobart Town Gazette*, 20 January 1827.

the work that made bark stripping an exclusively male industry in Van Diemen's Land. For the entire period of Wattle bark harvesting even into the mid twentieth century, preserving the trees was never a consideration. It was recognised that wattle trees could regrow and be harvested with quality bark within ten years.

3.6 Recovery

Odd things were happening during the year the export industry was in decline. The time lag between the occurrence of events on one side of the world and reactions to these events on the other exercised an influence. For instance, a Mr Beauvais arrived as a passenger on the convict transport *Sir Charles Forbes* on 6 January 1827. His plans were to promote the export of mimosa bark and extract from Van Diemen's Land "in conjunction with the company directed by Captain Thomas" who was operating around Port Sorell in the north.³⁵⁰ This suggests that from the time Beauvais left England on 15 September of the previous year, the perceived economic value of wattle bark had already changed. Very little was known about this venture.³⁵¹ It was somehow linked with an equally obscure horse-dealing company that was reported by the *Colonial Times* "to be interested in changing its focus and producing Mimosa bark".³⁵² The same article noted that Thomas Kent planned to return to Van Diemen's Land as the company's agent.

³⁴⁹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 20 January 1827.

³⁵⁰*Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 January 1827.

³⁵¹LSD 1/73/3799, 1831.

³⁵²*Colonial Times*, 9 March 1827.

Letters had been received from Kent stating that he had been granted 10,000 acres of land as a reward for introducing mimosa extract to England.³⁵³ In addition, he was to be given free passage for any workers he might wish to bring out and 100 tons of freight free to the colony on convict transports. Kent did not refrain from gloating: “what do you think of mad Tommy Kent now, with his boat, casks, and extract down the river”.³⁵⁴ At this point, the editor of the *Colonial Times* called upon other settlers to emulate Kent: “to pay attention to the development of the natural resources of the colony”.

A later follow up article discussed the immense contribution Kent had made to the wattle bark industry in the colony and that he was “coming hither to take the sole management and agency of the firm”.³⁵⁵ It is not clear whether Kent returned to Van Diemen’s Land in 1827. Neither is it known why Searle placed Kent’s new venture in New South Wales, rather than in Van Diemen’s Land.³⁵⁶ There is no evidence to indicate that Kent’s intended destination was New South Wales. The locale may have been assumed by Searle as her research is heavily focused on the New South Wales Wattle bark industry, so it is little wonder that she was skeptical about it ever having reached a successful outcome in Van Diemen’s Land.³⁵⁷ Kent’s venture may have become a fiasco owing to Lord having him arrested for debt immediately upon his arrival in Port Jackson. Although the Van Diemen’s Land grant was eventually processed, it

³⁵³ It is not known where the 10,000 acre grant was.

³⁵⁴ *Colonial Times*, 1 June 1827.

³⁵⁵ *Colonial Times*, 1 June 1827.

³⁵⁶ Searle, S., *The Rise and Demise of the Black Wattle Industry in Australia*, Technical Paper No. 1, CSIRO (Forestry). 1991.

³⁵⁷ Searle, S., *The Rise and Demise of the Black Wattle Industry in Australia*, Technical Paper No. 1, CSIRO (Forestry). 1991. p. 3.

was taken over by Kent's creditors. Presumably, Simeon Lord received a lion's share, adding it to his Van Diemen's Land holdings.

Wattle bark reappeared in the export statistics for 1828 but no data exist for 1829 or 1830. Cargo manifests show shipments of bark and extract are recorded frequently in the press. Records after 1831 indicate a large, but fluctuating trade, mainly in bark. Extract is not mentioned. It is known that the Constantia Distillery was sold and converted into a brewery.³⁵⁸

In all likelihood recovery was helped by the spread of the industry into the east coast and other parts of north Van Diemen's Land. Shipping accounts note that the *Wanstead* brought cargoes of bark from Oyster Bay to Hobart during two voyages in July and August 1828.³⁵⁹ Wattle bark was shipped from the whaling establishment run by George Meredith, so presumably the Oyster Bay mentioned is the one that incorporated the area of Swansea and the Schoutens. Likewise, the Launceston newspapers in 1829 were full of information about a thriving trade. The *Launceston Advertiser* of 1829 published the following article:

the bark trade has occasioned a good deal of bustle in our little town, particularly on Saturday, for on that day settlers who have come to town for supplies, contrive to bring a good load of mimosa bark in with them, and that for near twenty miles distance. For this load, of a ton weight, he receives the sum of 30 shillings, which, when well laid out, provides groceries, and small articles for his family for a week, and this at a time when the settler has not much employment for his cart. Upwards of 1,200 tons of bark are expected to be exported from here this season.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸*Colonial Times*, 6 April 1827.

³⁵⁹*Hobart Town Courier*, 26 July 1828 and 16 August 1828.

³⁶⁰*Launceston Advertiser*, 29 December 1829.

It appears from the *Launceston Advertiser* that the bark industry was ongoing in the north. In 1829 it was advertised that Richard White, who was staying at the Launceston Hotel, required men to strip wattle bark.³⁶¹ However, William Smith wanted six labourers to work as bark strippers at Land Fall, a property on the east bank of the Tamar River not far from Launceston.³⁶²

Ultimately the *Launceston Advertiser* editor could see Van Diemen's Land competing as "the cost of the resource is nothing". A British editor is unlikely to have made such a comment about oak bark.

3.7 Wattle Bark Harvesting and the Aboriginal Landscape

The Victorian Board of Enquiry of 1892 into the Wattle bark trade argued that the average Wattle tree of this period produced 80 pounds of bark.³⁶³

Therefore, using an average figure of 80 pounds of bark per tree, one ton of bark would require 28 trees, hence a typical shipment of 50 tons would involve the felling and bark removal from 1,400 trees. At first, in Van Diemen's Land of the 1820s there was no shortage of trees. Thomas Kent replied positively to a number of queries from Bigge about the abundance of Black wattle in Van Diemen's Land. It was, he confirmed, found "all over the country" and would spring up in any area of cleared land if not kept constantly in check.³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ *Launceston Advertiser*, 5 October 1829.

³⁶² *Cornwall Press and Commercial Advertiser*, 17 February 1829.

³⁶³ *Wattle Bark: Report of the Board of Enquiry*, Government Printer, Melbourne. 1892. p. 8.

There were, however, two flaws in his argument. Firstly, “all over the country” was not available as those involved in the industry could only use the barking locations that afforded easy transport of bark or extract to the Derwent River, at that time there was only water transport. It was not economic to move the bark over any distance on land, when so much Wattle was readily available close to the coast. In New South Wales, Bigge had been told that the cost of cartage of bark was uneconomic at a rate of £3 per thirty miles.³⁶⁵ In Van Diemen's Land, there is no evidence of much carting in the forest of the south, although, a case could be made for local landowners in that region supplementing income by bringing loads of bark to town in a fashion similar to that used in the north. Bark was usually carried on the backs of men either to a bush distillery or a shipping point. It could be argued if a man were to harvest half a ton per day, then the distance over which it could be carried would have been very limited, as freshly harvested bark is surprisingly heavy.³⁶⁶

Secondly, the trees ‘springing up everywhere’ would take at least ten years to mature enough to provide a bark of quality and yield. Kent said that “the bark of the old trees affords the greatest quantity of tan, and it is from them that I collect the bark”.³⁶⁷ Significantly, Kent also claimed that he used three tons of bark to produce one ton of extract. Obviously Kent is referring to old growth “not off young trees”. Writing in 1850, Mitchell claimed that it took 9 tons of

³⁶⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: The Bigge Report Examination No. 16 of Thomas Kent, 6 March 1820. p. 256.

³⁶⁵*Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.2: 1788-1850, James Wiltshire, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria. 1967. p. 191.

³⁶⁶Pers. com Barbara Reardon, Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell, 2003.

³⁶⁷*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: The Bigge Report Examination No. 16 of Thomas Kent, 6 March 1820. p. 256.

wattle bark to make 1 ton of extract.³⁶⁸ The difference is clear, suggesting that the large old trees rich in tannin were no longer available.

The landscape had changed in character with the demise of old growth Wattle trees. Thirty years of Wattle harvesting in areas that were accessible to bark strippers had destroyed the character of the Wattle forests that had been maintained in the past by the Tasmanian Aboriginal.³⁶⁹

The Aboriginal maintained Wattle forest in the lower Huon Valley were described by Thomas Kent when replying to questions in the 1820 Bigg enquiry. When asked, “do you find the mimosa trees standing near together or much separated” Kent responded “at the Huon River, they grow on the sides and tops of the hills in groves, and from 5 to 20 yards asunder”. In response to another question about tree size Kent noted that these were very large trees “from eight inches in diameter to 30 inches in diameter at the butt and in length from 40 to 100 feet and perfectly straight”.³⁷⁰

Kent’s description is not of a natural forest, but of a forest created by millennia of Aboriginal land management.

The Wattle was of great utility to the Aboriginal Tasmanians. The importance of Mimosa to their lifestyle went beyond the use of bark for tanning. The seeds,

³⁶⁸ Mitchell, J., On the Export and Consumption of Wattle Bark and the Process of Tanning &c *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* Vol v: part 2. 1850. p. 220.

³⁶⁹ Wilson, E., (Worrawee), *Astronomy and Other Seasons* Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers, Hobart. 1999.

³⁷⁰ *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol 3: The Bigge Report Examination No. 16 of Thomas Kent, 6 March 1820. p. 256.

high in protein, were roasted green and eaten as a vegetable, or ground into flour when ripe. The Wattle Grubs, which lived in the heartwood or just under the bark were also a source of protein. Mimosa provided food and shelter for birds and animals, which were in turn themselves used for food. The blossom, which had ceremonial uses, was also steeped in water for its nectar, or hung in bunches inside their houses.³⁷¹ In the grassy woodland areas Wattle groves acted as shelter belts for Kangaroo and Wallaby and other grassland animals. Part of a cultural land management process was to encourage the Wattle, thus producing a distinctive landscape varying from tall, straight, widely spaced trees, called “groves” by Kent, to the more dense copses of trees of varying ages, was an integral atmospheric part of the pre-invasion landscape.³⁷²

Wattle copses began to diminish in places close to colonial settlement as the Wattle Bark industry increased destruction of so many plants. In some areas irreversible changes to the Aboriginal landscape began to occur. As the Wattle groves and copses began to diminish in places further away from colonial settlement, so too the yearly fragrance when the trees bloomed began to fade. Never again were the Wattle trees to be such an integral part of the Van Diemen's Land landscape. The Wattle fragrance held such cultural significance for the people of Trowernna for thousands of years that it was the word for that time of flowering and fragrance *Pawenya Peena*, which was used for the season Europeans call ‘Spring’.³⁷³ So strong was the fragrance of the Wattle that it

³⁷¹Wilson, E., (Worrawee), *Traditional Villages*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers, Hobart. 1999.

³⁷²Wilson, E. (Worrawee), *Astronomy and Other Seasons*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers, Hobart. 1999.

³⁷³Wilson, E., (Worrawee), *Astronomy and Other Seasons*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers, Hobart. 1999.

could be smelt over considerable distances, even out to sea. Without the strength of fragrance, the Aboriginal sense of the season, which began the change to summer was lost to them.³⁷⁴ The Aboriginal season *Pawenya Peena* and its link to the original landscape was forever lost.³⁷⁵

3.8 Conclusion

Research for the Wattle industry showed crucial losses of industrial importance within the mainstream historical record. By linking locations with historical events, much of the conflicting data concerning the Van Diemen's Land Wattle bark industry began to unravel. The historical geographical linking of Kent and Lord in two colonial settlements has brought to light the fact that Simeon Lord had a son, also called Simeon Lord, who owned property in Van Diemen's Land and that Thomas Kent dealt with both men in both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Sydney writers, such as Searle, appeared to have ignored Simeon Lord's Van Diemen's Land industrial connections with bark thus geographically separating the two colonial settlements, when they were in fact linked by industrial developments.

There are still a number of areas that need further research and questions still to be answered concerning the Wattle bark industry for Van Diemen's Land. Ships manifests need to be thoroughly researched, not just cargo ships from

³⁷⁴ Aboriginal culture recognises more than the four seasons of the British. *Pawenya Peena* was the time at the end of the cold and before the beginning of the hot weather.

³⁷⁵ *Journal and Printed Papers: Tasmanian Parliament, 1901 paper 69*, Calder J. E. Languages and Dialects Spoken by the Aborigines of Tasmania.

Hobart Town but sealing ships picking up additional cargo of bark to make the voyage profitable when seal harvesting was limited. A more intensive search of the Colonial Secretaries records may uncover references to further distilleries and bark harvesting camps or method of harvesting.

There are other questions that can be passed to historians and historical geographers concern historical information. What really were the differences between Simeon Lord and Thomas Kent that led to such animosity by Lord? Were the differences professional or personal? It would be interesting to know why Simeon Lord senior apparently went to such extreme lengths to socially break the man he originally set up in business as a partner. One important piece of information would be to know if Simeon Lord's stepson with the surname Black was associated with the Wattle bark industry and if so, in which colonial settlement.

The research showed that although Petchey and Wood are attributed to be 'the fathers' of the wattle bark industry, it was actually Thomas Kent who made Britain aware of the potential of the Van Diemen's Land Mimosa trees. Historical geographical research often uncovers the more obscure aspects of the past returning either the people or the event to a more rightful place in history. The real 'father' of the Van Diemen's Land Wattle bark industry is the much maligned Thomas Kent.

CHAPTER 4

FAUNA

4.1 Introduction

It is difficult to envisage the wealth of fauna that lay before the eyes of those people arriving in Van Diemen's Land in 1803. We receive tiny glimpses of fauna numbers from ship's logs like those of Baudin of 1802, the official correspondence to and from the Colonial Secretary's Office, local newspaper accounts describing export cargoes, private letters, journals and diary accounts. Reverend Robert (Bobby) Knopwood, Lieutenant Jeffreys, and Deputy Surveyor General G P Harris, show that all manner of bird species at the settlements were considered good eating.³⁷⁶

Such official and private documents show only incomplete export or trade figures for animals. No records or accounts put figures on the type or amount of fauna used in households, nor are there accounts showing the number of fauna wasted in building up the required quantities for export, used as pet food or destroyed as pests. Data within the official records of the Commissariat or the Colonial Secretary's Office are so vague that estimates for species numbers and diversity at time of settlement will never be known. In the introduction it was noted that millions upon millions of birds being destroyed. This is probably an understatement. In 1829 George Augustus Robinson, described the arrival of mutton birds at one of their nesting grounds almost three decades after

³⁷⁶Diary, journal and other accounts are referenced later within this chapter when their comments become significant.

the arrival of Europeans. His journal entry notes the arrival as taking an entire day, turning the sky black and where the sound of their wings was deafening.³⁷⁷

In the early 1820s the sealer Boulton, told of thousands of Albatross in one nesting ground. Both accounts, made after three decades of harvesting, still imply unlimited quantities, a testament to the original numbers.

The volume and variety of fauna harvested from Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1830 is significant when both domestic and export harvesting is considered. Later discussion will show that the harvesting of the native fauna incorporated:

- ◆ thousands of pounds of Kangaroo meat a month to the Commissariat,
- ◆ tens of thousands of Kangaroo and seal skins,
- ◆ hundreds and thousands of gallons of oil from various animal species,
- ◆ many species of marine life from scale to shellfish,
- ◆ millions of birds harvested for feathers, meat or bone,
- ◆ hundreds of thousands of dozens of eggs,
- ◆ curiosities sent "home" by tens of thousands,
- ◆ uncounted pounds of butchery waste sent to the glue factory,
- ◆ uncounted quantities of skins of various species sent to the local tanneries, and exported, or tanned and used domestically,
- ◆ unrecorded harvesting for domestic eating; dog food, sport, or for pest extermination.

Conservative estimates can be made of the numbers of native fauna killed either for food, feathers or skins passed, then either sent out through the Commissariat or held in the Stores for export. By working back from the primary records of tons of feathers, pounds of meat, bundles of skins and barrels of oil, indications of some population densities in the landscape begin to emerge. For example, Boulton notes that it takes the small feathers of three Albatross to make a

³⁷⁷Journals of George Augustus Robinson 1829 to 1832, in *Friendly Mission; the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson*, Edited by N. Plomley Tasmanian Historical Research Association. 1966.

pound, therefore, approximately 6,720 Albatross were killed for every ton of feathers harvested for export or domestic use.

While some records describe species becoming extinct by the 1830s, it can never be known how many species were slaughtered to extinction without ever being formally described, as might have been the case with one type of seal.

Was it the “sea otter” mentioned by Captain Hunter of the *HMS Sirius* while in southern Tasmanian waters?

Here we saw many animals playing along side, which were at first taken for seals; but, after having seen a considerable number of them, I did not think they were the seal, at least they appeared to me a very different animal from the seals to be met with on the coast of America and Newfoundland; for they have a short round head, but these creatures heads were long, and tapered to the nose; they have very long whiskers, and frequently raised themselves half the length of the body out of the water, to look round them, and often leaped entirely out; which I do not ever recollect to have seen the seal do: from these circumstances, I judge them to be something of the sea-otter.³⁷⁸

It is impossible to estimate the number of species that became extinct because of changes to habitat conditions caused by either the timber or Wattle bark industries. Nor can it be known exactly how diverse the fauna was in 1803 or the botanical diversity within any ecological niche supporting the fauna within the Aboriginal landscape.

Much of the problem in defining the fauna industry lies in the spread between the localized and domestic needs in the infant colony and industrial and/or export uses. What started as completely exploitative for profit often became entangled with survival and vice versa, such as happened when the salt meat

and British products failed to arrive owing to the escalation of the war with France when British supplies were needed for the military.

It was not lack of available food that gave rise to the hunger and starvation that is a theme in many historical accounts, but rather the lack of familiar food particularly salt meat and flour. Harris noted that the settlement was under “great deprivation of almost every comfort” and then listed British items.³⁷⁹

Lieutenant Governor Collins wrote to Governor Bligh:

The arrival of the salted meat has saved us from much distress, since the small quantity of that article remaining in the Public Stores would have been very speedily consumed.³⁸⁰

From the very beginning of the Risdon Cove settlement in September 1803, the three-tier structure of British society and colonialism was in place; the free, the military and the convict. Free status included not just those who settled but the administrators and the surveyors, many of whom had military backgrounds.

The military included both those of upper ranks and common soldiers who acted as convict guards. Marines, Navy officers and enlisted men were free as were discharged merchant marines, sealers and whalers. Discussion of the complex social structure of convicts' lives is outside the scope of this work.

The clear lines separating British social divisions further added to the challenges in interpretation of the official records and newspaper extracts as many of those individuals mentioned had multiple roles in the developing

³⁷⁸Hunter, J., *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea 1787-1792: with further accounts by Governor Arthur Philip, Lieutenant P G King, and Lieutenant H L Ball*. Edited by J. Bach, originally published 1793. Royal Australian Historical Society. no date. pp. 26 -27

³⁷⁹Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p.85.

³⁸⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor Bligh, 18 October 1806. p. 279.

settlement. Even further, the multiplicity of mentions often only succeeded in blurring the situations rather than providing clarity. Thus making it a challenge to differentiate between commercial industrial personalities and practices mentioned in many accounts particularly with the meat supplies obtained for and from the commissariat and the contribution towards domestic sustainability from the sporting pleasures of the “gentry”.³⁸¹ For almost two decades most convicts had lifestyles very different from the perception of incarceration, leg irons and constant supervision portrayed by many recent writers. Only a small number of those transported remained confined to the barracks areas. Convicts were the majority of the population and the labour force. Many of them had earned respect and free interaction within the constraints of their own assignment and their own personal acceptance within colonial society. This sense of freedom in exile for convicts was curtailed after Governor Arthur’s arrival in 1824.

Occasionally it is the use of old terms within the historic records which shed light on perceptions of the time. Records show that from their arrival in 1803, convicts were given guns or muskets and sent out to hunt for meat. Surveyor Harris had a convict gamekeeper. Reverend Knopwood had a convict servant who hunted. Many soldiers and free settlers supplied meat to the Commissariat as a result of sport, or through assigned convicts servants. Another common and necessary convict servant category was woodsman. By 1810 the convicts

³⁸¹Evans, G., *Surveyor General Geographical, Historical, and Topographical description of Van Diemen's Land with Important Emigrants and Useful Information Respecting the Application for Grants of Land: together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822.

cherished their freedom in exile and began to refuse to return to convict restrictions usual for secondary offenders.

Other factors also came into play. Martha Hayes, mistress of Lieutenant John Bowen arrived with a greyhound in 1803, the resultant pups provided her with more than pin money as they were sold for 25 pounds.³⁸² The Surveyor Harris and Reverend Knopwood brought their dogs with them to Van Diemen's Land in 1804. Did any others? How many and what species of native animals did these dogs kill besides those recorded as being taken back to the settlement for dog food? The amount of food a hunting dog required daily in nineteenth century Van Diemen's Land in the form of native animals would be little different from working dogs today. Dog food was not accounted for on any Victualling List, which noted who were allocated rations from the Commissariat Store. Procuring enough meat and fish for the convicts and colonists to allay "starvation" was an industry in itself. Numerous clues within obscure accounts helped to clarify some distinctions between domestic and commercial processing of the animals, however, all involved environmental impact and landscape changes, which were immediate and irreversible.

As early as 1804 Governor Collins was conscious of the impact his people were having on supplies of food and fresh water in the immediate vicinity of the camp, and within three days of his arrival issued orders to keep the water drinkable.³⁸³ Just as Collins laments the harassment of the swans in the upper Derwent River he was considering the colonies future food needs. There was

³⁸²Pers. com. Rosyln Hill descendant of Martha Hayes 2003.

also an overlap of hunting native animal food supplies with the collection of “curiosities” sent “home” to family friends and patrons by the free settlers or military personnel.

Where does the blurring between survival and industry begin? From 1803 convicts were the main suppliers of meat, sent out into the scrub to hunt for the Government Store. Before the first decade of European occupation was out, the laxness involving such hunters, many of whom became absconders, was beginning to impact on the colony. Lieutenant John Oxley RN, Commander of the *Estramina* on a voyage to Van Diemen's Land in 1806, records that

There are now not less than from 20 to 30 men from the two settlements of the Derwent and Port Dalrymple in the woods, who have become extremely troublesome, plundering the settler of their arms, dogs, and whatever else might be of use to them. From their intimate knowledge of all parts of the interior, it has now become a difficult task to take them; they are constantly on their guard.³⁸⁴

The Military could not recapture them. Later historians consider that this situation stands as the beginning of bushranging.

As already mentioned, the convicts were supplying meat and collecting skins from the beginning of invasion, but to what extent? Who exactly were they supplying with meat besides themselves? Certainly the convict servants were bringing in meat. How much were they supplying to the Commissariat and other outlets discussed later? How much of the meat was being exported to Sydney? There are few or no documented answers, only more questions.

³⁸³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, February 1804. p. 219.

³⁸⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: J Oxley, Remarks on the country and settlements formed in Van Diemen's Land 1810. p. 576.

Forced or amiable integration and interaction between the Aboriginal community and convicts sent into the bush to hunt, impinge on industry? Sealers, such as Kelly and Briggs, had by 1819, set up an exchange of Kangaroo skins for the “useless seal meat” with two men of Trowernna, Tolobunganah and Lamanbunganah, on Van Diemen's Land's northeast coast.³⁸⁵ It is likely that considerable friendly interaction occurred between convicts and the Aboriginal community in all of the industries, not just those of timber and Wattle bark. It is possible that the Aboriginal community showed the friendly ‘settlers’ the hidden salt deposits of the Ross Sandstone. The period of early fauna exploitation had an industrial impact little considered by modern historians who have defined 1803 to 1830 as three decades of hostile Aboriginal and invader interaction. However, it was the slaughter of Kangaroo for meat and skins combined with the replacement of Kangaroo with tens of thousands of sheep that promoted hostilities with the Aboriginal community, not just the movement of Europeans across the land as implied today by the social historians.³⁸⁶

Again it is the material within personal letters, which exemplifies the difficulties of defining commercialism from sustenance in the use of native fauna. The most informative source of early information is that recorded by George Harris in a series of letters he wrote home to family in England.³⁸⁷

Some aspects of the fauna industry such as the skin trades in seal and Kangaroo

³⁸⁵ Kelly, J., 16 January 1817 from *The Log, Circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land by James Kelly and other accounts of early exploration for the west and northwest coasts of Tasmania from the Parliamentary Papers*, published 24 November 1986, Tasmania Day. p. 15.

³⁸⁶ Worrawee, E., Wilson, *Traditional Forest Practices*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia, in Press. 2003. The colonial musters record numbers and location of sheep.

are well known but the weights of carcass meat consumed and the amounts wasted are hard to estimate. Were the bones sent to the glue maker or used to make the fertiliser, blood and bone? In 1805, from a total amount of 17,064 pounds of Kangaroo, 725 pounds were sent to the glue maker.³⁸⁸ Was the meat fed to the dogs or used as fertilizer? Various accounts in the *Historical Records of Australia* and colonial newspapers state that a percentage of animal skins were made into items of necessity including rugs and shoes. However cargo manifests indicate that the majority of skins were exported for high fashion. The local newspapers contain lists of boot makers advertising for, and selling, Kangaroo skins. An example is the newspaper advertisement stating that J Wintle, Boot maker, opposite the Waterloo Mill, Liverpool Street “has 500 dressed bush kangaroo skins of superior quality for sale”.³⁸⁹

A suitable infrastructure was needed to organise and maintain sufficient quantities of rations that could be distributed to feed the two communities of Hobart Town and the Port Dalrymple settlement in the north. The majority of meat and fish caught in the first decade was used to supplement the imported salt meat. The *Historical Records of Australia* tells us that Governor King was so much concerned at the sickly state of Collins’ establishment that he could all: “but hope from your accounts of the abundance of Kangaroo that any remains of the scurvy will soon be eradicated”.³⁹⁰ Another reference shows that “fish was caught from the harbour” and Collins wrote “I saved one hundred and sixty

³⁸⁷George Harris arrived with Collins and stayed for a short period before returning to New South Wales.

³⁸⁸*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Enclosure No. 1. 5 October 1805. p. 332.

³⁸⁹*Tasmanian*, 8 November 1827. The same advertisement was placed in the *Hobart Town Courier*, November 10 1827.

four pounds of beef at the store, by serving 2 pound of fish in lieu of one pound of salt pork so saved 164 pound of meat”.³⁹¹

No part of the native fauna industry had definite demarcation lines, there was a gradation between domestic and commercial enterprise. That exploitation of land resources cannot always be separated from that involving marine related products adds another complication to the study of the fauna industry.

Certainly in terms of marine harvesting whalers and sealers were considered the main commercial processors. Often they were global traders taking home or trading the processed goods in foreign ports. However, cargo manifests for the majority of ships list diverse cargoes of raw materials including fauna goods. It is not clear whether the supplies purchased by ship's captains before they returned to the sealing and whaling grounds were categorised as local trade or export commercial activity.

4.2 Meat as an Industry

Kangaroo hunting was the earliest of recorded government sanctioned land industry in Van Diemen's Land. Salt meat for the Commissariat was in short supply owing to the revival of the war with France, so hunting the local wildlife became essential to extend the rations brought from England or Port Jackson. Surveyor Harris' description of the Derwent area in 1804 notes that it abounded

³⁹⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Governor King to Lieutenant Governor Collins 30 September 1804. p. 283.

³⁹¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Lord Hobart, 4 March 1804. p. 230.

with the Forester Kangaroo, and that there was an abundance of Brush Kangaroo, Ground Kangaroo or Kangaroo Rabbits.³⁹² Was Harris a minor entrepreneur as well as a surveyor because he caught:

one or two kangaroo five or six times a week each weighing 50-60 pounds, where the meat can be brought off the government for eight pence a pound, and the meat is given to the laborer in lieu of money?³⁹³

“It was a most valuable animal”, Reverend Knopwood acknowledged, observing that if the colonists had not experienced such good success “in killing kangaroos” they would have been destitute.³⁹⁴ Some families lived entirely on Kangaroo meat, as “the animal was easily slaughtered” and many colonists “were loath to kill their stock of sheep and cattle, when free meat was so readily available; further more, hunting Kangaroos and other animals was great sport”.³⁹⁵

Governor Collins let it be known that the Commissariat Store would accept Kangaroo at 1 shilling a pound and would issue “2 pound in lieu of salt pork”.³⁹⁶ Supplying the Commissariat with meat was one of the ways to obtain supplies of timber to build a house. Captain Sladden’s Commissariat Store account indicated the amounts of Kangaroo meat supplied by an individual in 1804 and 1806 (figure 4.1).

³⁹²Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994.

³⁹³Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 66.

³⁹⁴Papers and journal of Reverend Robert Knopwood 1804, edited by Mary Nicholls, Tasmanian Historical Research Association. 1977.

³⁹⁵Frank. G., *For Glory on the Farm*, Chapter: 5. Whakatane District Historical Society, Whakatane. 1984.

Kangaroo Meat weight in pounds per month			Total
1804			
February 21	544 lb.	at 1/-	£27 / 4/-
September 30	1,339 lb.		£66 / 19/-
October 31	329 lb.		£19 / 12/-
1806			
February-	2,495 lb.	at 8d.	
March	318 lb.	at 1/-	
April	478 lb.		
		Total	£122 / 17/-
May	1,781 lb.		£89 / 1/-
June	951 lb.		£47 / 11/-
July	1,560 lb.		£78 / 0/-
August	554 lb.		£27 / 14/-
September	197 lb.		£9 / 17/-
		Total	£263 / 2/-

Figure 4.1 Captain Sladden's Commissariat account 1804 and 1806.

Source: *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Store account paid by Captain Sladden for materials for erecting a house, September 1806. p. 499.

The weight of Kangaroo meat allocated as rations also allows for an approximate underestimation of numbers of fauna killed for food. The same data also listed some of the species used for food. If the tally of one supplier of hunted meat, Captain Sladden, showed that a total of 10,546 pounds of Kangaroo was sent out as victuals through the Commissariat stores, many other supplier's records which have not survived must have been comparable. The Commissariat records provide one of the better sources of data concerning species and quantities of native fauna meat. A side benefit of this type of record is that it often gave additional information relating to industry. One such record stated that only a quarter of the meat sent to the hospital for soup was salt pork, "even the feet [of the Kangaroo] were weighed and delivered to the glue maker"

³⁹⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 15 October 1804. p. 332.

showing “that every part of this, to us very valuable animal, was made useful”.³⁹⁷

If we accept Surveyor Harris’ conservative average dressed weight of 50 pounds for a Kangaroo then Captain Sladden’s tally for the commissariat approximated

1804

- ◆ 18 Kangaroos February 21
 - ◆ 26 Kangaroos for September 30
 - ◆ 6 Kangaroos for October 31
- Totaling: 49 Kangaroos

1806

- ◆ 92 Kangaroos between February and May
 - ◆ 19 Kangaroos in June
 - ◆ 26 Kangaroos in July
 - ◆ 15 Kangaroos in August
- Total 152 Kangaroos

Surely such amounts of processed butchered meat were considered a commercial industry.

Between the 1 August and 5 October 1805, the total amount of Kangaroo received into the government store totaled 17,064 pounds of meat, of this 11,192 pounds was delivered as rations, 5,146 pounds to the hospital and the remaining 775 pounds were sent to the glue maker.³⁹⁸ Had

it not been for the Kangaroo and Emu affording us a providential a supply as the Mount Pitt birds [Yolla] once did the wretched inhabitants of Norfolk Island, I should not now have had any salted

³⁹⁷*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 15 October 1805. p. 330.

³⁹⁸*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 15 October 1805. p. 330. This is the only known reference to a glue factory in Van Diemen's Land.

pork to issue. So long as this continues I am easy in that respect, as the fresh meat is far better for the people than the salted.³⁹⁹

The situation described by Governor Collins referring to a lack of meat supplies was not a lack of food that was producing the hunger or starvation problem in the colony, but the perception of lack due only to the lack of the familiar salt meat.

During 1805 the resumed war with France led to a scarcity of British goods and a fall in the rations allocated to people in both Van Diemen's Land settlements. According to Harris, the Commissariat was down to allocating 4 pounds of bread and 2-3 pounds of salt pork per man per week "& are now almost in a state of starvation". However,

as we have such abundance of Kangaroo here we can never *want* - from 2-3,000 (lbs) weight a week having been turned into the Store by the Officers at 1/- pr lb which has considerably helped us on.⁴⁰⁰

Harris had 2 huntsmen and "a pack of kangaroo dogs as good as any in the whole country" killing between "3 4 5 or sometimes 8 Kangaroos a day or two". Some of the "kangaroos stand 6 feet tall and weigh 100-130 or 150 pound" and "fight the dogs most desperately so as to sometimes kill them".⁴⁰¹

Because of the distance needed to travel to kill the quota of meat necessary by 1806, Governor Collins was requesting that all Kangaroo meat must be "fresh

³⁹⁹ *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 28 September 1805. p. 327.

⁴⁰⁰ Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 73

⁴⁰¹ Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 73

from the woods” and that only the “hind quarter and tail were to be taken”.⁴⁰²

Governor Collins remarked to Governor King that he found some of the hunting methods were only a wasteful exercise that he hoped was redeemed by the collecting of the skin.

The Commissariat records indicate that the use of native fauna in the meat industry was aligned with the shortage of salt meat, which was a constant problem and ways of eking the meat were sought at every opportunity.

Kangaroo was one of the easiest and most profitable sources for its replacement. Collins wrote to Governor Bligh about the “extraordinary means I was compelled to adopt to procure Animal Food for the subsistence of the Inhabitants of the Settlement”.⁴⁰³ One of the more obvious ways to save salt meat was noted in October 1806 where each prisoner was entitled to two pound of salted meat and twelve pound of Kangaroo per man each week.⁴⁰⁴ However, the Commissariat records show that by 1808 the supply of meat had changed and the issue for each person was seven pound of Kangaroo and four pound of pork with pound for pound for beef.

	1 JANUARY TO 31 AUGUST 1806	
	pork lbs	Kangaroo lbs
January	1,190	
February	1,246	1,775
March	2,177	2,246
April	913	4,369
May	742	13,442

⁴⁰²*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Section B. General Order 19.

⁴⁰³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor Bligh, 18 October 1806. p. 380

⁴⁰⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor Bligh, 18 October 1806. 380.

June	1,451	7,380
July	893	5,799
August	242	14,415
TOTAL	8,856	49,406

Figure 4.2: Weights of pork and Kangaroo.

Source: *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Enclosure 31 August 1806. p. 378.

Figure 4.2 demonstrates the comparison between salt pork and fresh kangaroo meat. However, the origin of the pigs that became fresh pork is a mystery.

There were 62 pigs listed in the colony in 1804, no arrivals or increases were listed for 1805 and yet the *Historical Records of Australia* claim in 1806, that 8,856 pound of fresh pork was supplied from the Store. To confuse matters only 27 hogs were registered in the stock list for 1806.⁴⁰⁵ The custom of not holding non-breeding stock over winter may have been followed.⁴⁰⁶

There is one puzzling feature with the meat industry. A lack of recorded preservation methods for meat meant that the animals had to be either killed close to the supply outlet otherwise it became rotten. It is unlikely that this indicated there were herds of Kangaroos kept in yards near the Commissariat waiting to be slaughtered, hence, the meat may have been processed and salted close to where it was killed before it was transported to the Commissariat?

The allocations for supplies of fresh meat to be delivered to the Commissariat vary between open commercial quantities, amounts related to sport or the need

⁴⁰⁵Schaffer, I., Editor *Land Musters, Stock returns and Lists Van Diemen's Land 1803-1822*, St. David's Park Publishers, 1991.

for survival through taking ‘a native’ meat in domestic quantities. Need verses demand encouraged the blurring which continued within the colonial records. A typical example of need and demand is described by Evans as hunting for early morning ‘sport’, commencing with dogs startling a flock of birds and herds of Kangaroos consisting of 70 or 80 of each kind. ‘Sport’ was commonplace with 26 Kangaroo killed in one morning and often two bullock carts could be filled by 9 am.⁴⁰⁷

Sport or Supply

The British social structure itself encouraged the blurring of industry when the ‘colonial gentry’ considered “field sports”, the hunting of Kangaroo and Emu and “to enjoy these sports, therefore, in perfection, it is necessary to go beyond the limits of colonization”.⁴⁰⁸ Evans found that, as an exercise, the Kangaroo hunt is equal to that of hunting stag claiming “Van Diemen's Land affords more amusement and profit to the sportsman than the whole of New Holland Collectively”.⁴⁰⁹ Evans’ description of ‘field sport’ may be seen as also an account of colonial domestic meat production.

⁴⁰⁶ Pers. Com. Margaret Long Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell 2000

⁴⁰⁷ Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822. p. 88.

⁴⁰⁸ Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822. p. 89.

⁴⁰⁹ Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822. pp. 89 –91.

Then what about the problem created when the convicts initially sent into the bush to procure meat for the 'settlement', refused to return? By 1809 these 'free', bushranging convicts had a system of bartering. When their dogs killed the Kangaroos, they bartered the hindquarters to settlers and town people for grain and sugar. A secondary market for these bushrangers was with "the officers, who have servants, employed as hunters find a convenience and profit from these ruffians" who supplied them with meat.⁴¹⁰ Another problem facing Governor Arthur with the stock keepers was drunkenness and compelled him to issue an order "in 1819, against the retail of spirits to stock-keepers for Kangaroo skins; a practice highly detrimental to good order".⁴¹¹

The data gathered on meat from any form of statistics must be used with caution since the records were mainly from incomplete government sources

⁴¹⁰McKanness, G., Captain William Bligh's Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land. *Royal Society of Tasmanian Centenary Meeting*, 14 October 1943. p. 49.

⁴¹¹Bonwick, J., *Curious Facts of Old Colonial Days* Sampson Low, Son & Marston. London. 1870. p. 276.

We were also visited by a flight (or a mob as every thing is called here) of White Cuckatoo and several old Crows favored us with their delightful can can can's a White Frost has a curious appearance in this country surrounded by large Evergreen trees as it is on this plain when the Ground is white as snow most of the Men employed all the forenoon in slaying & hauling up the Balloons after which all went on with the Building until dark. Saw the new moon in the evening the whole circle visible very fine clear weather. Therm 42 in the Tent after dark



Friday June 9th

Frosty and rather cloudy
Therm in the tent 31 out 28

Knowing the Country to be very hilly beyond the six miles of Road prepared for the Carts I wished to examine the tier of Hills to the East of the Road to see where would be the best spot for cropping it. Went with Mr F & Mr L about 18 & at 2 miles came to a bend of the Avenue Creek went along a flat of coarse Grap & few trees and at 1 mile came upon another bend of the Creek. The soil near the River 3 ins deep black alluvial upon Gray Sand under which there is clay. This place is but thinly timbered & is much water gullied there is coarse Grap all the way. At 2 miles we were opposite to the Grappy Knoll on the other side of the Creek went on through low swampy forest and at 3 miles we ascended the Sugarloaf (p 12) described before. Vide May 18th in this Book, this Sugarloaf

Figure 4.3: Dogs chasing a Kangaroo
Source: Hellyer 1828 field journal

with very few private figures known beyond records considered sporting kills. Therefore, it is not known how many animals were wasted by spoiling, before they were eaten, or killed and left as unwanted excess. Harris and Jeffreys both discuss the prowess of the hunting dogs and their kill tactics but offer no estimate on the numbers or species of animal torn to pieces by them (figure 4.3). However, although there were accounts that record other animals for meat, the material was elusive and often vague. Detailed statistics only relate to Kangaroo meat distributed through the Commissariat.⁴¹²

Harris records that from 1804 the Tasmanian devil was a common sight in the area of the 'settlement' of Hobart Town which:

furnished the convicts with a fresh meal, and the taste was said to be not unlike veal. As the settlement increased, and the ground became cleared, they were driven from their haunts near the town to the deeper recesses of the forests yet unexplored. They are, however, easily procured by setting a trap in the most unfrequented parts of the woods, baited with raw flesh, all kinds of which they eat indiscriminately and voraciously; they also, it is probable, prey on dead fish, blubber, &c. as their tracks are frequently found on the sands of the sea shore.⁴¹³

The Wombat, another species considered good eating, weighed "nearly forty pounds" when fully grown and would have fed an entire family for a week. It is described as being "somewhat similar to a kangaroo" in flavour only "more delicate".⁴¹⁴ However, some Wombats were such a delicacy they were quickly killed out, as was the species recorded in an obscure reference by the editor of

⁴¹²Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out.* London. 1822. p. 88.

⁴¹³Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 73.

⁴¹⁴Breton, R., *Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land During the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833*, London. 1834. p. 359.

the *Hobart Town Gazette*, who noted that there was no mention of the small white Wombat in an account of Mr Barnard's survey of King Island in 1827. The editor lamented the demise of an animal "which affords such delicate eating and we fear the dogs left on the island by the sealers have nearly destroyed the species".⁴¹⁵ Does this indicate Van Diemen's Land's second recorded extinction?

According to Breton, the Van Diemen's Land Echidna, was a different species from that of New South Wales, was considered fine eating, where "the flesh equals that of a fowl".⁴¹⁶ There is modern anecdotal evidence from about 1900 of 'porcupine', meaning Echidnas, being eaten. A wheelbarrow full of 'porcupine' carcasses were delivered to the steamer at Dunalley for sale in Hobart.⁴¹⁷ It is likely then that Echidnas were eaten by the invaders from the earliest times of the colony.

Even common Bandicoots were considered superior to rabbit and hare. However, not all of the animals were eaten. The Possum "had a strong disagreeable flavour, which is not resorted to by Europeans, except under the most pressing circumstances".⁴¹⁸ It is interesting to note that the native animals exploited from the beginning of settlement apparently had an "unreal quality"

⁴¹⁵*Hobart Town Gazette*, 31 March 1827.

⁴¹⁶Breton, R., *Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land During the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833*, London. 1834. p. 358.

⁴¹⁷Pers. Com. Margaret Long Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell 2001.

⁴¹⁸Parker, H., *Van Diemen's Land its Rise, Progress and Present State With Advice to Emigrants*, Chapter 11, Natural History, London. 1834. pp. 177-193.

compared to the “realness” of the familiar taste of those British animals which had to be protected at all costs for breeding purposes.⁴¹⁹

4.3 Birds

The limited records concerning the use of bird species for industry forms a biased overview as apparently only a few species of birds provided the raw material for major industries. The majority of bird records show that birding activities fitted into the domestic or cottage industry. Beyond accounts of hunting and shooting brace of birds for the table, there were few references to indicate that the majority of bird species were killed for anything other than the table. The occasional reference does show that some species were killed for their plumage or to be stuffed as curios. The records show hunters of swan had a lucrative industry on the East Coast and at Port Sorell. Albatross and Yolla or mutton bird industries flourished on the Bass Strait Islands. Shooting and snaring of birds were commonly practiced, but, like many other common practices, they were poorly recorded. It was the incidental mention within newspapers, letters and diaries, which so often offered an insight into the ordinary every day practices of the times. It is probable that netting was used to capture the small birds for their plumage or for taxidermy. There were some references that allude to species of birds becoming pests that presumably prompted eradication attempts. Other birds became popular as table birds

⁴¹⁹*Colonial Times*, 21 April 1826.

The common wood pigeon of the island, that beautiful bird, is now very fat and very plentiful, as well as the quail. They are sold at the wharf at about 1 shilling and 6 pence a pair.⁴²⁰

Which other species were sold at the wharf yet rated no newspaper mention can only be speculated upon.

Disruption to Aboriginal culture was caused not only by the European methods of harvesting bird species. The changes to the landscape must have had considerable impact on bird habitat and it is not known how many bird species were made extinct during this time.. In addition to seasonal harvesting of Yolla, ducks, penguins and swan for food, the Aboriginal communities also harvested penguin and Yolla for their oil. The eggs of all species were eaten seasonally. Some other species of birds eaten were also taken for their feathers. Many of the colourful bird feathers were used as hair decoration by the Aboriginal community.⁴²¹ Feathers were also used as decoration and insulation inside their houses. Birds played an integral part in Aboriginal cultural expression, not just as decoration and a food source. Ceremonial practices involving birds were important seasonal and yearly events, for example, in the time known, today as November, major preparations began for the Egging Ceremony.⁴²²

Birds were in abundance everywhere. On mainland Van Diemen's Land, on the 12 February 1804 Harris wrote to his mother from Frederick Henry Bay that:

they saw an emu, a woodstock, quantities of pigeons, quails & paroquets in the woods, and teal, ducks, black swans & pelicans on

⁴²⁰ *Hobart Town Courier*, 18 April 1829.

⁴²¹ This use of feathers is recorded in documents held in the La Trobe Library.

⁴²² Wilson, E., (Worawee) *Astronomy and Other Seasons*, Manuta Tunapee Puggaluggalia Publishers. 1999.

the shores and lakes, so that I am in hopes we shall want no supply of game in this new settlement.

Then on 15 February, 1804, Harris was at Risdon Cove where:

Ducks & teal are in great plenty and black swans in such astonishing numbers, that a boat has taken 150 in a day by running them down, for in a flock of swans there are always a number that cannot fly on account of casting their quill [sic] feathers. Mr Mountgarret (the surgeon) assured me that towards the head of the [Derwent] river, he has seen *fifty thousand* swans in a flock. – It is a great thing for us to have such a supply of fresh meat, for they are excellent food, as white & good as any goose I ever eat in England.⁴²³

Later in August, from Sullivans Cove he wrote “The woods abound with beautiful parroquets, parrots, pheasants, partridges, quail, eagles, hawks, crows, pigeons and various other birds”.⁴²⁴

From just three locations within a few months of settlement, Harris recognised the extensive numbers of birds. Even twenty years later birds were still in large quantities, as Evans noted that “Black swans, wild ducks, mountain ducks, teals, moor-hens, widgeons, snipe and quail are all in great abundance. The latter of these birds form a very excellent substitute for partridge”.⁴²⁵

Beyond lists of birds, no one recorded the numbers killed when harvesting beyond mention of a brace. Although there was the occasional reference to pairs of Black Swan being given live to people such as Governor and Mrs King,

⁴²³Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 61.

⁴²⁴Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. pp. 59 & 66.

⁴²⁵Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the*

who were each given a pair from Governor Bowen with another pair to Governor King sent by Captain Bunster, the references to live swan shipments are limited.⁴²⁶ Nor were records kept of the birds killed as 'sport' and used for personal purposes. Domestic supply may have been well up to commercial quantities but it is doubtful if 'sport' for fowl, no matter what the numbers, could be classified as a domestic industry.

Limited and peripheral accounts indicated very successful birding industries. In Boulton's account of the sealing industry he recorded aspects of harvesting albatross and Yolla (mutton birds). The apparently endless flocks of birds in staggering variety must have been considered welcome for food, commerce and beauty.⁴²⁷ Nor are there records for the number of bird skins which were damaged during their removal and like the carcasses left to rot.

Emu

Extinction of the King Island and Trowernna or Tasmanian mainland Emu had occurred within the first three decades of settlement. The records concerning the Emu are few and vague. Again it was the obscure references which filled in the blanks. James Davis received corporal punishment in 1807 for receiving or buying Kangaroo and Emu meat from the servants of Bowden and Harris.⁴²⁸ It is clear that the Emu were hunted into extinction around the 1830s and yet very

application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out. London. 1822. p. 90.

⁴²⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: Lieutenant Bowen to Governor King, 20 September 1803. p. 231.

⁴²⁷Backhouse, G., *A Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co, London. 1843.

⁴²⁸Tipping, M., *Convicts Unbound: the story of the Calcutta convicts and their settlement in Australia*, Viking O'Neil, Ringwood, Victoria. 1988.

few mentions of them appear to exist, other than notes of the occasional shooting catch or as an aside with other unrelated information. It is possible that they were relatively few in number, or that their numbers may have been rapidly depleted by such practices as Reverend Knopwood killing chicks and mother together?⁴²⁹

Contemporary accounts indicated that there was considerable variation in size, most likely related to the age, or sex difference of the bird. The modern impression of the Van Diemen's Land Emu being a dwarf species, similar to those of King Island is probably inaccurate. King Island had a dwarf species but other records for mainland Van Diemen's Land indicate that it was a much larger bird.

Harris wrote to his mother in 1805 of sometimes killing Emu, which he described as large birds.

Which are hunted in the same manner as kangaroo & make a worse resistance / They frequently weigh 80 or 90 lb. & and run (for they cannot fly) amazingly swift, so that the swiftest greyhound can scarcely get up with them – They are much coarser food than the kangaroo.⁴³⁰

However, Evans considered hunting Emu and Kangaroo as the principal amusement of the sporting part of the colonists and described the Emu as “a

⁴²⁹ Stephens, G., *Knopwood a Biography*, Print Centre. 1990.

⁴³⁰ Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 73.

bird nearly the size and form of an ostrich, having short wings, or rather flappers, and long legs".⁴³¹ Parker noted that:

these birds weigh from 40 pounds to 100 pounds, and will kill the strongest dogs by one blow of their tallons. The common kangaroo dog soon acquires the habit of seizing them by the neck, and thus avoids the danger.⁴³²

Parker's description of hunting dogs learning to grab Emu by the neck offered an alternative view of Emu hunting from shooting. The dogs may have contributed to the demise of the birds in destructive killing frenzies so that the actual body was of little use as human food. It is also possible that common use of Emu, for example of feathers for local fashion or sent home to family or used as dog food, would have left a limited record.

However, possibly the most fascinating record of the Emu was that of Henry Hellyer dated 15 July 1826 when he was surveying for the Van Diemen's Land Company in the area of the West Head of Port Sorell. Hellyer was in the company of Maori, "two New Zealand youths (sailors of the *Sally*)":

We shewd them the leg of an Emu they had never seen one & said Kang-a-roo! But seeing feathers at the upper part they made a motion of flying and were quite astonished at its size being as large as that of a racehorse⁴³³

⁴³¹Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. p. 88.

⁴³²Parker, H., *Van Diemen's Land its Rise, Progress and Present State with Advice to Immigrants*. Simpkin and Marshal Stationers' Court. 1834. p. 186.

⁴³³ Hellyer, H., *Journal and Field Book*. 17 May to 15 July 1826.

Emu bones found in a modern archaeological dig at a whaling site on Bruny Island show that Emu were used as a food source in the 1820s.⁴³⁴ No mention was found concerning the use of eggs, feathers or meat beyond household use.

Wild Ducks

In early colonial times duck eggs were harvested and duck were taken in great quantities. Journal accounts indicated locations for duck marshes both near settlements and in isolated areas and recorded ducks turning up at markets and butchers. No accounts list duck as a commercial source of meat or feathers. Beyond being used as food there are few references to ducks in the early record. It is possible that the commonness of ducks combined with the ease with which they were shot or caught, usually by the person who intended eating them, is the reason they are relatively unrecorded. There are a number of lists of birds, which include many species of ducks and the places where they were sighted or killed, but these records do not show commercial exploitation in any form.

Swans

It is impossible to estimate the exact population of swan before the invasion.

Flinders noted:

⁴³⁴Lawrence, S., Foodways on Colonial Whaling Stations: Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Diet in Nineteenth-Century Tasmania. *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 87: Part 2. December 2001. p.212.

In December, and perhaps at all times, from one-tenth to one-third of these swans are without their wing feathers; and may be taken by a handy whale boat, whose only weapon need be a boat-hook. By swimming and flapping along the water, and by their craftiness in gaining the wind, after being chased, the swans would sometimes tire our little two oared boat: a few shot then generally ended the pursuit ... in the shoal part of the river, from Risdon Cove upwards, where they are found in their hundreds.⁴³⁵

He recorded that the flocks of swans on the Derwent “will be the best dependence for fresh provisions.”⁴³⁶

On 27 February 1804, Governor Collins wrote that a number of swans at the upper part of the Derwent were much harassed and diminished, and “the resource which they might have otherwise proved will totally fail”.⁴³⁷ As a method to conserve this article of stock, “orders were issued to stop people molesting the birds particularly as they have eggs”. Swan were seen as a benefit to the settlement and newly arriving ships. If Mountgarrett’s account of 50,000 swans at one locality of the Derwent can be believed, the total population in all wetland areas must have been in the millions.

Between 1805 and 1808, the skins and down collected from the “countless thousands of black swans gave Swan River and Great Swan Port its name”.⁴³⁸

Other places have names associated with swan, like Swan Bay in the Tamar River and Cygnet on the Huon River, Swan Cove at the Jordan River at Herdsmans Cove at Brighton. Today’s Sundown Point on Tasmania’s West

⁴³⁵Flinders, M., *Observations on the coasts of Van Diemen's Land on Bass's Strait and its islands, and on the Part of the Coast of New South Wales Intended to Accompany the Charts of the Late Discoveries in those Countries*, London. 1801. p. 8.

⁴³⁶Flinders, M., *Observations on the coasts of Van Diemen's Land on Bass's Strait and its islands, and on the Part of the Coast of New South Wales Intended to Accompany the Charts of the Late Discoveries in those Countries*, London. 1801. p. 8.

⁴³⁷*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: 27 February 1804. p. 224.

Coast was originally called Swan Down Point because of the number of swan harvested from the river and lagoon area. Folklore states that Egg Island in the middle of the Huon River, near Cygnet, was so named because of the number of eggs laid by the swan in the season.⁴³⁹ Liberty Point at Port Davey was named because during his 1815 circumnavigation of the of Van Diemen's Land James Kelly captured 12 swans there and the four that were not eaten were released on 29 December, thus giving rise to the name.⁴⁴⁰

James Kelly had recorded the presence of numerous swan on the West Coast. At High Rocky Point his party met two Aborigines who were offended by them having a quantity of swan but were “appeased by the gift of two birds”. A few days later, on an island near the Point, Kelly wrote in his Log:

This day we had a “glorious feed “ for dinner – two black swans: one roasted (stuck up), the other made into a sea-pie – a three decker, in a large pot, - a first rate Christmas dinner on the west coast of Van Diemen’s Land. After dinner we named the cove “ Christmas Cove,” by throwing a glass of brandy into the salt water, and giving three hearty cheers upon the occasion.⁴⁴¹

When timber harvesting began at Sarah Island and around the shores of Macquarie Harbour, the swan provided easily available fresh meat. Such was the decimation of the swan colonies and their habitat, the swan never returned to that water.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸Some Notes on the History of Swansea and District. *Royal Society of Tasmania Northern Branch*, East Coast Excursion, 28-29 November 1970.

⁴³⁹Pers. Com. Pete Smith post graduate student University of Tasmania 2000.

⁴⁴⁰RS 99/1.

⁴⁴¹RS 99/1.

⁴⁴²Pers. com. Gordon River guide at Sarah Island 2003. What the guide never considered was that the marshes at the edge of the river were destroyed leaving no shallow habitat for the swan to return to nest or eat.

Finnis Garty noted that “the flocks at Swan Port and Oyster Bay had been raided by convicts, as had the rivers entering the bays as the escapees made their way up the coastline towards Bass Strait Islands”, where besides provisions “they had a pastime amongst the swans”.⁴⁴³ The Bass Strait Island sealers came as far south as Georges Bay, for swanskins worth one shilling each. They built staked enclosures and drove the birds into them in the moulting season, then they were starved so the skins could be removed easily.⁴⁴⁴ When it came to birding for swan, gangs of men similar to sealing gangs collected swan feathers and skins. T. W. Birch sent five men in an open boat to Oyster Bay, about 150 miles by sea northeast of Hobart where they procured 300 pound of feathers, 60 swan skins, 100 Kangaroo skins and 30 live swans. The gang also collected 151 sealskins in the same area at White Rock also known as Isle de Phoques, south of Greater Swan Port.⁴⁴⁵

The southern part of the Port Sorell estuary was a center for the swan and duck industry, which reached its peak around 1826. The abundance of waterfowl was the result of the waters transporting whitebait as they made their way to the small creeks of Franklin and Greens Creeks and the mouth of the Rubicon River to spawn. The shallow waters of the estuary even today are the nursery for various fish species including Flounder and Flathead.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³Some Notes on the History of Swansea and District, *Royal Society of Tasmania Northern Branch*, East Coast Excursion, 28-29 November. 1970.

⁴⁴⁴O'May, H., *Wooden Hookers of Hobart Town and Whalers out of Van Diemen's Land*, Government printer. 1959.

⁴⁴⁵*Hobart Town Gazette*, 28 November 1818.

⁴⁴⁶Hordor, L., *Industries in Launceston: A Visit to the Port Sorell Estuary*, *Launceston Naturalist*, Vol. XXX: No. 9 and 10. June/July 1997.

In 1826 the areas of the Rubicon River and Greens Creek abounded with ‘white swan hunters’.⁴⁴⁷ The name ‘white swan hunter’ suggests the British translated the title to the Antipodean situation, as a Britishness inflection, but it may also have been a term used to separate Aboriginal swan hunters who, worked with the European, or were no longer occupied in the industry.⁴⁴⁸ Ignorance of the fauna of Van Diemen's Land in England is recorded in the *Latest Quotes of Australian Produce from the London Shipping and Commercial Trader*, Mr Burnhamhall who is quoted as saying “Swan skins should be all white and largely downy paying 15 pence and 18 pence each”.⁴⁴⁹ This statement was made despite Burnhamhall having a known connection to London Swan Hide Brokers Dyster and Coker, who imported Black Swan from the Colonies.⁴⁵⁰ Van Diemen's Land swans would have been downy but definitely not white! Another possibility was that the soft downy grey of the cygnet was being commented upon. An intriguing newspaper shipping notice referring to four casks of seal skins and four casks of swan skins from Mr Wilson leaving Kangaroo Point, near the ferry, before being dispatched from Hobart Town on 24 March, 1827.⁴⁵¹

At Moulten Bay on the East Coast, conservative harvesting estimates, long after the area had been decimated, reported in excess of 80 pair of swans and as

⁴⁴⁷Hordor, L., Industries in Launceston: A Visit to the Port Sorell Estuary, *Launceston Naturalist*, Vol. XXX: No. 9 and 10. June/July 1997.

⁴⁴⁸There is a possibility that Aboriginal people hunted swan with the European in the same way they were stockmen and farm workers.

⁴⁴⁹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 21 April 1827.

⁴⁵⁰A letter in the form of a receipt to Petchey and Wood 1 December 1824. Transactions of the Society of Arts, Vol. 43 1825.

⁴⁵¹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 24 March 1827.

many as 500 eggs taken each season.⁴⁵² There are no records to show the number of swan harvested at Moulten Lagoon further down the East Coast. It is known that Swan Island was a breeding ground for swan and “at times the ground was covered with eggs”.⁴⁵³

From the accounts of numbers of swan sighted, the fragmentary records of the swan industry, and those populations described around 1830, it would appear that the feathers of the swan industry was of some importance in the developing colony.

Albatross

The first Europeans credited with landing on Albatross Island, northwest of Hunter Island, in 1798, were George Bass and Matthew Flinders who collected seals and albatross as fresh meat (map 6). They recorded the area as “appearing almost white with birds”.⁴⁵⁴ Bass fought his way to the top of the cliff and then proceeded to club his way amongst the albatross.⁴⁵⁵ When they left the area they had a boatload of albatross and seal, which also inhabited the island, even though the seals killed were considered inferior because of their reddish fur. Bass and Flinders noted that there were:

vast numbers of albatross on that isle to which their name is given, which were tending their young in the beginning of December; and

⁴⁵²Backhouse, G., *A Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843.

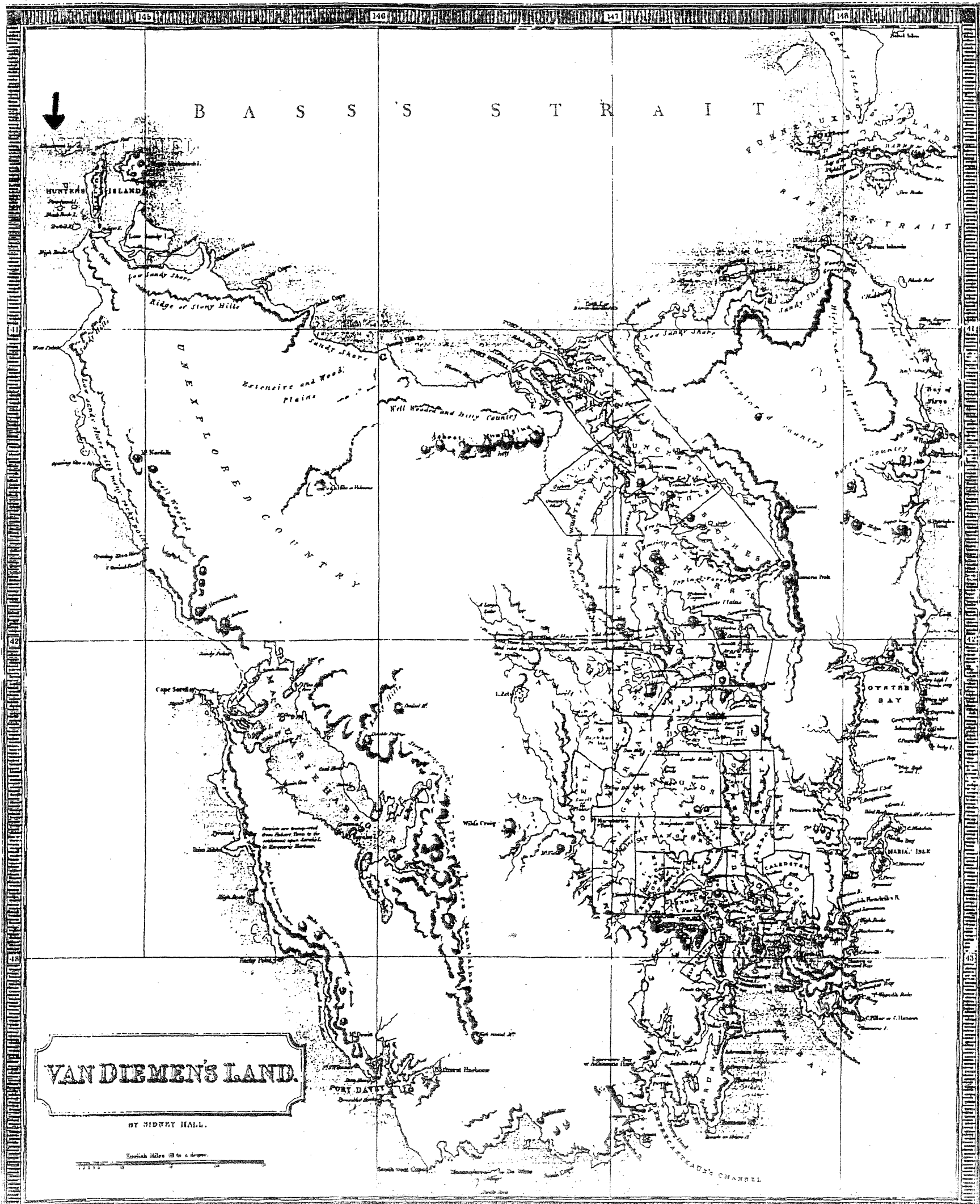
⁴⁵³Cumpston, J., *First Visitors to Bass Strait*. A Roebuck Publication. (no date).

⁴⁵⁴Green, R., Albatross Island, *Records of the Queen Victorian Museum and Art Gallery* No. 51, 1974.

⁴⁵⁵Cumpston, J., *First Visitors to Bass Strait*, A Roebuck Publication. (no date).

Map 6: Map of Van Diemen's Land with red arrow showing Albatross Island

Source: Lands Department of Tasmania.



being unacquainted with the power or disposition of man, did not fear him: we taught them their first lesson of experience.⁴⁵⁶

The questionable arrogance in the attitudes expressed in wanting to teach Albatross to fear man displayed a callous attitude to wildlife not usually commented on in the records. It is a comment offering an insight and understanding of the mindset of those times. It was also a mindset that was continued by all those harvesters of Albatross and other species after them. It also suggested that the attitude and behaviour of Bass and Flinders in 1798 seems to have been the norm.

Even though it is known Albatross made good eating there is no evidence that the Albatross meat was used commercially. From the beginning, sealers killed the Albatross almost exclusively for their feathers for which they obtained nine pence to a shilling a pound. Records show that it took the small feathers of three Albatross to make one pound of feathers and that feathers were exported by the ton.⁴⁵⁷ Simple mathematics shows that it took 6,720 Albatross to make a ton of small feathers and down, without wastage.⁴⁵⁸ At one pound of feathers overall per bird it was an 'economic paradise', and possibly the most cruel of the fauna industries. With down feathers equal in quality to that of the swan, few birds went unplucked for both feathers and down, and in particular the "skin of the neck down".⁴⁵⁹ With birds plucked alive and left to die, the

⁴⁵⁶Flinders, M., *Observations on the coasts of Van Diemen's Land on Bass's Strait and its islands, and on the Part of the Coast of New South Wales Intended to Accompany the Charts of the Late Discoveries in those Countries*, London. 1801. p. 11.

⁴⁵⁷Both Cumpston and Boulton discuss the number of Albatross necessary to weight of feathers.

⁴⁵⁸The conversion between feathers and Albatross is based on Brent's 1826 Almanac listing for weights and measures used between 1803 and 1830.

⁴⁵⁹Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1901.

Albatross rookeries must have resembled Dante's visions of hell. This population must have been decimated by 1832 when G A Robinson visited the island, the population of Albatross had been decimated from years of slaughtering yet they still numbered in the thousands.

Originally those birds were in great numbers and covered the whole surface of the island completely with their nests, but destruction since has been very great amongst them.⁴⁶⁰

Robinson also noted "The intolerable stench occasioned by the putrid carcasses of the albatross which lay in heaps in different parts of the cavern".⁴⁶¹

It is doubtful if it was just the feathers that were of use in trade as their hollow bones made pipe stems, quills and straws. The sealer Boulton wrote in his journal:

I collected a few albatross quills that were on the beach, and cutting them into lengths joined one piece to another so as to form a tube, by which I obtained my end, sucking the water through the quill as the hollow became full.⁴⁶²

The Albatross was valuable for other reasons. The stomach of the Albatross contained a green substance resembling barilla, but it is unknown if it had the same properties. Of more commercial use was the oil content of each bird. With the "stomach full of oil digested from whale blubber", and the oil content of the skin made it a specialist bird. The skin was extremely oily and "the oil can be removed with a spoon" where upon it became opaque and almost white

⁴⁶⁰Robinson, G., Journals 1829-1832, in *Friendly Mission the Tasmanian journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson*, edited by N. Plomley, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966.

⁴⁶¹Robinson, G., Journals 1829-1832, in *Friendly Mission the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson*, Edited by N. Plomley, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966.

⁴⁶²Stark, J., Editor. *The Journal of a Rambler: the Journal of John Boulton*, Oxford University Press New Zealand. 1986. p. 23.

on cooling. The whale oil removed from the stomach “remains limpet” or liquid.⁴⁶³ The Albatross was a bird that produced a variety of products.

When Le Soufe visited the area sixty years later in 1894, only 400 nests remained.⁴⁶⁴

Guano

Guano is a natural product formed at bird rookeries from their droppings.

Whenever it was found in large quantities it was noted for possible exploitation as a fertilizer. If the deposit was accessible then those nations who had access to such deposits mined it. Spain did this when they removed the original Easter Island inhabitants to mine the guano deposits.⁴⁶⁵ It was a labour intensive industry. However, knowing that guano was a commonly mined product, does not explain why nothing concerning the mining of local Van Diemen's Land guano deposits were mentioned within the colonial *Blue Books*. Nor is there mention of guano as a cargo on any ship recorded in the newspapers of the time.

With millions upon millions of birds in hundreds of rookeries, there must have been very large exploitable deposits associated with a number of the rookeries. It is known that “significant deposits” of guano are recorded on Elephant Rock, White Rock Isles, Freycinet Peninsular, Sloping Island, Frederick Henry Bay,

⁴⁶³Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1901.

⁴⁶⁴Green, R., Albatross Island, *Records of the Queen Victorian Museum and Art Gallery* No. 51, 1974.

numerous islands in the Furneaux Group, and on the east coast of King Island.⁴⁶⁶

Albatross Island had guano deposits, Robinson noted that the rocks

being covered with an enamel of silvery polish which suppose to have formed from the excrescencies of birds and is very difficult to walk on, slippery as ice.⁴⁶⁷

It is rather odd that this resource was not harvested. Perhaps there was no need for fertilizer at this stage of the Van Diemen's Land agricultural pursuits. There have been no accounts found to indicate whether guano deposits were mined for other areas of Australia during this colonial period, even though millions of birds over thousands of years on rocky island outcrops would surely have left a reasonable guano resource.

Yolla (Mutton Bird, Mount Pitt Bird, or Sooty Petrel)

The records of Yolla harvesting as an industry demonstrate one of the clearest examples of historical bias, based on omission, within the historical record.

Sealing is the other, and even though very different, the two industries mirror each other. Seal colonies abounded in the southern waters of Van Diemen's Land as did Yolla rookeries. There are very limited records of what was large scale commercial sealing and none found of Yolla harvesting either on

⁴⁶⁵Metraux, A., *Easter Island, a Stone Age Civilization of the Pacific*, Redwood Burr. 1957.

⁴⁶⁶Jennings, I., and Noldart, A., Tasmanian Department of Mines Geological Bulletin, No. 50, *Geological Resources of Tasmania*, Government Printer, 1967.

mainland Van Diemen's Land or the southern coastal islands, even though the rookeries were probably unaffected prior to 1803. Colonies of both seal and Yolla were known to have existed in these areas but to a great extent were decimated very early in the nineteenth century. The southern seal rookeries were probably harvested to extinction prior to invasion in 1803 or soon thereafter. Accounts of seal harvesting at Oyster Bay, the Schoutens, White Rock and Maria Island show southeastern Van Diemen's Land seal colonies survived, but no mentions were found of the Yolla rookeries for that area or for Bruny Island and Research Bay even though they were likely to have been present.

The people of Hobart Town did not seem to mention either feathers or meat of mutton birds, nor do their known accounts list Yolla, Mount Pitt Birds or Sooty Petrels nor are they mentioned in the Commissariat records, or within the lists of birds used as food by the colonists.⁴⁶⁸ The unlimited variety of birds similar in taste to British fowl and game birds would have meant little need for the colonists to 'acquire' a taste for the distinctly flavoured Yolla in spite of their familiarity to the 568 or so colonists transferred from Norfolk Island between 1807 to 1809.⁴⁶⁹ The lack of records relating to the Yolla areas of Van Diemen's Land other than Bass Strait produces an inadvertent bias overlooked by modern writers, who make little mention that they are only recording one part of the Yolla harvesting industry, that of the Bass Strait sealers. Clues to the

⁴⁶⁷ Robinson, G., Journals 1829-1832, in *Friendly Mission the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson*, Edited by N. Plomley, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966.

⁴⁶⁸ The Yolla was called Mount Pitt birds after Mount Pitt on Norfolk Island.

⁴⁶⁹ Schaffer, I., *Exiled Three Times Over Profiles of Norfolk Islanders Exiled in Van Diemen's Land, 1807-1813*, St. David's Publishers, Hobart.1992.

industry were sometimes found as asides in records relating to other issues, events where some person or ship was noted as being in a particular place.

Early exploitation on the east coast of mainland Australia was linked the northern islands of Van Diemen's Land as the sealing industry attracted ships from a wide variety of world ports.

The amazement expressed by the writers of journals, such those of Flinders, Davis and Robinson gave a visual perception of Yolla that was fundamental to estimating the numbers of Yolla in the untouched rookeries.

Possibly the first record of Yolla being sighted and the first account of commercialism for Yolla is from Captain Hamilton, who was sealing in the area of Preservation Island in 1796. For the six months he anchored his ship *Sydney Cove* at the island where the crew were eating the Yolla, which they “skinned, smoked and dried”.⁴⁷⁰ In 1798 Flinders records that he took Sooty Petrels “in great numbers” from Preservation Island.⁴⁷¹ Flinders’ description is the first known account of a flight of Yolla so numerous that they occupied one and a half hours in passing. He estimated the numbers to have amounted to at least *one hundred and forty millions*.⁴⁷²

In 1846 Davis witnessed the arrival of the Yolla on isolated small Green Island, Bass Strait:

⁴⁷⁰Cumpston, J., *First Visitors to Bass Strait*. A Roebuck Book Publication. (no date).

⁴⁷¹Skira, I., *Tasmanian Aborigines and Mutton Birding: a Historical Examination*, Doctorate Thesis University of Tasmania 1993. p.149.

⁴⁷²Breton, R., *Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land During the Years 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1833*, London. 1834. p. 320.

24 November at "Green Island" a few minutes before sunset flocks arrive at the island from every quarter ... they congregate together, so dense is the cloud that night is ushered in a good ten minutes before the usual time ... the whole island is burrowed; and when I state that there are not sufficient burrows for a quarter of the birds to lay in ... every burrow on the island contains, according to its size from one to three or four birds and as many eggs: one is the general rule. At least three fourths of the birds lay under bushes, and the eggs are so numerous that great care must be taken to avoid treading on them.⁴⁷³

This account was only for a single island, not for all the Bass Strait, or any mainland rookeries. It was however, a testimony as to the original numbers of the birds:

notwithstanding the enormous annual destruction of these birds, I did not, during the five years, that I was in the habit of visiting the straits, perceive any sensible diminution of their number.⁴⁷⁴

Flocks of these sizes are unimaginable today.

A number of factors, dominated by a change of economics after the collapse of the sealing industry to Yolla harvesting have encouraged the survival of records from only one harvesting source, thus initiating the bias. The knowledge of the Bass Strait Island Yolla industry has survived, partly due to the what was described in the nineteenth century as the "hybrid Aboriginal" population who were a curiosity for missionaries, historians and the new field of anthropology.⁴⁷⁵ Some of the descendants from the group of women who joined sealers, have continued the seasonal harvesting to the present day. The main factor in the survival of Yolla numbers in Bass Strait is the limited human

⁴⁷³Davis R., Some Accounts of the Habits and Natural History of the Sooty Petrel (Mutton Bird). *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture and Statistics, &c.* Vol. 11: Henry Dowling Stationer, Launceston. 1846. pp. 13-14.

⁴⁷⁴Davis, R., Some Accounts of the Habits and Natural History of the Sooty Petrel (Mutton Bird). *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture and Statistics, &c.* Vol. 11: Henry Dowling Stationer, Launceston. 1846. p. 15.

contact related to the concentrated population distribution in the Furneaux Islands.

The birding rookeries of Bass Strait were severely affected from the beginning of the nineteenth century by expansion of human activities and introduction of pigs and dogs, which were left to run wild on some islands. It is known that Yolla on Woody and Vansittart Islands were destroyed by “the predation of pigs” combined with “the destruction of habitat” associated with land clearance and “being subjected to trampling and predation by domestic stock”, just as similar actions presumably destroyed the mainland rookeries.⁴⁷⁶

Activities such as coastal farming, aspects of timber harvesting, wattle bark and lime industries would have inadvertently caused permanent damage to mainland rookeries from an early stage. Destruction in rookeries by dogs, sheep, cattle and possibly pigs, as well as man, would have created issues that led to the rookeries not being recorded.

There are a number of accounts of Yolla, but few refer to any form of industrial harvesting prior to 1830, despite it being a continuous seasonal industry. From the time of Flinders there appeared to be a never ending supply of the birds.

According to Skira the first official recorded export harvest was 1831 where 2.5 ton of feathers and thousands of eggs left the Furneaux Group.⁴⁷⁷ Even though

⁴⁷⁵The list of papers and books describing both the Bass Strait Island population and the Yolla harvesting are too numerous to list.

⁴⁷⁶Skira, I., *Tasmanian Aborigines and Mutton Birding: and Historical Examination*, Doctorate Thesis University of Tasmania. 1993, p. 150.

⁴⁷⁷Skira, I., *Socio-Economic Aspects of Mutton birding in Tasmania, Australia*, *ICBP Technical Publication*, No. 6: 1987. p. 68.

the newspapers and journals record exports of feathers, eggs and meat before that time.

Because of the in-built bias of the records only a limited view of the entire industry is available. If Yolla were still available in areas being colonised, it is doubtful that poor colonists on mainland Van Diemen's Land would have ignored a ready source of income available from harvesting Yolla, when it was such a lucrative source of income to the Islanders. Part of the reason that rookeries were preserved in Bass Strait was the diminishing number of harvesters after 1840, when the Islands only housed a small permanent population; this has ensured an ongoing industry.

In his paper Davis offers no estimate of the enormous number of eggs taken, nor how many spare casks were filled with eggs, he just remarks "that every spare cask on Flinders Island was filled with eggs"; presumably this occurred on a seasonal basis. The chicks made good eating for the Aboriginal people, however, the records show that all ages of bird were acceptable to the British. Possibly the earliest reference of export commercialisation is that by Boulton in 1824 when he visited the Bass Straits hunting seals. He recorded:

On Preservation Island there are several boat crews who go there to get a supply of mutton birds, which is their main article of food. These birds, so called from their resemblance to mutton, are migratory, in September they come in flocks to the island and remain, on or about the shore til April, when they disappear, they burrow in the ground like rabbits where they make holes to lay their eggs which are as large as a hens egg. In the evening, they swarm to their places, it is very easy to knock them down by the dozens, merely by swinging a stick right and left. At day break they are to be heard making a deafening noise, as they proceed towards the seaside for the purpose of seeking their food.

They are so numerous that I have seen a distance of 3 miles entirely covered with them. The size of these birds is equal to a common sized

fowl - they are of a dark lead in colour, and are a nourishing sort of food - when eaten with potatoes, to such constitutions as those who are inured to a life of hardiness.

At certain times of the year they grow lean which is the best time for plucking the feathers and a black woman will pluck 500 birds per day for her work - the feathers are sold for flour, spirits etc. ⁴⁷⁸

Backhouse and Walker offering a different perspective, found the birds “larger than a pigeon (as large as an English ring dove)”. ⁴⁷⁹ Their observations fill in some of the gaps from Boulton’s account:

Arriving on the 20 September to scratch out their holes they leave about 8 November and return to lay on 21 November. Each hole is occupied by a male and female bird. The female only lays one egg. They leave when the young birds are able to fly about 8 May. The incubation period is 1 month “these birds have many enemies, but their numbers are so vast, though each pair rears but one young in a season, wholesale destruction does not appear to diminish them.” ⁴⁸⁰

The breeding needs of the Yolla actually aided their harvesting as noted by Backhouse and Walker, that when attempting to fly, the Yolla cannot rise easily from the ground on account of the length of their wings. They run along the ground to find an elevated spot or to the rocky shore for a convenient elevated spot from which to rise.

The only processing industry recorded from capture to export is that of the Yolla:

a pit is dug about six feet long and three feet deep and four feet or larger according to the circumstances. This is lined with boards or bark and a fence of two feet high is placed at the side next to the sea. A fence 2’ high converging on this pit is raised for a considerable distance. As soon as the birds come out of the holes in the morning, two persons drive them toward the pit, and a person from each end of the fence

⁴⁷⁸ Boulton, J., *Journal of a Rambler: the journal of John Boulton* Edited J Starke Oxford University Press, Auckland. 1986

⁴⁷⁹ Backhouse, G., *A Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843.

⁴⁸⁰ Walker Backhouse, J., Journal accounts in B. Plomley *Weep in Silence*. 1987. p. 221.

performs the same duty. The poor affrighted birds run towards their destruction biting one another, and fall into the pit until it is full, when a sail or thatched hurdle is thrown over them, and the fences leveled to suffer the remainder to pass on to the sea. The heat from the birds piled one upon another under the sail suffocates them in a few minutes; few of them are said to survive a quarter of an hour. As soon as they are dead their destroyers send the Aboriginal women into the hole to pluck them. As they pluck the bird they throw the bodies out and then bag the feathers. A hundred birds yields four pounds of feathers and two and a half tons is sent from these islands in a season. As many as 150,000 birds were taken in some years according to Munro could see no difference in their numbers. The eggs are taken in great numbers in the laying season. When there are young birds they are taken out of the holes for their oil. This is obtained by pressing the craw and occasioning them to vomit.⁴⁸¹

It is most likely that the methods described developed from the Aboriginal women, combined with the sealers' knowledge of gamekeepers and or poachers practices in rural England and Ireland. The traditional Aboriginal method of harvesting Yolla is very different.

The combination of techniques developed into commercial ventures with the taking of adult Yolla in September and November primarily for "their feathers. The carcasses were discarded".⁴⁸² Only the chicks were salted after being skinned, their downy feathers providing a separate trade commodity of growing importance:

At this time the pound of down taken from twenty five birds was selling for about six pence. Nestlings are abandoned by their parents about a fortnight before heading north early in May. In colonial times the [A]boriginal women drove the young muttonbirds, now living on their reserves of fat, into a hole surrounded by a half moon fence where they were covered and smothered.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹Robinson, G., in B Plomley *Weep in Silence*. 1987, pp. 221-222

⁴⁸²Skira, I., Socio-Economic Aspects of Mutton birding in Tasmania, Australia, *ICBP Technical Publication*, No. 6: 1987. p. 66.

⁴⁸³GA Robinson's Journal 23 October 1830, Mitchell Library, New South Wales.

Feathers sold for five pence or six pence per pound. It took the feathers of twenty five birds to make one pound. It took 1,000 birds to make a feather bed (mattress) weighing 40 pounds, giving 56,000 birds to the ton of feathers. Approximately two and a half-ton of feathers were taken each season from approximately 140,000 birds, which approximates Munro's estimate.⁴⁸⁴ By squeezing the throats of the chicks after death oil could be extracted from their craw. Later accounts note that, on average, it took 100 chicks to make one gallon of oil and "a good season would yield about 3,000 gallons", a further indicator to past vast numbers.⁴⁸⁵ The oil of the Yolla was held in high esteem for its medicinal value. The eggs were also collected in great quantities.⁴⁸⁶ With trade well established by 1823, adult birds were killed for their feathers, chicks for meat, fat and oil. Eggs were also collected, for use as a general staple.

The Yolla harvesting and industries involved in timber harvesting are the only continuous colonial industries to survive to the present. Other industries discussed have ceased some to recommence with "fashion". The research into the Yolla industry has shown how circumstances of the recording, has created a significant bias that has coloured accounts directly related to the omissions from the historic record. One source, that of Robinson's edited journals, dominate modern writings to the extent that they have become the base of the bias within the Yolla industry. Comparison and contrast of the primary records before the

⁴⁸⁴ GA Robinson's Journal 23 October 1830, Mitchell Library, New South Wales.

⁴⁸⁵ Skira, I., *Tasmanian Aborigines and Mutton Birding: and Historical Examination*, Doctorate Thesis University of Tasmania. 1993. p. 157.

⁴⁸⁶ Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania During the Years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1901.

1830 period provided a more accurate understanding for aspects of the colonial period than secondary sources.

Aboriginal women were the prime labour force of the Bass Strait Islands for both sealing and harvesting of Yolla. From the earliest records it is known that the sealers and their families ate Yolla fresh, pickled or dried for later use. The salted chicks were described as tasting like herrings. By the development of localized harvesting techniques combining aspects of the traditional Aboriginal methods and European experience, and it became possible for Yolla to provide a profitable variation of exploiting wildlife, which has been sustained by and for those called the Bass Strait Islanders, through to the present day. These birds provided a significant economic replacement for the seal after the collapse of the Bass Strait sealing industry from over fishing around 1823. Oral histories of the Aboriginal Communities within the islander (Palawa) and broader Tasmanian mainland (Lia Pootah), combined with historical accounts, brought to light, how embedded the geographical bias is within the broad understanding of the modern story of the Yolla industry.

4.4 Tanneries

For a colony producing considerable quantities of animal and bird skins, tanneries were little documented. However, it is known through the colonial newspapers that local tanners worked with the native animal, sheep and cattle skins. It might be argued that the noxious nature of the operations of

fellmongeries and tanneries may have influenced the sensibilities concerning smell, thus forcing their relocation beyond the residential parts of the settlements.

However, considering the stench recorded from the whaling industry in the Derwent and the fact that a working tannery existed three miles from Hobart’s city center in South Hobart until the 1990s such reasoning is problematic. The *Blue Books* offer limited statistics and information concerning such establishments, but they contain enough statistical information to show a surprising number of tanneries in Van Diemen's Land (Figure 4.4).

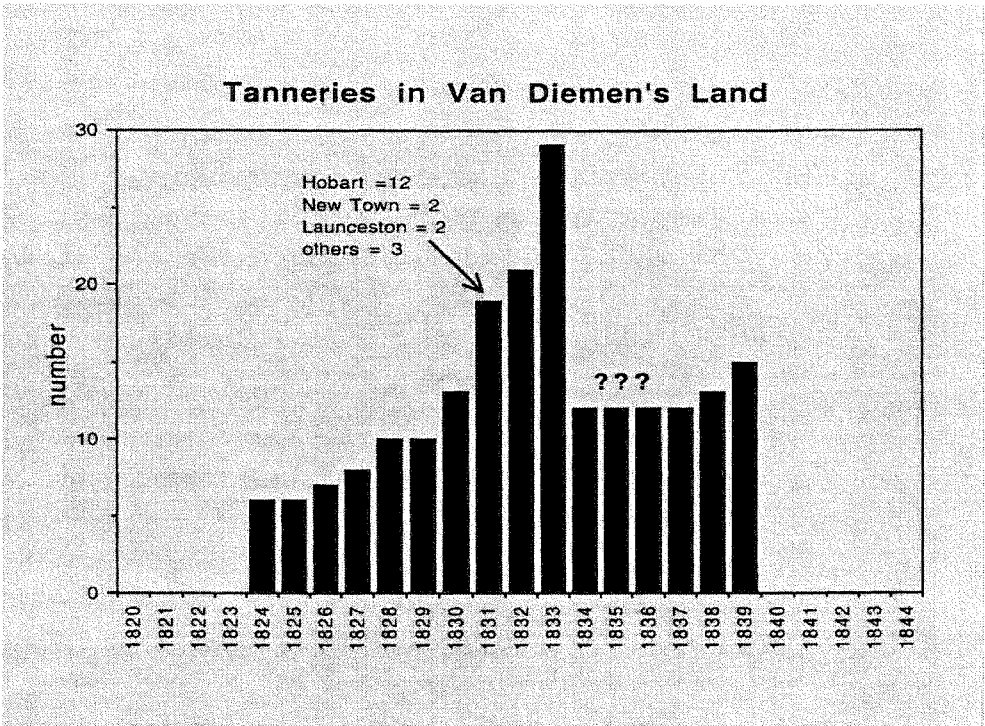


Figure 4.4: Official tanneries.

Source: The author

By 1831 there were twenty one tanneries and fellmongeries operating on the island.⁴⁸⁷ Unfortunately, the source of the *Blue Books* data is not clear and it can only be assumed that Government records were the source.

The obscure and limited reports indicate that the locally tanned skins were of little importance other than for domestic usage. Few tanned items were listed as exports in newspapers of the period from 1803 to 1830, and likewise few accounts were reported of tanneries (figure 4.4). It is possible that the obscure references to locally tanned leather were related to the symbolic importance of clothing to the social standing to the British. British clothing marked the colonist as ‘civilised’, cementing their social position within the colony’s society. The earliest mention of tanneries in the colony was the reference noted in the chapter on Wattle bark, where Lieutenant Governor Collins mentioned a tannery in operation to produce some leather to add to the bag leather for the making of shoes in 1805.⁴⁸⁸

The advertisements in newspapers for house or property sales sometimes included mention of a tannery such as “the old established inn and liquor shop in Liverpool Street the property of Mr Dickson with a large tannery establishment out-houses and productive gardens”.⁴⁸⁹ The importance and significance of obscure mentions of colonial industry contained within newspapers validate the time consuming tediousness of using microfilm. Prior

⁴⁸⁷ *Blue Books*, Return of the Manufactures, Mines and Fisheries. 1831.

⁴⁸⁸ *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Earl Camden, 18 December 1805. p. 344.

⁴⁸⁹ *Colonial Times*, 30 September 1825.

to 1831 the tanning industry appeared to dominate at a domestic level with the use of local skins for clothing.

Tanning was an industry based on need, for example Boyce has noted that convicts “took to wearing jackets, trousers and sometimes caps made from Kangaroo skin”.⁴⁹⁰ In the summer of 1815-1816 James Kelly noted that eight soldiers he met with who were searching for the convict Michael Howe, “were all dressed in Kangaroo skin”.⁴⁹¹ Bushrangers made “their clothing of Kangaroo skin, which they made into jackets, waistcoats, trousers, shoes, hats and rugs”.⁴⁹² In 1820 James Dixon recorded that convicts wore jackets and shoes from Kangaroo skin as did many poor settlers.⁴⁹³

Accounts of other tanneries suggested the existence of farm scale and domestic operations rather than large commercial ventures such as the one Meredith had on his east coast property.⁴⁹⁴ It is not recorded what Meredith tanned.

However, the Land Commissioners note prior to the mention of the tannery that:

At the back of the house a fine marsh which if drained would make the choicest pasture is retained for the Mansion as a swannery and duck walk. At the front a large lagoon capable of being easily drained, still in the state of nature.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁰Boyce, J., *Surviving in a New Land: The European Invasion of Van Diemen's Land 1803 - 1823*, Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Tasmania. 1994. p. 32.

⁴⁹¹Calder, p. 21 in Boyce, J., *Surviving in a New Land: The European Invasion of Van Diemen's Land 1803-1823*, Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Tasmania. 1994. p. 32.

⁴⁹²Boyce, J., *Surviving in a New Land: The European Invasion of Van Diemen's Land 1803-1823*, Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Tasmania. 1994. p. 32.

⁴⁹³Boyce, J., *Surviving in a New Land: The European Invasion of Van Diemen's Land 1803 - 1823*, Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Tasmania. 1994. p. 33.

⁴⁹⁴ McKay, A., Editor *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-1828*, Hobart. 1962. p.93.

It could be argued because of the swannery and duck walk that Meredith actually had an area that he maintained for the purposes of attracting ducks and swans. The ducks for the table and swans that could be easily harvested forming a base for a swan industry and that the tannery was for swan skin.

Advertisements in the newspapers, reveal much of the tanning and fellmongery industrial story of Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1830. In 1826 the *Colonial Times* advertised that Mr Dexter, next to the Green Gate in Collins Street wanted 1,000 kangaroo skins for which he would pay 10 pence each, while Mr Underwood of the Royal Exchange wanted immediately 30,000 kangaroo skins.⁴⁹⁶

The lack of documentation for tanneries is surprising given the by-products a tannery produced. There was little mention of the subsidiary industries of dyes and inks produced as a consequence of various chemical processes tied up with the tanning liquors. Each skin gave a limited amount of fat so that each tanner would have had a sideline tallow production for candle and soap making.⁴⁹⁷

Soap and candle manufacture abounded as individual industries, but not necessarily in association with tanneries. In 1827 an advertisement offered “parchment of colonial manufacture” at five shillings per skin available from the office of the *Colonial Times*.⁴⁹⁸ Museum catalogues of today describe colonial blankets and floor coverings made of skins sewn together. Several known bed throws are made from the skin of the Tasmanian Tiger. Possum and

⁴⁹⁵McKay, A., Editor *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-1828*, Hobart. 1962. p.93.

⁴⁹⁶*Colonial Times*, 28 April 1826.

⁴⁹⁷*Australian Directory of Bibliography*, James Wiltshire 1788-1850. p. 608.

Platypus skins were made into blankets with thick pile that can still look new even after almost two hundred years.⁴⁹⁹ Word of mouth often brings to light anecdotes of domestic uses of locally tanned skins during the early colonial period. Possibly the tanning of skins for rugs was a cottage rather than a commercial endeavour.

Almost as a contradiction, the newspapers show that various colonial tanneries were in production as indicated by the number of skins advertised or offered to boot makers. “John Megger corner of Argyle Street and Collins Street, opposite Bird in the Hand; a quantity kip and crop leather, kangaroo skins etc.”, S Wintle bootmaker opposite Waterloo Mill in Liverpool Street offers to “shoe makers and others 500 dressed brush kangaroo skins for sale very superior quality with an assortment of top sole leather, boot webbing, hempte”.⁵⁰⁰ These appear to be raw skins being offered to a boot maker with tanning facilities. Perhaps many of the bootmakers in the early part of the colonial nineteenth century also tanned their own hides? Tanners would have tanned sheep, pig and cattle skins as well as the skins of the native fauna so the lack of documentation for the early tanners is surprising. It is possible that the modern term of tanner may not have been used as commonly prior to 1830. One reference mentions a parchment maker; another account in the *Colonial Times* refers to a leather manufacturer.

⁴⁹⁸ *Colonial Times* March 23 1827.

⁴⁹⁹ Pers. Com Mrs R Hill who has an heirloom possum skin double bed bedspread from pre Governor Arthur period 2003.

⁵⁰⁰ *Hobart Town Courier*, 1 November 1827.

“Colonial enthusiasm” described in a feature article in the *Colonial Times* tells that Mr Blackwell, a tanner and leather manufacturer of New Town, “wears a suit completely made of leather: coat, waistcoat, trousers, hat and shoes” all of a very soft “pukeen leather”. Trousers made from Mr Blackwell’s pattern are on sale in most shops in and are well suited “for working men in the bush” was a good advertisement for his goods.⁵⁰¹ It is possible that he also made leather aprons much in use for workers’ clothing protection at this time. Tanned kangaroo skin was much lauded for the merits of its softness. Kangaroo skin gloves showed a “peculiar softness and elasticity” and these qualities made it so useful a leather “for boots, slippers, ladies shoes”.⁵⁰² In the same article the editor notes that Mr Cosle of Jericho dressed and tanned first class skins, showing tanned Kangaroo skin to be a useful article of trade. One or the other of the men mentioned in the newspaper may have made the strong Kangaroo leather bootlaces which were so hard-wearing.

The *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* ran an advertisement for Mr Rain of Macquarie Point who wanted “well tanned leather OF THIS COUNTRY”. He would buy by the butt weighing 50-56 pound and there were three barrels to the butt. He paid 17 pence to 19 pence per pound for “Dressing hides 15-16 pence, calf skins 20-40 pounds 22-26 pence 40-50 pounds 28-34 pence and kangaroo skins 16 to 36 pence”.⁵⁰³ It is noted by Linge that:

The Tasmanian settlers who made shoes out of kangaroo skins in 1805 did so simply because there was a shortage of hides from other animals: they found it answered ‘reasonably well’ as leather for uppers but presumably were unaware that Kangaroo skin has a particularly tightly woven structure with intertwined fibers running in all

⁵⁰¹*Colonial Times*, 15 June 1827.

⁵⁰²*Hobart Town Courier*, 22 December 1827.

⁵⁰³*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 6 January 1821.

directions so that the resulting leather is the strongest known for a given weight and thickness.⁵⁰⁴

Tanneries and slaughter yards developed in close proximity and there was often mentions of one or the other but not necessarily together. There were some industrial omissions that were hard to understand. Presumably there was some form of slaughter area although it was unlikely that there were stockyards for native animals. Governor Collins wanted the meat of the native fauna to arrive fresh, and it was most likely that Kangaroos were killed early in the day as noted by Evans. This timing would have allowed the meat to be transported in the cool of the morning, as a cartload of Kangaroo could be got before breakfast, making its arrival at the Commissariat before the day began to warm up a guarantee of freshness.⁵⁰⁵ What happened to the skins? Were they taken to a commercial tanner near the Commissariat? Or did the skins belong to the convict hunter or the convicts master and therefore tanned in a domestic area associated with the landowner? In the time before 1820 every landowner held a land grant of acreage in what was to become the city of Hobart Town. Even after this date many houses still consisted of acreage. Probably there were many others like “John Mezger [who] at his house” on the corner of Argyle and Collins Street opposite the hotel *Bird in the Hand* sold quantities of kip and crop leather and Kangaroo skins.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴Linge, G., *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788-1890*, Australian National University Press, Canberra. 1979. p. 28.

⁵⁰⁵Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the*

4.5 The Curios of Shell, Skin, Fur and Feathers

It was the curiosity value and uniqueness of the Van Diemen's Land furs and feathers that led them to become fashion statements for family members friends and patrons still in the "home country". In a letter dated February 1806 George Harris indicated that he was collecting furs and feathers for "a muff and tippet" for his sister-in-law.⁵⁰⁷ One newspaper carrying out a campaign against the slaughter of Kangaroo suggested that "stock-keepers who cannot refrain from hunting" should instead target the birds of "beautiful plumage that cover our bushes and injure our cornfields". The editor considered that a market in England for parrots would solve the problem as:

Many a lady about Park Lane and Grosvenor Square would be proud of a muff and tippet formed of the feathered skins of our native parrot of various species and endless variety.⁵⁰⁸

The editor could also see the potential market in China for bird skins with feathers suitable for ceremonial dress.

Fashion is always a specialist marketing area where shade and texture dominate. Many seals must have been killed that did not satisfy the fashion industry by having the "soft down beneath the hair".⁵⁰⁹ In the cargo of the *Hugh Crawford* bound for England there were Mr Kemp's 13 casks of sealskins, Captain Wilson's four casks and the single pipe of Mr Thomas Smith's sealskins.⁵¹⁰ It can not be known what proportion of these sealskins had the soft under fur. The

application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out, London. 1822.

⁵⁰⁶ *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 November 1827.

⁵⁰⁷ Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 85.

⁵⁰⁸ *Hobart Town Courier*, 14 February 1829.

⁵⁰⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*, 16 January 1830.

same cargo manifest listed Captain Wilson as exporting one case of swanskins, but the number of skins packed in a case is not recorded.

Sometimes a bounty was raised on native animals. Reasons for their introduction included practical and to some extent the more prosaic reasons. Backhouse noted that the Native Cat bounty was worth eight pence a skin, a successful method of protecting the introduced pheasant. The Native Cat numbers were so numerous that as many as 600 skins at a time could be collected.⁵¹¹ Possums were also exploited for their skins. A sale was brought to the attention of the public with a notice “the posted sale of possum skins will now not take place”.⁵¹² The “posted sale” was not advertised in the previous newspapers. The term ‘posted’ implied that a handbill form of advertising previously had been used perhaps posted on a tree trunk in a busy area. Interestingly, the export of Brush Possum skins has continued to this day.

Sometimes animal fur of one kind was combined with another type of fur to make it more acceptable to a specialist market. Two of the more common animals used in this manner during the first decades were the Golden Bellied Water Rat which inhabited the fresh water streams and sea beaches of the Bass Strait Islands and all Van Diemen's Land sea inlets.⁵¹³ The Golden Bellied Water Rat is also called the ‘musk rat’ because of its characteristic smell. Backhouse records that musk duck bird skins “dried by filling repeatedly with

⁵¹⁰ *Colonial Times*, 23 March 1827.

⁵¹¹ Backhouse, G., *A Narrative of a visit to the Australian Colonies*, Hamilton Adams and Co. London. 1843.

⁵¹² *Hobart Town Gazette*, October 1827.

⁵¹³ Gould, J., *Australian Marsupials with Modern Commentaries*, Edited by Joan Drebine Maximillen. 1974.

wood ash until dry”, were exported with muskrat and musk duck packed together as both had the characteristic musk smell.⁵¹⁴ It is possible that this was done with the Yolla to encourage sales, as the smell of the feathers was distinctive and persistent, but not so highly favoured, one of the reasons in the decline of Yolla feather sales.⁵¹⁵

Information on the feather and fur industry was gleaned in many ways. Fur and hat making were complementary industries in the nineteenth century. Fur seal skins from Van Diemen's Land were sent to Port Jackson to be made into hats as a substitute for beaver.⁵¹⁶ Van Diemen's Land had a peltry that used Kangaroo, Wallaby, Native Cat and Tiger, including Black and Grey Possum by the hundred of dozens, plus the locally produced Wattle bark.⁵¹⁷

An article describing the Town Hall Show in 1874 showed how commonplace fur blankets and rugs were. The article also gave an insight into which animals were used.

The collection of furs is admirable, the best we have ever seen in this city. Mr Schmidt had rugs of opossum, wallaby, black native cat, tiger cat, and white Kangaroo, and other skins.

Mr Omant displayed:

⁵¹⁴Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1901.

⁵¹⁵Skira, I., Socio-Economic Aspects of Mutton birding in Tasmania, Australia, *ICBP Technical Publication*, No. 6 1987.

⁵¹⁶Evans, G., Surveyor General, *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822.

Shoulder furs, mats, bed covers, cloaks, rugs, collars and cuffs, waistcoats, &c ... Mr Luckman's collection included ... mantles, foot warmers and other things.⁵¹⁸

Other sources of information for curios were the Rules and Regulations and records of disputes regarding skins. A cargo of skins used as ballast on the *Sinbad* between Launceston and Port Jackson in 1819 became part of a dispute between James Lord, who had been contracted to fill the ship, and the owner George Barnard.⁵¹⁹

Bartering provided for merchants and tanners a more profitable acquisition of skins. Bartering was an established practice in the colony. Eventually sealskins become an official form of currency for the Bass Strait Islands:

Spirits were always carried by colonial vessels for trade with the straitsmen for seal skins. In 1825 Governor Arthur officially sanctioned captains to take aboard spirits produced in the colony amounting to two gallons per month for each crewman. A months self-denial could raise a tidy some: 9-12 skins worth 27 shillings a piece, could be traded for a gallon of rum.⁵²⁰

Boulton recorded that sealers used the skins of seal, Kangaroo, Wallaby, Emu, swan and mutton bird feathers as barter for supplies.⁵²¹ Bartering was still practised in the islands even after seal skins began to diminish as a trade item.

Much of what was collected and preserved for collections would sit in storage in distant places remaining unrecognised except for its curiosity value,

⁵¹⁷Notes and Relevant Material East Coast Excursion Swansea and Environs November 28,29 1970. *Royal Society of Tasmania Northern Branch*. From a 1968 meeting relating to James Hume and his wattle bark distillery in Hobart Town in 1826.

⁵¹⁸*Mercury*, 13 November 1874.

⁵¹⁹Tipping, M., *Convicts Unbound: the story of the Calcutta Convicts and their Settlement in Australia*, Viking O'Neil, Ringwood, Victoria. 1988.

⁵²⁰*Hobart Town Gazette*, 25 March 1826.

aesthetics and novelty. During his visit to Van Diemen's Land in 1772 Marion de Fresne collected the “curious sea stones, sea eggs and fine valuable shells”.⁵²² Modern science was in its infancy and curios were the rage. The southern lands were a scientific collector’s dream with their strange and wonderful flora and fauna, much sought after by collectors in Britain and Europe (see figures 4.5 and 4.6).

gathered there that it is now called the Impressionist Island.

upon much as visitors from the moon would have been.



Sir Joseph Banks named Botany Bay in 1770 and was the first—after William Dampier—to bring attention in Europe to the Australian flora, but he published nothing about the plants. It was the French whose beautifully illustrated volumes promoted Australian plants abroad after settlement. The first volume of *Voyage de découvertes aux Terres Australes* (1807), with this vignette of Malmaison on the frontispiece, shows that Napoleon and Josephine were proud of their Australian flora and fauna.

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NAPOLEON, THE EMPRESS AND THE ARTIST 8

Figure 4.5

⁵²¹Boulton, J., *Journal of a Rambler: the Journal of John Boulton* edited by J. Starke, Auckland Oxford University Press, 1886.

⁵²²Flinders, M., *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, 1814.

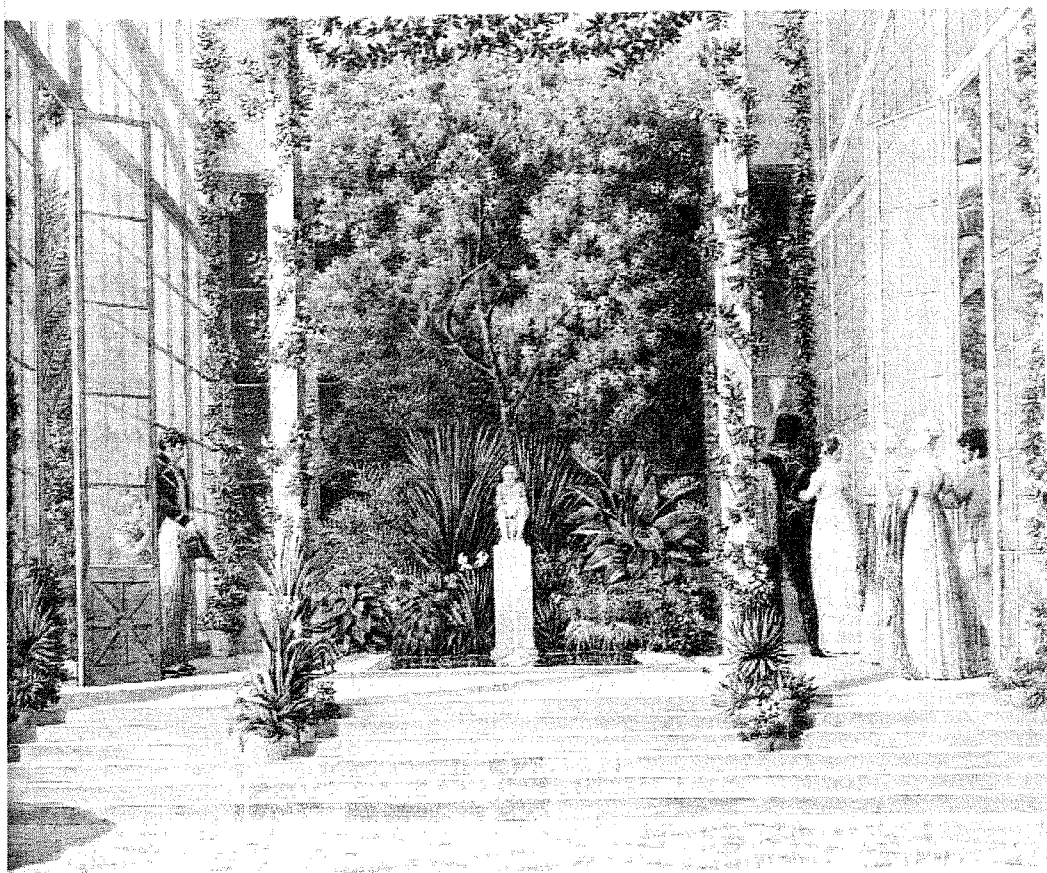


Figure 4.6: Empress Josephine's Black Wattle.

Source: Margaret Long Municipality of Sorell Historical Society.

The number of items removed to satisfy scientific curiosity and novelty can be conceived from the statistics of the 1802 French expedition of Baudin which sent "home" to France 22,000 specimens consisting of plants, animals, minerals or shells from Van Diemen's Land and other southern lands.⁵²³ There were the other unnamed collectors who sent to collectors or institutions:

bottles containing parts of new female animal, the skin of a male etc., the skin and bones of one now sent, and a very perfect native's head, with some birds etc.⁵²⁴

⁵²³Plomley, B., Pre-Settlement Exploration of Tasmanian and the Natural Sciences, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania Pamphlet*. 1984.

⁵²⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: 4 November 1805.

Harris began his shell collection from the moment he landed in Port Phillip, complaining in his letter about the local shells as “few and so little variety that they are not worth sending home”.⁵²⁵ In Storm Bay Harris found species that he sometimes recorded often with their Latin names. These included the *paper argonaut* which he found common on the shore, and noting two or three of the *Voluter undulata pulchra* and a curious variety of cockle (very scarce) a few *trochii* (very small), limpets and ear shells on the beaches were mainly fragments.⁵²⁶

A letter written by Harris to his mother in 1805 showed that he had been an avid collector for some time of the colonial curiosities.

I have also to thank my kind & worthy friend Comyns for his very friendly letter – I shall write him a very long letter & wish it was in my power to send him some curiosities by this conveyance – but I have met with a great misfortune in having a large case of birds (some capital ones) abt. 100 in number totally destroyed by a nest of large ants eating into it unknown to me – not a feather was left on them – Nancy & Mr. Comyns write to me to preserve them in spirits, but they could not know the scarcity of that article.⁵²⁷

His letter also discusses the difficulty in preserving a collection once gathered.

Harris may have collected other specimens and sent them successfully to friends or found them destroyed in other ways that he did not record.

⁵²⁵Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 57.

Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 58.

⁵²⁷ Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p. 70.

4.6 Fish

The historical records show that fish and fowl were the most commonly recorded food sources acquired at Van Diemen's Land from 1642. Each ship that arrived replenished supplies, wood, fresh water, fish and fowl. Even after Britain controlled Van Diemen's Land, ships could still re-victual from uncontrolled coastal bays. Supplies for ships that were taken in this way were unrecorded for quantities or species.

Historically the 'Fisheries of Van Diemen's Land', locally and internationally had only one meaning. Whaling and sealing were referred to as the "Fisheries", although not included as an industry within this thesis, for reasons already noted. From 1803, when the mate of the *Albion* killed the first whale on the way to the Derwent River, until 1880, whaling dominated any form of fishing recorded in the cargo manifests and export records.

In 1804 the Harbour Master William Collins suggested to Lieutenant Governor Collins the benefits of erecting a temporary store and boiling or frying houses to aid the ships getting ready for whaling. They could stock up on provisions and stores in Hobart Town and the factory would be ready to receive cargo.

Presumably the stores being considered would have been drawn from the local fauna, rather than imported British salted products already noted as being in short supply. All advantages should be taken because Storm Bay - Storm Bay Passage, Frederick Henry Bay and the River Derwent teemed with black

whales. Governor Collins reported that every year since settlement, Hobart Town had been visited by whalers.⁵²⁸

However, outside of whaling and sealing, the fishing industry was predominately domestic, with few records describing scale fish exports. One of the earliest records of fish exported was in 1804 when American vessels took “smoked and pickled fish” to the “China market”.⁵²⁹ In 1804 Amasar, Samuel and William Delano from the ships *Perseverance* & *Pilgrim*, had caught several barrels of fish to smoke. They kept the fish in brine and then smoked them in smokehouses that were already in existence at Kent Bay.⁵³⁰ When processed the fish were strung on small sticks, then the sticks were stored in bundles. Detailed accounts of commercial fish for export are obscure and mainly consist of simple references similar to that of Backhouse noting that fish are dried on the East Coast for market.⁵³¹

There were other records indicating that the selection of fish available in Van Diemen's Land was extensive:

The other kinds of fish which may be purchased at Hobart Town, are salmon, (so called in the colony but a very poor fish,) perch, rock-cod, bream, mullet, whittings, flat-heads, leather jackets, taylor's, parrots, guard-fish, cray-fish, (nearly as good as lobsters,) oysters, (good and plentiful,) eels, skait, and shrimps. Some years ago mackerel of a very small species were caught, but lately they have not been known to approach the island. Black fish are plentiful in the Mersey, and generally weigh from five to fifteen pounds, but have no scales.⁵³²

It is possible that the small mackerel species could be listed as extinct?

⁵²⁸ *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Under Secretary Cook, 10 October 1808. P. 404.

⁵²⁹ Cumpston, J., *First Visitors to the Bass Strait*, Roebuck. (no date).

⁵³⁰ Bateson, C., *Dire Strait a history of Bass Strait*. A.H. & A.W. Reed, Sydney. 1973.

⁵³¹ Backhouse Walker, J., *Early Tasmania Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Government Printer. 1901.

It is clear that the domestic fish supply was used almost immediately after the invasion. On 29 February 1804 fish were caught from the harbour of Sullivans Cove to feed the people with Collins, “2 pound of fish served in lieu 1 pound salt-meat so saved 164 pound of meat”.⁵³³ This is a large amount of fish and presumably was caught regularly in such quantities. How many and what species made up the 300 odd pound of fish was not clarified, nor were the methods used to cook the fish. The statement “employing a boat in constantly fishing” indicated a purely domestic industry or perhaps a commercial venture in a convict economy?⁵³⁴ Were Governor King’s 1804 instructions for Paterson to:

procure such kinds of animal food as the place can supply and you will be particularly careful to cure what ever supplies of fish that may be caught and to serve it out in rations for the supply of the settlement.⁵³⁵

to become instructions for commencing commercial fishing and processing. Corned meats, dried fish, hides and skins along with bark for tanning were a mainstay for the parent colony, of Port Jackson, which “has a great dependence”.⁵³⁶

⁵³²Parker, H., *Van Diemen's Land its Rise ,Progress and Present State with Advice to Immigrants*, Simpkin and Marshal, Stationers’ Court.. 1834. p. 188.

⁵³³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Lord Hobart 4 March 1804. p. 230.

⁵³⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor King, 15 October 1805. p. 330.

⁵³⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Instructions to Lieutenant Governor Paterson from Governor King, 1 June 1804. p. 590.

⁵³⁶Evans, G., Surveyor General: *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822. p. 90.

However, the first commercial, non-whaling, fishing ground was possibly Recherche Bay, sheltered from the sea with its 4 fathom deep sandy bottom. It was considered a prime fishing ground:

Fish in this part, are very numerous and of the best kind. This is well calculated for a fishing station and is not too great a distance to supply Hobart Town regularly with fish.⁵³⁷

While such accounts indicate a vibrant commercial fishing industry from the beginning of settlement, no statistics or numbers of fish or species were found.

Later official records remain vague in regard to commercial supplies for export.

At least two suppliers of fish products were operating in 1816, G. Clark in Collins Street offering fish with opened and unopened oysters two days a week and John Gwynn advertising that he could supply fresh fish six days a week.⁵³⁸

Later another editor found that there was a need for a fishing company for both river and deep sea fishing as the “current scarcity and high price for fish would lead to likely success”. This was not a new need as “such a company was being considered some time ago”.⁵³⁹

By 1829 the *Hobart Town Courier* noted that a fish recently caught off Macquarie Point closely resembled the salmon in taste and appearance. The editor urged some enterprising colonist:

to fit out a small fishing vessel, in order to supply the inhabitants of Hobart Town, at a moderate rate, with some of the excellent cod and other fish at the mouth of the river.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷Hobbs, J., from a series of letters written in 1824. This is from a copy of Hobbs's letters, which were given to me with no referencing from a member First Settlers (1804) Association.

⁵³⁸*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 1816. The 19 October for Clark and 16 November for Gwynn.

⁵³⁹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 February 1827.

⁵⁴⁰*Hobart Town Courier*, 10 January 1829.

It is known that fish traps were in use to supply the domestic need. It is not known how many of the tidal areas near the settlements contained walled traps for the fish, or if the Aboriginal fish traps were used. A stone wall had been erected across the Coal River “some years ago” to trap fish that came up with the flood tide. It became so widely used that people going to catch the fish were trampling crops of wheat growing nearby.⁵⁴¹

Fish were in plentiful supply being hawked through the streets in the early morning, to be sold at reasonable prices considering the small size of the industry. A two to three pound bream sold for a shilling and colonial salmon and mullet were two to three shillings a dozen.⁵⁴²

We hope to ere long be roused at peep of day by the sonorous announcement of “*Brim, Flat-heads and Salmon all alive O!*” Launceston is deplored for the lack of fish when it would only need half a dozen fishermen constantly up and down the river to make money.⁵⁴³

As was to be expected the English tradition of eating eels was continued in the new colony.

Lake Arthur contains great numbers of eels belonging to two species the *lamper* which is not eaten and the silver eel weighing 6-7 pound and is 3 and a half feet long. Nearly 500 weight have been caught in a single night with a net and 20-30 dozen herrings are sometimes taken with a hook and line on a few hours. Two other fish that are plentiful in the inland streams are the blackfish (8-10 pound) and the trout (6-8 pound).⁵⁴⁴

Even as late as 1829 eels were still being sent to Hobart Town. Mr Axford a settler on the Clyde River was only one of the settlers who sent in the

⁵⁴¹*Hobart Town Courier*, 24 January 1829.

⁵⁴²*Hobart Town Courier*, 28 February 1829.

⁵⁴³*Cornwall Press and Southern Reporter*, 17 March 1829.

⁵⁴⁴Breton, W., *Excursion to the Western Range, Tasmania. Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science, Agriculture, Statistics &c.* Vol. 11: Henry Dowley Stationer, Launceston. 1846.

occasional shipment of “excellent eels” averaging two to three feet in length and were sold at four pence to four pence halfpenny a pound.⁵⁴⁵

However, the glut in fish was short lived. Less than two decades later the fishing grounds were exhausted and the employment of a large and industrious class of men ceased.⁵⁴⁶

An industry associated with fishing was net and line making. Few accounts were recorded in the early time of the colony but, by 1828, “George Blacksten had finished a fishing net and will now be able to go white fishing,” an industry “to which he has been bred in England”. He was seeking customers for his nets and was asking for cork.⁵⁴⁷

Shellfish

Shellfish played a dual role in the early fishery industry, both as a live animal for food and as discarded shells. The discarded shells combined with those from the Aboriginal middens produced the lime needed in the colony. A variety of accounts list locations of shellfish in quantities for harvesting. Captain Bligh recorded that Frederick Henry Bay “had very fine oyster banks and ear shell. Properly stewed they provided an excellent meal”.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵*Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 January 1829.

⁵⁴⁶MCC 16/1.

⁵⁴⁷*Tasmanian*, 21 March 1828.

Records show that Van Diemen's Land had a history of exploiting shellfish beds for profit "the oysters, mussels etc. of which our bays afford cart loads of them".⁵⁴⁹ Sullivan's Cove oysters were first harvested for the British on 11 February 1804 when Robert Knopwood wrote that he "got a great quantity of oysters".⁵⁵⁰ The next day G P Harris wrote home "Our party returned last [night bringing] with them a boat load of fine oysters and mussels, which [provided] luxury to us."⁵⁵¹

Almost every rocky outcrop grew oysters, once an Aboriginal food source, which the British later harvested and sold. Then commercial farms developed as the original oyster beds were being destroyed by over harvesting by poachers and unauthorised fishermen.⁵⁵² Calder indicated that successful commercial oyster beds were in the Derwent at Kangaroo Bay and on the dry rocky bottoms of Barnes Bay as well as Southport. The question is was it still called an oyster farm when oysters growing naturally are harvested and sold? Most of the colonial attempts at commercial oyster farming led to failure due to neglect.

The transplantation of British technology saw salting, smoking and drying as means of preservation, hence it is entirely possible that the British means of keeping the oysters fresh for months would have been used in most domestic kitchens so that the delicacy could be enjoyed out of season. As with the other

⁵⁴⁸Mackaness, G., *Captain William Bligh Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land* Centenary Meeting 1943. Royal Society of Tasmania. 1943.

⁵⁴⁹Private letter from Michael Steele to his brother Joseph Steel, Kingham near Chipping Norton Oxfordshire, England 24 May 1826.

⁵⁵⁰Stephens, G., *Knopwood a Biography*. Print Centre. 1990.

⁵⁵¹Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994. p.59.

⁵⁵²Calder, J., *Oyster Culture: a Compilation of Fact*, James Barnard, Government Printer. 1868.

industries discussed, processing methods were often not recorded as they were of either such common knowledge or trade secrets and therefore kept hidden within trades or families and thus often became lost. It is therefore interesting when a processing method comes to light. Entitled “Christmas barrel of oysters can be kept alive in artificial sea water”, Calder described a simple preservative method:

for every 10 gallons of water add
7 1/2 ozs sulphate of magnesia
2 1/2 ozs sulphate of lime
43 1/2 ozs chloride of sodium
6 ozs chloride magnesia
21 grains bromide of magnesia
21 grains carbonate of lime

Stand in exposed air in strong sunlight for two weeks before use. During this time add a few growing plants of *enteromorpha* (a genus of *confervoid* *S*: minute aquatic marine plants) or *Ulva* (another type of the above) which covers stones. This forms a nourishing food for the oysters on the spores of the seaweed. Oysters laid in a trough of this water will live and thrive for months.⁵⁵³

It would be interesting to discover if this was a domestic preservation method of the housewife or if oysters preserved in this manner were sold commercially, or even exported.

While little was known about the shellfish industry, by 1820 most of the shellfish within close proximity to the towns were gone. A decade later, shops were again supplying the colonists with shellfish and oysters, which were again abundant in the Derwent. Opened oysters were available at nine pence a dozen, while crayfish dependent on the size sold for six pence to a shilling. Cockles are “very fine and delicate at four pence a quart”.⁵⁵⁴ It was noted that Hobart

⁵⁵³ Calder, J., *Oyster Culture: a Compellation of Facts*, James Barnard, Government Printer. 1868.

⁵⁵⁴ *Hobart Town Courier*, 31 January 1829.

Town was “well served” with many water cheap” indicating a profitable domestic industry.⁵⁵⁵ Luxuries, which were seldom scarce and “generally cheap” indicating a profitable domestic industry.⁵⁵⁶

There was no mention of fish or shellfish for immediate family or personal usage so estimates of quantities harvested were unknown. It was possible that some farmers actually caught fish as a feed supplement.

4.7 Shells for Lime

The use of shells was as much a part of the native fauna industry as was the taking of bird and animal skins. Shells are the protective covering of shellfish in the same way skins are the protective covering of animal flesh. Aboriginal middens consisting of millions of shells abounded along the coastlines and were the origin of the raw material for the lime industry. Shells were also used to bind the road surface on top of rocks and as a fertilizer. The removal of midden material changed the Aboriginal landscape.

Surveys of recently exposed middens show that they were of enormous size. Brown recorded one at “2,200 m by 5 m with a width of 80 m”. Other middens Brown recorded measured “400m by 100 m” and were dominated by oyster and thick patches of mussel.⁵⁵⁷ Modern midden discoveries have been exposed after removal of vegetation and Holocene dune deposits formed sand blowouts.

⁵⁵⁵*Cornwell Press and Commercial Advertiser*, 17 March 1829.

⁵⁵⁶*Cornwell Press and Commercial Advertiser*, 17 March 1829.

Middens accessed in the first decades were those only 8 to 10,000 years old.

Remnant midden bases still testify to location of areas of raw material processed into lime.⁵⁵⁸ Lime burning was one of the dominant industries of the early colony. Lime mortar cemented bricks and sandstone blocks together for almost every building. Quicklime was a standard part of every funeral as an aid to disintegration of the body of convicts and paupers. Lime whitewash was used for painting buildings.

Possibly the earliest record of making lime was in the in the “Quarterly Employment of the Prisoners in H M Settlement Derwent River Van Diemen's Land for July 1804” which recorded that five prisoners were engaged in lime and charcoal burning.⁵⁵⁹ In the northern part of Van Diemen's Land Lieutenant Governor Patterson's journal states:

I landed near Red Bill Point before I returned to the cove, and discovered a very large bank of shells on the beach, extending near a quarter of a mile, and from 3 to 4 feet deep; as the limestone on burning has not turned out so good as was first expected, and the shells being much preferable in quantity and more convenient for buildings which may be erected at Outer Cove.⁵⁶⁰

In 1809 Government lime burners were active at Kellsolls Bay, Port

Dalrymple.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁷Brown measured the midden himself hence the modern measurements.

⁵⁵⁸Brown, S., *Aboriginal Archaeological sites of Eastern Tasmania*, a Cultural Management Statement. *Occasional Paper No. 31*, Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, Hobart, Tasmania. December 1991.

⁵⁵⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Quarterly Employment of Prisoners, 3 August 1804. p. 258.

⁵⁶⁰*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Journal of Lieutenant Governor Paterson 17 December 1804. p. 622.

⁵⁶¹Cumpston, J., *Kangaroo Island 1800-1836*, Roebuck Society Publication No 1, Canberra. 1974.

A shortage of lime would have created problems for the builders. Lime burners were put to work, with midden deposits around the settlement quickly exploited. "Extensive strata of marine shells are found in abundance, and compensate in some measure for the deficiency in the former article [limestone]." ⁵⁶² The Aboriginal middens were continuously exploited for decades. Examination of Major Bell during the Bigge enquiry into Public Works shows that even after two decades middens were still quarried for lime. ⁵⁶³ The Ralphs Bay establishment had been working for some time employing six workers and an overseer. The government contract required the workers to furnish 100 bushels of shell lime per week at nine pence per pound. ⁵⁶⁴ Problems of supply affected shell burners, as gradually the raw material was at greater distances from settlements and transport of burners to the shell deposits, or shell to the burners was difficult especially inclement weather. Ships such as the Van Diemen's Land Company schooner *Nelson* collected shells and brought them to the lime burners at Circular Head. ⁵⁶⁵

References to shell lime burners were found within convict records of labour gangs at Sarah Island where four men and one woman gathered shells which were burnt on the spot if the wood supply could be kept up. ⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶²*Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 1: J Oxley "Remarks on the Country and Settlement found in Van Diemen's Land. p. 580.

⁵⁶³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: Bigge Report on Management of Public Works, 20 February 1820. p. 240.

⁵⁶⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2: Bigge Report on Management of Public Works, 20 February 1820. p. 241

⁵⁶⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 2. Case of W Stewart and sloop *Fly* C 96 Launceston 25 April 1820. p. 455.

⁵⁶⁶Brand, I., *Sarah Island penal Settlements 182-1823 and 1846-1847*, Regal publications, Tasmania. 1990. p. 42.

Coastal farms used the middens to make lime for both fertilizer and builders lime. The Cotton family at Kelvedon on the East Coast burnt the shells and ploughed them into the fields.⁵⁶⁷ The Musk and Gellibrand families at South Arm utilized the enormous amount of shell bordering their land. Some of the deposit was just harrowed and ploughed straight into the land. The majority was burnt into lime. One man was specifically assigned to produce a product, which was then sold to supplement farm income. Shells to be burnt were simply covered with timber and burnt.⁵⁶⁸

A pit dug on the beach or adjacent land reached temperatures approximately of 1,000 degrees (F), taking in excess of 20 tons of wood to make 36 tons of lime.⁵⁶⁹ The removal of firewood for lime may have tied in with clearing land for pasture for farming. It is impossible to determine the amount of wood used in this industry or the tons of natural deposits or midden shells burnt. Removal of the middens exposed the foreshore to wind and sea spray affecting coastal vegetation, and in many cases water regimes would have been affected. It was possibly the industry most destructive to the coastal Aboriginal landscape.

4.8 Conclusion

It is unrecorded how much of Van Diemen's Land's fauna is missing from the early records, or was made extinct? It will never be known how much of Van

⁵⁶⁷Cotton Family farm journals. Quaker Archive, University of Tasmania.

⁵⁶⁸Bizzette, J., Clarence Plains Historical Society guest speaker 2001. Speaking on his family involvement with the early lime industry at South Arm.

Diemen's Land was sent "home" as a curio to be forgotten in some private collection, only to have been in collections in Britain and destroyed with the bombing in the Second World War. The indiscriminate removal of so much of the natural world of the antipodes had to have left its mark on the Aboriginal people as well as their landscape. The term used today "environmental impacts" are created by any industry, and are recognised by the historically recorded changes to areas surrounding the industrial activity. However, modern words, terms and meanings have no place in geographical histories, when moving in chronological order in relation to industrial impacts, especially with the fauna industry. Today there are many writers who discuss devastation to the Australian or Tasmanian environment. They are not quoted here simply because there was no "environment", in the way the word is understood today, or used by modern theorists. Understanding the past comes from understanding the perceptions of those who destroyed things in their own time. To understand one must move forward a step at a time to the future. Looking back from the controlled environment of today fails to develop a true comprehension of what was.

In the beginning of the European invasion, 200 years ago, there was only the Aboriginal managed landscape to protect or exploit. There was only an unfamiliar landscape, alien to anything understandable by the British. Even the term landscape is misunderstood compared with the Aboriginal historical sense. According to the University English Dictionary definition, landscape is the "portion of land which the eye can comprehend in a single view", from the

⁵⁶⁹Brand. I., *Sarah Island penal Settlement 1822-1833 and 1846-1847*, Regal Publishing, Tasmania. 1990.

Aboriginal perspective it includes all plants and animals that are viewed, and those that are out of view, a visual picture representing the countryside. The environment may be categorised as the conditions under which one lives, “environment” was not a term that was appropriate for this research.

As there was no concept, knowledge or even acceptance of the existence of an Aboriginal landscape, “environmental impacts” cannot be ascertained for the decimation of the original fauna? To the Dutch and later the French and British, the original Aboriginal landscape of Van Diemen's Land was not considered to be of any value or even developed through intentional labour. It was considered a natural environment devised by God, and therefore its removal and change to a more familiar English view was the expected norm. Louisa Meredith epitomised the British view when she described her feelings of oppression brought on by the tall gums. Interestingly conservation of animals, though not in the way we consider the term today, began early in Van Diemen's Land's history. It was more a case of preserving animals for future needs as food, rather than conserving a species for survival. The need for economic conservation of British staples like salt meat was the only reason we find accounts of preservation for the native fauna of Van Diemen's Land. Such intended preservation of Kangaroo and Emu put forward by men like Lieutenant Jeffreys, who wanted a cessation of the slaughter, was probably intended to extend their availability for easily accessible ‘sport’, not to ensure that they survived as species.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁷⁰Evans, G., Surveyor General *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822.

That conservation was not viewed in the same way as it is today is demonstrated in newspaper articles. On 24 January 1829 the *Hobart Town Courier* was using the editorial to express the need for conserving seals. It was difficult to associate newspaper editorials with conservation and environmental awareness when such calls came almost a decade after the industry had ceased because of lack of seals to skin then sealing was replaced with the Yolla industry. Realising the loss of sealing to the economy, the editor was calling for preservation to extend the industry, not to protect the seals on the verge of extinction. Extinction of species was not a topic considered in any of the primary literature up to 1830, or even as late as the 1930s. It was recorded in the newspapers with a sense of pride that the last Tasmanian Tiger was killed. It is inconsistent to accept the concept of conservation, if extinction is not recognised. Other references show that different reasons were the driving force behind any form of regulation. On 31 January 1829, the editor was not upset that the price of Kangaroo was so low that they were not worth exporting:

we hoped it would put a stop to the abominable carnage, for we can call it by no milder name, of this very interesting and most harmless animal.⁵⁷¹

Rather the editor favoured a government regulation prohibiting stockmen from keeping Kangaroo dogs, as they tended to neglect their jobs “when they fully occupy their time in so idle and profitless a pursuit”.

The article was expressing concern about effective use of labour rather than an employment profitability issue, but it was not conservation. The same article noted that the number of Kangaroo killed exceeded previous levels. The editor

⁵⁷¹*Hobart Town Courier*, 31 January 1829.

noted that the stock keepers of Mr Edward Lord and Sir John Owen at the Plains of Bashan and St. Patrick had killed 1,800 Kangaroo for skins that were “not worth two-pence each”.⁵⁷² Was it the waste of time for such poor quality skins, or the lack of return because of a glut in the market, that caused the editor to complain? The article showed that the editor was distinctly unhappy about work ethics and availability to work when he complained that the stock keepers abandoned their duty to their master and needlessly exposed their lives to the “spears of the natives”.

Modern terms actually can confuse and distort understanding of geographically orientated historical material. Conservation, in the way it is meant today has a flexible view of landscape needing conserving, as councils and government can change the status of an area depending on the whim of development or monetary gain. In the early 1800’s, it was the need to overwhelm the Aboriginal landscape, replacing it with the familiar landscape that dominated the British view of their relationship with the land of colonies. An example of this need to Anglicise, was the introduction of silver haired rabbits to Betsy Island in 1827, which began a modern environmental disaster.⁵⁷³ What other purpose beyond Anglicizing the fauna could rabbits have held? There were no records to explain why rabbits were needed when the record showed that the Bandicoots were as big as rabbits, and the flesh was white and delicious?⁵⁷⁴ The colonist accepted that Bandicoot and the Kangaroo rat were a great

⁵⁷²*Hobart Town Courier*, 31 January 1829.

⁵⁷³*Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 March 1827.

⁵⁷⁴Bonwick, J., *The Bushrangers: illustrating the early days of Van Diemen's Land*, Melbourne. 1856.

substitute for the hare and rabbit.⁵⁷⁵ So the question becomes the loop of “why were the rabbits introduced and how did they get off the island to become a pest on mainland Van Diemen's Land?

The destruction of Aboriginal management regimes for the maintained biodiversity between fauna and landscape went unlamented, except by the original owners. Van Diemen's Land was a land viewed as an unending source of raw materials for oil, fur, meat and novelty fashion items all for the European markets. In such a situation fauna had little chance of being considered for its own intrinsic worth.

Historically, there has been little encouragement to develop an understanding of the Aboriginal landscape and its relation to fauna diversity from an Aboriginal perspective, either in the first three decades of British administration, or later. It has been the wont of historians to proclaim a landscape little modified by human intervention with the exception of fire as a farming tool.

The Aboriginal landscapes of the past can only be viewed from a British, or Europeanised perception as the only records are those written by the invaders. No attempt to record an Aboriginal understanding or view of their own land has been included within any of the primary records, even though a number of ‘settlers’ developed relationships with the Aboriginal people. Non Aboriginal

⁵⁷⁵Evans, G., Surveyor General *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with important hints to emigrants and useful information respecting the application for grants of land; together with a list of the most necessary articles for persons to take out*, London. 1822.

people theorizing about Aboriginal heritage and cultural practices, will ever remain theorists.

The whole native fauna industry was a series of industries driven by high profits for little outlay by the entrepreneur.

CHAPTER 5

SALT

5.1 Background

About one kilometre north of the Mona Vale Saltpan, in the Tasmanian Midlands, is an isolated flat-topped hill known as Dunns Battery.⁵⁷⁶ A hill said to be named after an early settler, suggested in one source to be Donald Morris of Cove Point, who fought off the Aborigines in a ten-hour siege.⁵⁷⁷ The dating of this event is vague, 'The early 1820's given by Von Stieglitz, writing in 1976, seems to be an impossibility because, in December 1811 Governor Macquarie was told that the hill was Donns Battery on his first trip between the settlements on the Derwent and the Tamar Rivers (map 7). In his inimitable way Macquarie renamed the hill Mount Henrietta "in honor of Mrs M", possibly his mother, as his wife was Elizabeth.⁵⁷⁸

Europeans had begun to collect salt from the lagoons at Salt Pan Plains, shown in map 6, as early as 1809.⁵⁷⁹ It is possible though unlikely, there may have been a Donald Morris harvesting salt in the district, who was involved in a conflict with the Aborigines.⁵⁸⁰ The nature of this specific conflict is unusual. Conflicts between Aboriginal and settler during the early period were

⁵⁷⁶It is spelt Dunns Battery today, at the time of Governor Macquarie it was Donns Battery.

⁵⁷⁷Von Stieglitz, K., *A Short History of Ross: with some Tales of the Pioneers*, Launceston Telegraph Printing, 1976. pp. 43-44. The incident was unfortunately unsourced.

⁵⁷⁸Macquarie, L., *Journals of His Tours in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1810-1822*, Public Library, NSW. 1956. p. 64.

⁵⁷⁹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: J. Oxley, Account of the Settlement at Port Dalrymple, 1810. p. 769.

⁵⁸⁰Donns/Dunns Battery is an historical conundrum. I have not found any evidence for any Donald Morris associated with the area. There is a possibility that the name refers to Corporal John Dunn of the N.S.W. Corps. Dunn was recommended for promotion on 20 February 1809 while stationed at Port Dalrymple. No reason is known for his promotion. The details of the

uncommon. The Dunns Battery clash possibly could have occurred because the salt pans had significance to the Aborigines. There was, however, a stronger possibility that the clash was due to the cultural significance of the salt pans due to their very obvious circular shape.⁵⁸¹ If so, then Morris had thereby trespassed on sacred ground.

The European need for salt was multifaceted. Firstly, there were many domestic uses beyond its classic use as a condiment on the table. Minor amounts of salt were used either as a wash to freshen meat or to remove bacterial and fungal growth that was potentially harmful. It was also used elsewhere in cookery. Colonial housewives used salt to preserve home-churned butter and pickle excess produce from the household gardens for storage in large pottery jars or small kegs of strong brine for use over winter. Beef, pork, bacon, ham, and fish likewise were salted, steeped in strong brine or coated with coarse salt as a precursor to smoking. Well-preserved and stored foods could last for several years. Most colonial households or kitchens had facilities for both brining and smoking. An important point is that in the colonial household, the kitchen was usually separate from the main house to reduce the cooking smells and the risk of house fire. From the very beginning of 'colonial settlement' the kitchen was only a domestic or cooking area with an attached work place serving as a pantry for storage of bottled and preserved jams and vegetables and perhaps included a scullery. Modern kitchens are organised differently. Salting of the beef or pork and its storage, was most likely an

siege as related by Von Steiglitz seem improbable. Dunn/Donn is not known to local or military historians.

⁵⁸¹Circles hold ongoing cultural significance to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Lia Pootah community.

activity for the men of the household, often in a 'shop' or a special outhouse shed, built away from the house and nearer to the slaughter yard. Until the 1950s, when electricity was connected to isolated farms and refrigeration became available, country slaughtering and preserving of meat for the family had not changed since the colonial grandfathers' day. Some farms still maintain the salting shop where the men continue to preserve meat by salting produce for family use or to barter with other farmers or to sell at markets.⁵⁸² From the beginning of the settlement this practice would have been associated with the Commissariat and the "shops" would have been adjacent to the Government Stores. These outhouses were specifically set up with tables and deep containers necessary for the salting procedures. Game may have been hung there, and storage was often in another nearby shed or in cellars.⁵⁸³

There were minor uses of salt as a cleaning agent and an abrasive to scour dirty pots and knives, to clean down wooden tables or to soak up stains like ink or wine. It also had a role as an antiseptic, its normal uses outlined in conventional housewives' bibles such as *Enquire Within Upon Everything* published in 1824.⁵⁸⁴ Common salt was a mainstay within the colonial first aid kit being used as a gargle for sore throats and in a weak solution to bathe sores. One of the more unusual uses for salt, not so uncommon in the Van Diemen's Land setting, was the application of a strong salt solution to a prisoner's back after a flogging, for the prevention of infection. The amount of salt used in such ways would not have been very significant. It certainly would not have

⁵⁸²Pers. Com. Betty Hill, retired teacher 2000. The management salting meat on her father's farm had not changed since her grandfather received his original land grant. Other farming families that she knew followed similar practices.

⁵⁸³Pers. Com. Margaret Long, 2001, Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell.

justified the sending out of anything more than a modest amount of salt from England.

The main significance of salt actually lay in its industrial uses, the production of salted meat; the manufacture of soap and pottery; and, most importantly, in the preservation of skins for export or until they reached a local tannery.

Meat preservation was a major industry in Van Diemen's Land.⁵⁸⁵ Its beginnings date back to the earliest years of the colony when salt meat was the staple part of rations for convict and free settler alike. In the absence of refrigeration, salting was the main method of preserving meat. With the enormous amount of Kangaroo and wild fowl freely available for fresh provisions, it became profitable to harvest local herds and flocks, and to then salt meat which was soon able to be sold as an export commodity for ships' rations and also exported to Port Jackson. In 1819 the Bigge Commission took evidence from A. F. Kemp on the export of salt meat:

Q: Has it been customary or is it practical to salt down provisions at Van Diemen's Land either for consumption there or exportation?

A: We salt a great deal of mutton and beef for the market at Port Jackson.⁵⁸⁶

The quantity of salted meat exported was not recorded. It was probably of variable scale, as newspapers through the 1820s repeatedly urged the colonists to be more energetic in meeting the demand for salt meat. For instance, the

⁵⁸⁴*Enquire Within Upon Everything*, 1824. p. 103. No publication details.

⁵⁸⁵Major as a descriptive term in this instance is relative to the population and needs of the colony.

⁵⁸⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 3: Bigge Inquiry, Examination of A.F. Kemp, 12 November 1819. p. 224.

Hobart Town Courier in 1829 deplored the fact that ships were arriving in the colony with salted meat to sell to the Commissariat, for people in the towns. It is unknown what proportion of the meat delivered to the commissariat was salted or fresh and how much Kangaroo meat was salted down. This trade, the writer believed, would have been an easy market to enter.⁵⁸⁷ Likewise, ships leaving for England did provide a useful market and income by their purchase of salted provisions for use on the voyage home. Salt meat production consumed large amounts of salt. One recipe suggested in the *Hobart Town Courier* called for 30 pounds of common salt, 14 pounds of bay salt and 14 pounds of saltpetre per hundredweight of beef.⁵⁸⁸ A hundredweight bag of salt would not have salted a full beast, a reminder that the storage of salt was a concern for users at this scale.⁵⁸⁹ If bay salt was unavailable, then larger quantities of common salt were recommended. The amount of water to dissolve the salts was not included suggesting that some knowledge was commonplace.

Salt was used in a number of different industries: for instance, a process in the manufacture of soap was known as “salting out”.⁵⁹⁰ This process separates the soap from the residual liquid known as the “kern”. Salt’s use in the manufacture of pottery in the Colonies is not commonly acknowledged. A hard glass-like surface was and still is produced during the glazing process by

⁵⁸⁷ *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 January 1829.

⁵⁸⁸ *Hobart Town Courier*, 12 April 1828.

⁵⁸⁹ Pers. Com. Margaret Long Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell.

⁵⁹⁰ Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993. p. 13.

“throwing salt into the kiln during firing”.⁵⁹¹ Salt was also used in the production of limewash to make it stickier.⁵⁹² The amount of salt used per gallon was minimal but limewash was needed for virtually every house in the colony to keep areas clean and as a form of paint and to put a clean surface freshener in the buildings used in meat processing.

Large quantities of salt were used in the preservation of sealskins. However, the amount cannot be easily calculated or estimated but anecdotal evidence suggested that the quantities needed were significant, as indicated by the attempt of Captain Miles Holding to hide the discovery of Macquarie Island in 1810 became unstuck when he placed an order for 35 tons of salt.⁵⁹³ This signaled the news that the *Perseverance* was returning to some hitherto unknown sealing destination to the south. Likewise, a ship en route to Van Diemen’s Land in 1819 stopped at St Paul’s Island in the southern Indian Ocean. A small sealing party had been left on the island, and reportedly had 500 skins with “20,000 weight of salt”.⁵⁹⁴

Conversion to standard Imperial measure, for the 20,000 weight, calculated improbably large amounts of salt. A conversion table of contemporary weights and measures available in *Bent’s Almanac* of 1826 (figure 5.1) sheds no light on the actual weight of “20,000 weight of salt”. Every attempt by several people to work through coombs, lasts of corn and bushels produced values of several thousand tons of salt.

⁵⁹¹Salmond, J., *Old New Zealand Houses 1800-1940*, Heineman and Reid, Auckland. 1989. p. 102.

⁵⁹²Pers. Com. Margaret Long, 2003, Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell.

⁵⁹³Cumpston, J., *Macquarie Island*, ANARE Scientific Report No. 93, Canberra. 1968. p. 5.

⁵⁹⁴*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 17 July 1819.

Figure 5.1: Bent's weights and measures

Per lb.	28 lbs.	112 lbs.	1 ton.
Pence.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
7½	0 17 6	3 10 0	70 0 0
7¾	0 18 1	3 12 4	72 0 8
8	0 18 8	3 14 8	74 13 4
8½	0 19 3	3 17 0	77 0 0
8¾	0 19 10	3 19 4	79 6 8
8¾	1 0 5	4 1 8	81 13 4
9	1 1 0	4 4 0	84 0 0
9½	1 1 7	4 6 4	86 6 8
9¾	1 2 2	4 8 8	88 13 4
9¾	1 2 8	4 11 0	91 0 0
10	1 3 4	4 13 4	93 6 8
10½	1 3 11	4 15 8	95 13 4
10¾	1 4 6	4 18 0	98 0 0
10¾	1 5 1	5 0 4	100 6 8
11	1 5 8	5 2 8	102 13 4
11½	1 6 3	5 5 0	105 0 0
11¾	1 6 10	5 7 4	107 6 8
11¾	1 7 5	5 9 8	109 13 4
12	1 8 0	5 12 0	112 0 0

Note.—If the price per pound should exceed 12-pence, any half number doubled will give the amount; which renders it unnecessary to go beyond the sum of 12d. per lb.

Table of Measures and Weights.

Ale and Beer Measure.

2 Pints make 1 quart
4 Quarts 1 gallon
8 Gallons 1 firkin of ale
9 Gallons 2 firkin of beer
2 Firkins 1 kilderkin
2 Kilderkins 1 barrel
3 Kilderkins 1 hogshead
3 Barrels 1 butt

Wine Measure.

4 Gills make 1 pint
2 Pints 1 quart

4 Quarts 1 gallon
18 Gallons 1 rundlet
2½ Rundlets 1 barrel
1½ Barrel 1 tierce
1½ Tierce, or 63 gallons, 1 hogshead
1½ Hogshead, or 84 gallons 1 puncheon
1 Puncheon, or 2 hogsheads, 1 pipe or butt
2 Pipes 1 ton

Corn Measure.

2 Quarts make 1 pottle
2 Pottles 1 gallon
2 Gallons 1 peck
5 Pecks, or 8 gal. 1 bushel
8 Bushels, 1 quarter or vat
5 Quarters of wheat, beans, or peas, 1 load
10 Quarters of oats 1 load

Dry Measure.

2 Pints make 1 quart
2 Quarts 1 pottle
2 Pottles 1 gallon
2 Gallons 1 peck
4 Pecks 1 bushel
8 Bushels 1 quarter
5 Quarters 1 weigh or load
5 Pecks 1 bushel of water measure

4 Bushels make 1 coomb
10 Coombs 1 weigh
2 Weights 1 last of corn

Coal Measure.

4 Pecks make 1 bushel
9 bushels 1 vat or strike
36 Bushels 1 chaldron
21 Chaldrons 1 score

Cloth Measure.

2½ Inches make 1 nail
4 Nails 1 quarter of a yard
4 Quarters 1 yard
5 Quarters 1 ell English
3 Quarters 1 ell Flemish
6 Quarters 1 ell French

Long Measure.

3 Inches make 1 palm
3 Palms 1 span
1 Span, or 12 inches 1 foot
1½ Foot 1 cubit
2 Cubits 1 yard
1 Yard and ¾ pace
1 Pace and 1-5th, or 6 feet 1 fathom
2 Fathoms and ¾ pole
16½ Feet, or 5½ yards 1 pole

40 Poles 1 furlong

8 Furlongs 1 mile
3 Miles 1 league
20 Leagues 1 degree
60 Miles 1 geo. degree

Square Measure.

144 Square inches make one square foot
9 Square feet 1 square yard
30½ Square yards 1 sq. pole, perch or rod
40 Squ. poles 1 square rood
4 Squ. roods 1 square acre
640 Squ. acres 1 square mile

Cubic Measure.

1728 Cubic inches 1 foot
27 Cubic feet 1 cubic yard

Avoirdupoise Weight.

16 Drachms make 1 ounce
16 Ounces 1 pound
28 Pounds 1 quarter of a hundred
4 Quarters 1 hundred, or 112 lbs.

20 Hundred 1 ton

Troy Weight.

4 Grains make 1 carat
24 Grains 1 pennyweight
20 Pennyweights 1 ounce
12 Ounces 1 pound

Apothecary's Weight.

20 Grains make 1 scruple
3 Scruples 1 drach
8 Drachms 1 ounce
12 Ounces 1 pound or pint

Wool Weight.

7 Pounds make 1 clove
2 Cloves 1 stone
2 Stone 1 tod
6½ Tod 1 weigh

2 Weights 1 sack

12 Sacks 1 last

Bread Weight

A half peck . . . 8 11 0
A quarter . . . 4 4 8

In actual fact ships were constantly arriving in the colony with cargoes of 20, 30 or 40 tons of salt. Many were coming from or going to the sealing grounds.⁵⁹⁵

The function of salt in the skin trade was the preservation of skins until they reached the tannery either in Van Diemen's Land, China or England. Sealskins were placed in strong brine shortly after being taken off the animal. After 12 hours in brine, they were taken out, sprinkled liberally with fine salt, and tied up tightly into bundles often with sprinkled salt. The bundles were usually packed into casks of brine for export. The use of good casks was essential as "poor casks will let hides lose their pickle and become tainted" greatly lowering the value of the skins.⁵⁹⁶ Export in brine was the preferred method for the China market. Exports to other markets went sometimes in brine and sometimes in bundles with the salt placed between the layers of skins. Similar procedures were followed in the export of the hides of cattle, the skins of Kangaroos and swanskins.

There were numerous potential sources of salt for the colony. The sealing industry probably operated on whatever salt could be gained from the Bass Strait Islands. Coastal pools would fill during winter storms and dry out over summer when the salt could then be collected.⁵⁹⁷ Rock platforms with suitable pools for solar evaporation exist on Big Dog Island, Clarke Island, King Island and elsewhere. However, as a commonplace activity for the sealers involved, and outside the experience of others, it has apparently escaped the historical

⁵⁹⁵It is possible that the weight measures 1.12 pounds which is one hundredth of a hundred weight. This would make 20,000 weight around 10 tons. .Pers. Com. Margaret Long, 2003, Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell.

⁵⁹⁶*Hobart Town Courier*, 16 January 1830.

record. Secondly, there were the salt lagoons of Kangaroo Island. These were clearly exploited on a significant scale by 1809.⁵⁹⁸ Cumpston refers to shipments of salt between Kangaroo Island and Sydney at this time.⁵⁹⁹ It would be probable that Bass Strait sealers had already begun to exploit this salt source, conveniently located in salt pans a short distance from the coast, some time before the opening of a more organised trade with Sydney.

The third source of salt was Britain. However, documentation of this trade was absent for early dates. The available records of imports found in the colonial press largely date from the 1820s. English salt sold at a premium as 'Liverpool salt'. Liverpool salt actually came from the rock salt works of Cheshire opened in the eighteenth century. The premium price was asked due to its reputation as 'the salt' to use for the salting of meat, that is, the best salt for that purpose.⁶⁰⁰

Finally, there were the options to produce salt in Tasmania using various technologies, such as the: harvesting of salt from the surface of natural salt pans and the extraction of salt from seawater (possibly also saline springs) by either solar evaporation or distillation.

⁵⁹⁷Pers. Com. Frances Mowling 2002 post graduate, University of Tasmania.

⁵⁹⁸Cumpston, J., *Kangaroo Island 1800-1836*, Roebuck Society Publication No. 1, Canberra. 1974. p. 32.

⁵⁹⁹The Kangaroo Island of Cumpston is the one in South Australia, but in 1809, Kangaroo Island was part of New South Wales as South Australia did not exist as such.

⁶⁰⁰*Hobart Town Courier*, 3 January 1829.

5.2 The Salt Lagoons of Saltpan Plains

Credit for the discovery of the salt pans, at Salt Pan Plains in 1809, is normally given to Mr A.W. Humphreys, Government Mineralogist.,⁶⁰¹ Unfortunately, his detailed report has been lost. However, the surveyor Charles Grimes was definitely in the Midlands area in 1807 (see map 7). Grimes' name is attached to two local features, namely Mt Grimes and Grimes Lagoon.⁶⁰² However, owing to its size and depth Grimes Lagoon did not and does not dry out on an annual basis, so that it is possible that Grimes did not notice anything unusual about the locality during his visit in the area.

Salt was first extracted from the lagoons on Salt Pan Plains in 1809. In his report on the settlement at Port Dalrymple Lieutenant John Oxley stated:

In 1809, the settlement was destitute of salt to issue with the fresh provisions from the store; a party was sent to the lagoons, and about a ton brought in and found to answer every domestic purpose. Laying nearly midway between the two settlements, the advantages, that arise to each from the possession of so valuable an article, must be very considerable, and will add not a little to the value of the increasing herds at both places.⁶⁰³

In a dispatch dated 2 February 1810, Lieutenant Governor David Collins reported to Governor Macquarie that several salt lakes had been found in the interior. Somewhat oddly, given that salt had already been collected, Collins commented in the dispatch that the salt pans were "of no use at present but may

⁶⁰¹*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor Macquarie, 2 February 1810. pp. 431-434. See Von Steglitz's *A History of the Lower Midlands* or *A Short History of Ross* for use of this source to attribute the discovery to Humphrey.

⁶⁰² Stancombe, G., *Highway in Van Diemen's Land*, National Trust, Hobart. 1969. p. 106.

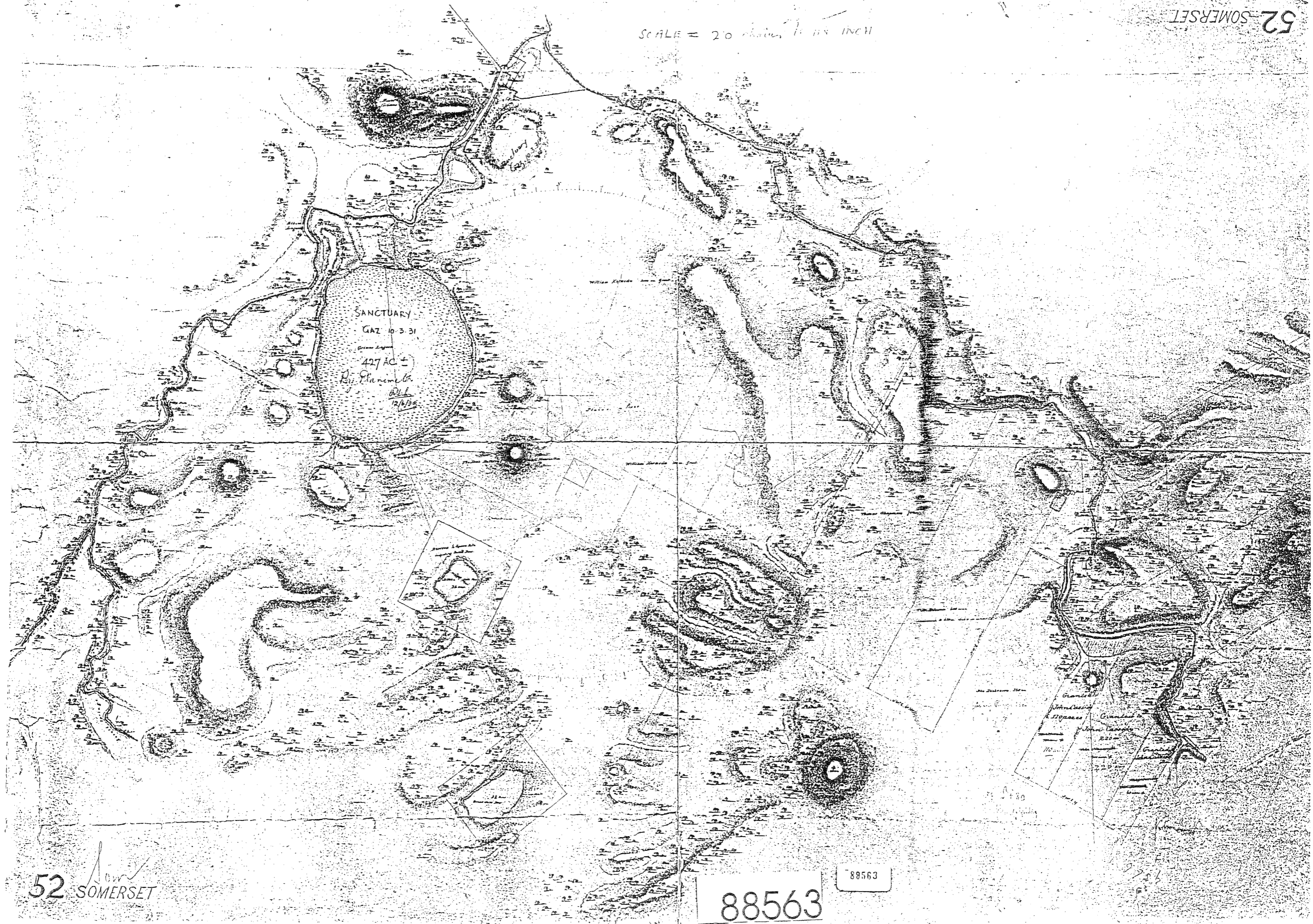
⁶⁰³*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Oxley, Remarks on the Settlement of Port Dalrymple 1811. pp. 769-700.



Map 8: Salt Pan Plains survey by Charles Grimes circa 1807. North is approximately vertical.

Source: Lands Department of Tasmania.

SCALE = 2.0 knots per inch



some day be of value".⁶⁰⁴ Macquarie in Sydney was much impressed with the discovery. In his reply, he noted that the recent discoveries of salt, coal and ironstone added to the importance of Van Diemen's Land as a source of strategic materials. The island colony was now with the advantage to be derived from the late discovery of salt to:

be of the very first importance in a national point of view, I shall be most happy at all times to afford it, every aid and support in my power, and shall not fail to state my opinion of its great utility and importance in my first dispatches to His Majesty's Ministers.⁶⁰⁵

Very little is known about the exploitation of salt in the following decade. The lagoons, nevertheless, were of scientific interest as various people tried to explain the appearance of salt lakes in the Midlands. Lieutenant Oxley put forward a hypothesis:

Natural Curiosities. - Among the natural curiosities of Van Diemen's Land, the salt lagoons, situated about half way, between Launceston and the Derwent River, hold a distinguished place; these lagoons are in the centre of a very extensive plain and are three in number, having no apparent or near connection with the sea; in the winter season, they are perfectly full of salt water, and, as the summer advances, the water is evaporated by the heat of the sun leaving uncommonly fine salt on the sides of the lagoons, which shelve gradually towards their centre, the water being there deepest. What adds to the singularity of these lakes is the vicinity of several large sheets of fresh water, and one very large fresh water lake lies within a quarter of a mile of the largest salt lagoon; there are also two fine streams of running water on the same plain; it is difficult to account for this singular phenomenon, the distance from the sea precluding all idea of a subterranean communication; a further and more accurate investigation may however explain what at present appears concealed in the bosom of nature.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁴*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Lieutenant Governor Collins to Governor Macquarie, Account of the Settlement at the Derwent by D. Collins, 2 February 1810. pp. 433-434.

⁶⁰⁵*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: Governor Macquarie to Lieutenant Governor Collins, 8 March 1810. p. 435.

⁶⁰⁶*Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3 Vol. 1: J. Oxley, Account of the Settlement at Port Dalrymple 1810. pp. 769-770.

Oxley's conjectures demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the salt-forming processes at the lagoons. The only point that is clearly incorrect is that the adjacent fresh water lakes actually alternate between fresh, mildly brackish and salty status depending on the rainfall. These changes however, would not have been apparent upon one visit.

In 1918 the Tasmanian geologist A. M. Reid, undertook an extensive survey of the soda and potash deposits of the Macquarie Basin.⁶⁰⁷ This survey was followed by a report in 1928 on the salt-bearing sandstones of Tasmania.⁶⁰⁸ In these reports, he mentioned the obvious existence of a large number of salt pans and salt lagoons scattered throughout the Macquarie Basin, a broad, flat depression that lies between the Eastern and Western Tiers between Ross and Tunbridge. The salts are leached out of the underlying sandstone, and carried by streams to shallow lake basins that do not possess a permanent outlet. Low rainfall and high evaporation result in the formation of deposits of salt. Annual deposits could be up to half an inch in thickness in the larger lagoons such as on the properties of Glen Morey, formerly Ballochmyle, and Mona Vale.

These naturally saliferous areas of the Midlands are associated with the Ross Formation, particular beds of sandstone interbedded with shales and mudstones. Within the Formation are two strata that are enriched in salt. One is a 15-foot thick layer rich in common salt (sodium chloride). Some twenty feet below it in the sequence is a thinner bed, only 5 feet thick, rich in both epsomite

⁶⁰⁷Reid, A., Alkali Commission, Report for Secretary for Mines Tasmania, 31 December 1918, p. 68-69.

⁶⁰⁸Reid, A., *The Salt Bearing Sandstones of Tasmania*, Unpublished Reports Department of Mines. 1928. pp. 148-150.

(magnesium sulphate) and common salt. It was Reid's opinion that the Ross Formation was impregnated by salt due to extreme arid conditions in the Mesozoic. In this respect it differs from other salt beds that are normally derived from more recent ancient seas.

It is not known to what extent the saltpans in the interior were utilised before the early 1820s. However, we do know that they were being used. In 1819, A. F. Kemp gave evidence to Commissioner Bigge:

Q: From whence do you obtain the salt?

A: Chiefly from Kangaroo Island; but in summer time some of the settlers obtain it from the salt lake in the interior.⁶⁰⁹

Kemp went on to state that he considered that the salt from the lagoons was an inferior product as it made the meat hard upon salting. It was nevertheless valuable. Advertisements in the 1819 press noted prices of five pence per pound and six pence per pound in 1820.⁶¹⁰ These were three times the prices that prevailed in the mid and late 1820s.

An article in the *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser* of 30 March 1822 noted that the Government was planning to place an official at the Salt Pan Plains with the tasks of monitoring the harvesting of salt and stopping illegal collection. Easy access to salt by thieves had become a factor in the increasing incidence of stock robberies. Such salt allowed people to cure in secret, meat "dishonestly obtained" in the interior for sale in Hobart. However, "respectable inhabitants and settlers" could continue to collect salt from the

⁶⁰⁹ *Historical Records of Australia* Series 3 Vol. 3 Commissioner Bigge's Examination of A F Kemp 12 November 1819. p. 224.

lagoons on payment of a fee of six pence a bushel or ten shillings for a cart load, approximately a ton. While the fees were to be credited to the Police Account, the details were not recorded in the *Blue Books*, nor in the otherwise exhaustive lists of government revenues in other records.

In January 1826, an advertisement appeared in the *Hobart Town Gazette*:

The Salt Pans, on Salt Pan Plains will be let by Government, to the highest bidder, for one year. For particulars enquire at the Surveyor's Office, where tenders will be received until 31st instant.

By Command, E. Dumaresq
Acting Surveyor-General.⁶¹¹

(see figure 5.2)



Figure 5.2: Lycett, J., 1822. Salt Pan Plains

Source: Private Collection.

⁶¹⁰*Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter*, 26 June 1819.

⁶¹¹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 21 January 1826.

Two curious facts can be noted about this information. Firstly, the land surrounding the lagoons was private property by 1826. The lagoons must have been excluded from the property rights of the settler, remaining Crown Land. Secondly, in relation to the lease, in his book, *Highway of Van Diemen's Land*, Stancombe argued that Captain Bunster of Hobart Town was an applicant for the concession to gather the salt. This salt would be, he said, "much prized, seeing that this commodity would otherwise have to come from Europe".⁶¹² While Bunster was involved in the Kangaroo Island salt trade from an early date first as a ship's captain and later as a prominent merchant, no data have been found which link Bunster in any way with the Salt Pan Plains.

The Land Commissioners visited the region in April 1827 when Captain Wilson was the owner of the land on which two of the saltpans were found.⁶¹³ The Commissariat also noted that the saltpans were seriously degraded, "subject to the intrusion of all who choose to cart the salt from the pans" and were at present "covered with decayed vegetable matter rendering the salt quite impure and unfit for any useful purpose". Wandering sheep and cattle were trampling the edges of the lagoons into muddy quagmires while salt collectors would inevitably take their carts into fresh areas and thereby add them to the despoiled portion.

The recommendation of the Land Commissioners was that:

by judicious management they might be converted into a public benefit, and we should beg to recommend their being advertised and let to some respectable, solvent tenant at a low rent for seven years, who would

⁶¹² Stancombe, G., *Highway of Van Diemen's Land*, National Trust, Hobart. 1969. p. 106.

⁶¹³ McKay, A. Editor, *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-1828*, Hobart. 1962. p. 57.

erect salt works, and conduct them in a proper manner, the salt to be sold at a certain low and fixed price, they would require an outlay of capital in order to make the salt in any quantity.⁶¹⁴

Obviously, nothing effective had resulted from the Government's advertisement of the previous year.

The Commissioners envisaged a complex scheme for the exploitation of the lagoons. The mud on the floor of the lagoons was to be cleared outright down to the bedrock. The proprietor of the proposed salt-works would then collect the brine and subject it to distillation. Yet such a procedure would hardly be viable. The expense of large coppers for boiling the brine, also, the cost of importing firewood in what they described as "a large tract of land, scarcely a tree to be seen" needed to be considered (figure 5.2). Besides, it is impossible to determine what the Commissioners understood about the mechanics of how the salt was derived. They seem at one stage to imply, when noting that "when the water would fall on a beautiful plain of solid stone", that the brine would come down as rain!⁶¹⁵

It would have been more logical to devise some method of maintaining the natural lagoons in a clean state. The amount of salt that could have been derived from the lagoons on the Salt Pan Plains is difficult to estimate. There are a large number of lagoons and saltpans, varying in size from no more than an acre to over 450 acres, with depths ranging from a few inches to six feet. Salt output came from a thin crust to layers of salt from one to two inches in

⁶¹⁴McKay, A. Editor, *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-1828*, Hobart. 1962. p. 57.

thickness. As well, salt output is affected by climate, hence a good salt year depends upon a combination of rain and sun, the first to provide groundwater to dissolve the salt and the second to evaporate the water out of the salt. The frequency of these years in the past may not have been the same as in the present. There is a distinct possibility of climatic changes but land modification affecting the inflow of groundwater probably has been of more significance.

The salt pans of the Midlands were used intermittently throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Writing in 1889, Barwick spoke of how he had gone to Ballochmyle Lagoon with his father over fifty years. Previously, that is in the 1830s. “A good year”, he said, “would see the lagoon yield several hundred tons of salt”.⁶¹⁶ The salt was used in the district for salting meat, for stock licks and for domestic purposes. Even the salt-enriched mud had a use as a fertilizer. Some salt was known to have been carted to Hobart Town and Launceston but such distances would have made it expensive.

5.3 Cornthwaite Hector and others at Pittwater

In his archaeological survey of salt manufacturing sites in nineteenth century Tasmania, Rogers notes that there was no salt industry at Pittwater prior to

⁶¹⁵McKay, A. Editor, *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-1828*, Hobart. 1962. p. 57.

⁶¹⁶Barwick, J., Letter: re Salt lagoons on Salt Pan Plains. *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* . 1889. pp. xxi-xxiii.

1833.⁶¹⁷ He states that Cornthwaite Hector, although arriving in Van Diemen's Land in 1828 with the equipment to manufacture salt, specifically saltpans from Mandesley and Company worth £167, did not actually begin to manufacture salt until 1833.⁶¹⁸ This may be true, as Rogers is very convincing in the location and archaeological reconstruction of the site of Hector's solar concentrating ponds and boiling works at what was termed 'Risdon Creek' on the Cambridge-Richmond Road.

Rogers' dating of 1833 is based on a plea to Arthur in that year to provide assistance:

I heard yesterday that Your Excellency has said that in future the ration of salt allowed to the prisoners under Government should be reduced to half. I [beg] to state to your Excellency that I have by me pans which I brought with me from England for the purpose of making salt which only need to be riveted. I have the rivets and if your Excellency would lend me for 3 weeks two blacksmiths [two] brickmakers and about a week hence a bricklayer, I would undertake to make a very good marketable salt and to reduce the price so much as would enable both the Government and the settlers to be furnished with that useful article in abundance.⁶¹⁹

The production of 100 tons of salt at Risdon Creek is also mentioned in the *Blue Book* for 1833, confirming that the salt manufacturing site was established and running in that year. There was no mention for earlier years.

⁶¹⁷Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993. p. 28.

⁶¹⁸Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993. pp. 26-29.

⁶¹⁹Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*. Science and Technology Analysis Research Program Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong 1993. p. 29. Rogers cites TSA CSO 1/468/10380:80.

Rogers discounted the possibility of an earlier salt manufacturing industry in the Pittwater area based at the site now known as the “Belbin Salt Pans”.⁶²⁰ This name, he claims, was applied by the Nomenclature Board in 1985, using information provided by local historians and landowners. It was Rogers’ opinion that there was confusion between Hector’s saltworks built on land subsequently acquired by Dr James Murdoch and the immediately adjacent land granted to Murdoch in 1822. Over the years, the memories of the local community may have translated the saltworks southward along the coast. As proof, Rogers states firstly, that Murdoch’s 1822 grant had no access to the coast; secondly, that there was no contemporary documentation for salt production by Murdoch; and thirdly, that there was no archaeological field evidence on the southern section of the coast for any production of salt.

Rogers’ emphasis was on the archaeological remains of coastal distilleries. Thereby, he ignored the possibility of any less sophisticated salt production. Substantial production of salt by evaporation from the tidal shallows of the Coal River estuary would not have been complicated and would have left little archeological evidence on the landscape. Methods for salt production in areas of little tidal change were in common practice in Britain at the time, and did not involve the infrastructure needed for boiling. As this method of salt production was very simple, requiring little more than “a piece of land, barely above high-water mark”, it is doubtful that archaeological remains would now exist.⁶²¹ A low dyke was built to enclose a part of a salt marsh. The land within the dyke

⁶²⁰Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993.

⁶²¹*Encyclopedia Britannica*, edition 11, Vol. 24: 1911. p. 88.

was leveled, and, if necessary the floor was puddled with clay. The seawater was “impounded” in a “reservoir” where the sun’s heat acting upon the shallow water can “continued the process of heating, decanting and evaporation”.⁶²²

Small features of this type of processing need not have left any remains in the landscape. There were no brick or iron features to be preserved. The clay dykes easily become obliterated by ploughing or stock movement, or by natural weathering processes in cases where coastal marshes have been drained or eroded and/or buried by sediments. Hector’s site, for instance, is known to have been affected by coastline recession.⁶²³ That coastline is vulnerable to blowing easterly and southeasterly winds. Murdoch’s land bordered a tidal creek draining into Pitt Water. There is insufficient reason to claim that the lack of remnant infrastructure precludes a working saltpan. This may be why part of Murdoch’s estate Craigow is now known as “the salt pans” and why in a publication for the family’s centenary within Tasmania, Dr Murdoch was reported as sending grain and salt to the ferry at Kangaroo Point for transport to Hobart Town.

One point to consider in relation to salt harvesting at Pittwater involves an advertisement in 1862 for the lease of Salt Pan Farm of 500 acres.⁶²⁴ The advertisement noted that “salt works had been erected on the beach”. These works were clearly not the ruins of Hector’s plant of 1833 as the boundaries

⁶²²Thompson, I., The Role of Artisan Technology and Indigenous Knowledge Transfer in the Survival of a Classic Cultural Landscape: the *Marais Salants* of Guerande, Loire-Atlantique, France, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 25: Part 2, 1999. pp. 216-234.

⁶²³Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*. Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong Science and Technology Analysis Research Program in Association with the Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, 1993. p. 29.

were given as Bonnington Bay and One Mile Beach to the north. Today, the coastal area of Bonnington Bay is not recognised by the Nomenclature Board, though there is a Bonnington Farm in the vicinity.⁶²⁵ It could be a long obsolete name for Barilla Bay or more likely the name of one of the smaller bays within Barilla Bay altered when earthworks were constructed around 1880 for the Sorell Railway. The boundary to the west of the Salt Pans Farm was the road to Kangaroo Point. Any saltworks in this location has not been found but it is clear that it could be neither Hector's nor Murdoch's. Rogers states "neither aerial photographs nor on-site inspection revealed any evidence of there having been any earthworks or buildings which might confirm the existence of saltworks in this vicinity".⁶²⁶ Rogers dismissed Murdoch as a contributor to the salt industry.

Two local historians and property owners whose families have worked the same lands since they were granted, W. Hanslow of *Dulcot* and L. Lazenby of *Lowlands*, Cambridge, gave information to Rogers which deserved to be given more credence. Local historians are extremely knowledgeable about their own properties and district, and old farming families have intimate knowledge about their land and how it was utilised in past generations. It was this type of knowledge that Hanslow and Lazenby used to answer Rogers' questions.

Rogers' assumptions made in relation to the lack of archaeological record of those salt pans reported by Hanslow and Lazenby, need to be questioned.

⁶²⁴ *Mercury*, 10 April 1862.

⁶²⁵ Pers. Com. Nomenclature Board of Tasmania.2000, 2001.

Rogers did not meet any descendants of the original owner of Craigow, Dr. Murdoch. He may not have understood that the University Farm consists of only that part of Craigow closer to the Pittwater coastline, to which the original Hanslow grant has been added. Rogers would have been introduced to Lou Hanslow at the University Farm where he continues to be employed working on what was once his family's land grant.⁶²⁷ For Rogers to be so dismissive of first hand local knowledge because it does not fit a preconceived theory where archaeological evidence will indicate salt distilleries or because there is a lack of expected documents, is a questionable practice by any historian. Rogers also did not consider the effect of changes in tidal flows induced in Pittwater by the construction in the 1870s of two causeways linking *Milford*, Cambridge, Midway Point and Sorell or the causeway for the Sorell Railway. These changes must have affected production of salt from any coastal salt pans and may have even altered the occurrences of spring tides, mean sea level and the vulnerability of earlier nineteenth century earthworks to wave and wind erosion. Perhaps the coastal pans of Pittwater were no longer used after Lisdillon was in production.

The use of the Ross Sandstone for salt can be established for the Richmond Hills and for the Buckland area to the east and Green Valley to the west. The same formation outcrops at Bothwell in the interior. There are salt springs at Bothwell that offered the opportunity to anybody familiar with older

⁶²⁶Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*. Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong Science and Technology Analysis Research Program in Association with the Australian Society for Historical Archaeology, 1993. p. 24.

⁶²⁷Pers. com. George McDermott 2003, land owner in the Cambridge area.

⁶²⁷The author visited the University farm during the International Pursal Conference 2001.

technologies within the English salt industry, to establish a simple solar pond system for purification and extraction of the salt, which would have been locally useful.⁶²⁸

Rogers did not mention other natural supplies of salt found in the Richmond Jerusalem area of the Coal River Valley. In a review written in 1849 about the coal deposits of Van Diemen's Land, Milligan, noted the presence of sandstone caves in the hills overlooking the Coal River Valley Hills. Geologically, the sandstones associated with the caves, referred to above, are part of the Ross Formation. The same sandstone produced the salt lagoons of the Salt Pan Plains but their occurrence elsewhere is often ignored.⁶²⁹

But the most curious and interesting phenomenon connected with these hills and caverns is, that the sandstone is saliferous; and that common salt oozes and effloresces from roof, sides, and floor of many of the excavations. On the floor there is often a thick layer of sand, with an encrustation of salt between it and the solid rock.⁶³⁰

to estimate. However, domestic use is known. Whether any salt was taken to Hobart and sold is not known but possible. There were good shipping links to Hobart Town from the Coal River, and prices before 1823 would have made extraction of the salt economically viable.

There is one additional saltpan reference, which provides a conundrum. A letter (figure 5.3) in the files of the Colonial Secretary's Office mentions saltpans at Kangaroo Point:

⁶²⁸Pers. Com. Arthur Clark geomorphologist, 2000

⁶²⁹It is regrettable that the revision of the Stratigraphic nomenclature of Tasmania has subsumed the Ross Formation into part of the Malbina Superstructure.

⁶³⁰Milligan, J., A Letter: Richmond and Jerusalem Hobart, 13 February 1849, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land*, Vol. 1: 1849-1851. pp. 67-68.

To whom it may concern
James Chase has 5 a of land at Kangaroo Point, for taking in his buildings &
[...] gives him occupancy of his salt pans, which the Lt. Gov. directs he is not to
be disturbed in, pending further instructions on his application.

14 January 1828

(signed)
[illegible]⁶³¹

15
To whom it may concern
James Chase has 5 a of
land at Kangaroo Point, for taking
in his buildings & he gives him
occupancy of his Salt Pans, which
the Lt. Gov. directs he is not to be
disturbed in, pending further instructions
on his application.
(signed)
14th January,
1828.

Figure 5.3 Letter from James Chase

The significance of this letter is unknown.

⁶³¹ SC 285, Report 69. Letter book 87.

It is assumed that Kangaroo Point is the Kangaroo Point (also Bluff) on the Eastern Shore of the Derwent opposite Hobart. There were so many Kangaroo place names that a location of such name cannot be pinpointed with any

Milligan goes on to describe how “in the earlier times of the Colony, settlers collected salt for domestic use in the caverns along the line of the Richmond Hills”, useful but there is no evidence for any attempt to do so during the colonial period.⁶³²

The scale of extraction of the salt found in the Richmond Hills caves is difficult accuracy without corroboration through additional information. Nor is it clear what is meant by his term ‘salt pan’. It could have been a simple solar saltpan, for instance, on the marshlands at the head of Kangaroo Bay. However, it is possible that the letter may in fact be referring to a works for purifying salt brought down from the Coal River or the Midlands.

Further purification of the dirty salt collected from lagoons or caves would have been necessary to produce a product of commercial quality, which could have been done at Kangaroo Point and would explain the letter. Salt was commonly cleaned in Britain by one of two methods. The first involved washing it down and drying it on a heated floor. Another method produced clean white crystals by dissolving salt in fresh water and then boiling it down. This produced clean white crystals, similar to the salts derived from the salt

⁶³² Milligan, J., A Letter: Richmond and Jerusalem Hobart, 13 February 1849, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land*, Vol. 1: 1849-1851.

springs or rock salt brine. This technology was common in the English salt industry.⁶³³

5.4 Robert Arthur Roberts and Bruny Island 1823-1830

According to Rogers, the earliest salt distilling plant was on Bruny Island, most likely at the northern end of Rosebanks Beach within Barnes Bay though an alternative site at Apollo Bay appears in the literature.⁶³⁴ It operated from late 1823, having been established by a newly arrived settler, Robert Arthur Roberts, in conjunction with his soap industry. The plant operated until 1829 or 1830 producing one and a half to two tons of salt each week.

The history of Roberts' salt operations is highly confused. Rogers states that salt was needed to separate the soap from the residual liquid or 'kern'. The soap formed on the top and the residual lye on the bottom, the salt having induced the separation. This stage in the process was known as 'salting out'.⁶³⁵ Rogers' logic was that by manufacturing salt, he would secure his own supply of a raw material. Rogers found that the combination of soap and salt manufacturing was "a simple form of vertical integration". In addition, he had an alternative use for the same equipment as the boiling pans were capable of producing either soap or salt.

⁶³³*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, 1911, Vol. 24, p. 88.

⁶³⁴Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993. p. 17.

The actual layout of the Bruny Island salt-works is not known. Rogers presumed that the operation began in the usual way with a settling pond where coarse impurities such as sand and shell grit settled out. The saltwater was then presumably taken to the building that housed the boilers. Rogers made this assumption because there was no archaeological evidence for solar concentration ponds. However, there are limited remains at either possible site which do not allow for such definitive conclusions.

The seawater was brought to a brisk boil and then albuminous substances were added to remove the impurities. These were usually either blood or beaten egg whites. Rogers does not indicate which of the two were used. It could have been either or both. The 1820's were a period when both bay whaling and shore whaling were common and Bruny Island featured in both industries with the nearest shore whaling stations about 1824 being at Adventure Bay, that of Captain Kelly and Cookville operated by Mr Lucas. Whale blood was therefore in ample supply, hence it was the most likely albuminous substance added to the brine. It is unlikely that cattle blood was sent down river from Hobart Town in casks when blood was available locally. That is not to say that egg whites were not used seasonally as there were rookeries all around the island for a number of species of sea birds as well as extensive marsh bird breeding areas.

The furnaces were wood fired. Wood was a major cost in labour as vast volumes of water had to be heated. It needs to be remembered that it took 98 tons of sea water to produce one ton of salt. There is actually more than two

⁶³⁵Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong,

tons of salt in that amount of salt water, but the nature of salt making limits the output to one ton. Otherwise, excessive boiling would start to bring the bitter magnesium salts out of solution and crepitation would make the process more dangerous. Careful design of the saltworks was necessary to economise on the use of fuel. Copious amounts of timber would have been needed. Timber was readily available on-site when the plant started, but would have been used up quickly and firewood would have had to come from further away, decreasing efficiency of labour and increasing costs each year.

Coal is another possibility for use as fuel, as Bacon suggested that Roberts may have tried to use coal known to occur on the island.⁶³⁶ Rogers rejects the theory claiming that the salt works had been closed for several years by the time Roberts started to investigate the coal outcrop at Adventure Bay. “The search”, Rogers said “for workable coal did not begin until 1833”.⁶³⁷ This is not necessarily accurate because the coal seam was known since its discovery by Captain Dixon in 1823.⁶³⁸ It is quite possible in such a small, community as Hobart Town was in the 1820s, that Robert and Dixon were acquaintances. In addition it is significant that Roberts was an experienced coal miner. It would be uncharacteristic for Roberts not to have at least tried the coal in the furnace. It may never be known whether the existence of accessible coal as an alternative fuel source had been influential in Roberts’ choice of location. The only information recorded about the use of fuel at Roberts’ saltworks is possibly

1993. p. 13.

⁶³⁶Bacon, C., The Coal Resources of Tasmania, *Bulletin of the Geological Survey of Tasmania*, No. 64, 1991. p. 91.

⁶³⁷Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993. p. 16.

irrelevant. It involves the curious tale of a repentant convict, which, while considered of minimal scientific value, at first glance, is of sufficient importance to quote in full:

HORRIBLE MURDER!

Several months ago a Portuguese named Dennis an assigned servant to Mr. R. Roberts, at Brune Island, disappeared very suddenly, and could not be traced; it was at last concluded that the black natives had murdered him.

William Hyton, another of Mr. Roberts' men, employed in the same place, labouring under the effect of great remorse, has just declared that one Ferguson, a ticket-of-leave man, and Wilkes employed by Ferguson, together with himself murdered Dennis who is also known by the name of *Antonio*; and in order to escape detection had destroyed the body, by putting it into the furnace under the salt-work boiler.

The reason given for this diabolical act is that Dennis had not been pleased with the division of some unlawful spoil, and threatened to denounce them.

We suspect the poor natives are blamed for several similar acts, but the all-seeing eye of Providence cannot be eluded, and such crimes are sure to meet just retribution sooner or later.⁶³⁹

Normally, a report of a crime would be quickly followed by a report of the trial.

The trial probably would have provided more information about the layout, staffing and operation of the salt works. No press report of a trial could be found but the incident itself was reported in another paper. The search for any primary documents in the Archives was also unsuccessful in finding any record of the trial. Nevertheless, it can be concluded from the above that the salt work's furnace must have been of sizable scale.

Rogers found it hard to gauge the success of Robert's salt and soap enterprise.

Three issues required consideration. The first was whether the soap business was transferred to Hobart Town in 1825. Rogers argued that the opening by

⁶³⁸Bacon, C., The Coal Resources of Tasmania, *Bulletin of the Geological Survey of Tasmania*, No. 64, 1991. p. 91.

Roberts of a soap factory in Liverpool Street allowed easier access to tallow.⁶⁴⁰

It was then inferred that the Bruny establishment was run as a stand alone salt manufactory. It is more likely that he worked both plants together. The production of soap was a complicated industry with many alternative methods and products. It is known that Roberts made hard soap using barilla and soft soap with wood ash. Both ingredients would be easy to obtain at Barnes Bay.

The second issue was the amount of salt produced. The output of salt must have been significantly greater than the reported output of no more than 100 tons per year. The basis for this argument lies in the alleged use of the opportunity available to Roberts to sell salt to ships and bay whalers without bringing it to Hobart Town. Roberts had an output of salt in 1827 of one and a half to two tons per week.⁶⁴¹ The principal market would have been vessels bound for the various sealing grounds.

It is known that many vessels called at Bruny Island whilst leaving the Derwent.

For instance, John Boulton described how in 1824:

When we got abreast of Brune Island we hove-to & the Captain (a drunken little Tartar but a good sailor) seeing a smoke on shore sent his little boat, which returned with 2 common looking downcast fellows, who were convicts; they immediately skulked below where they continued till we cleared the port.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁹*Tasmanian*, 28 December 1827.

⁶⁴⁰Rogers, B., *Nineteenth Century Salt Manufacturing Sites in Tasmania*, Science and Technology Analysis Research Program: Working Paper No. 11, University of Wollongong, 1993.

⁶⁴¹*Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 June 1827.

⁶⁴²Begg, C., and Begg, N., *The World of John Boulton including an Account of Sealing in Australia and New Zealand*, Whitcoulls Publishers, Sydney. 1979. p. 53.

It is known that this ship was headed for the Bass Strait. It is very possible that this ship picked up salt from Roberts' salt works to take with them.

The third problem involved the quality of the salt. Rogers notes that in 1827, the editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette* lamented the fact that colonial manufacture of salt had not been very successful, but thought that the demand for salt meat by the Commissariat was likely to spur the industry.⁶⁴³ One specific criticism mentioned in the article was that manufacturers, note the plural, used the abundance of cheap fuel to evaporate the brine too quickly. Bay or solar salt was preferred for meat curing as the evaporated brine produced a salt that was not preferred for use in the curing of meat. Roberts savaged the editor in a retort published the following week.⁶⁴⁴ He discussed how his works were operated "exactly upon the improved principle adopted at home" meaning England, and detailed how the speed of evaporation was irrelevant to the purity or strength of the salt.⁶⁴⁵ All that it would affect, he said, would be the size of the crystal. He then went on to note the extensive use of his salt in the curing of meat by the Government Store, and also claimed that much of the salt sold in the town as coming from Leith or Liverpool was actually the product of Bruny Island. The British salt to which Roberts was referring was most likely some of the salt being imported quite illegally by ships chartered by the Van Diemen's Land Company. Shipped as ballast, salt could be sold quite cheaply.

⁶⁴³*Hobart Town Gazette*, 9 June 1827.

⁶⁴⁴*Hobart Town Gazette*, 9 June 1827 and 16 June 1827.

5.5 Conclusion

Until 1830, the salt industry was more diverse and complex than it first appeared, raising more questions than answers. Questions were raised as records were often so vague, it is not clear whether the salt was a Van Diemen's Land product or imported. The majority of the salt may not have come from Kangaroo Island in South Australia, as some early records infer and later writers claim.⁶⁴⁶ Is it possible that significant amounts of salt used came from the Salt Pan Plains, where the annual tonnage of 600 and 700 tons harvested, exceeded the annual harvest from Kangaroo Island of 60 to 100 tons indicated in Cumpston's accounts.

Published sources imply that Kangaroo Island salt was always available; whereas other records show that access to that supply, although in great quantity, was relatively limited. Statements such as “only be obtained in summer” as it only “crystallizes about February”, showed that its availability could not be entirely predictable.⁶⁴⁷ Would it be a fair comparison to consider that the Kangaroo Island saltpans would have suffered the same fate as those in the Midlands from degradation by careless harvesters? After all, consideration for later harvesters is not something recorded when harvesting publicly available salt. Sealing ships would have taken as much good salt crystals as they could harvest, in the same manner as those harvesting salt from the Salt Pan Plains. Cumpston and colonial newspaper accounts show that harvesting

⁶⁴⁵ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 June 1827.

⁶⁴⁶ *Tasmanian and Port Dalrymple Advertiser* 20 April 1825.

⁶⁴⁷ Cumpston, J., *Kangaroo Island 1800-1836*. Roebuck Society Publication No. 1. Canberra. 1974. p. 39.

moved progressively towards the centre of lagoons because of the damage done to the salt from previous harvesters.

Salt harvesting was no different from any of the other industries discussed, in that some information lacking in the formal records can be teased out from less obvious accounts. The ease of opportunity to procure salt from the Salt Pan Plains of Van Diemen's Land was discussed in an editorial in the *Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*.⁶⁴⁸ Demand for salt must have grown significantly as coastal evaporation processing plants developed in increasing numbers, as did distillation plants with their insatiable need for firewood. It is known that Roberts' early evaporative saltworks on Bruny Island produced one to two tons of salt a week by 1823. No records were found for quantities of salt produced from his boilers.

A question that needs answering is what was all the salt produced used for? By 1823 this time the Bass Strait Island seal fisheries had collapsed, therefore it was not clear where all the salt was then going, or what it was being used for. Ships bound for new fishing grounds around New Zealand may have collected salt from Van Diemen's Land. Otherwise, as the Van Diemen's Land fisheries were no longer productive and the human population still relatively small, other reasons must have influenced the increase of salt production. Was there an increase in the harvesting of native animal or bird skins, or was more produce being salted for export?

⁶⁴⁸*Hobart Town Courier and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, 30 March 1822.

Careful sifting of records relating to industrial and domestic salt use may indicate new and productive ways of looking at the fragmentary records of the earlier decades. Detailed research of the more obscure reference would possibly show what much of the salt was used for. What the present research has indicated is that salt tonnages produced in Van Diemen's Land were greater prior to 1830 than published accounts indicate.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The history and geography of Van Diemen's Land between 1803 and 1830 cannot be considered in isolation from other parts of the world. The attitudes of the British invaders interlinked with social complexities and needs of people in the nineteenth century, as well as combining with the “global interactions” of war and economics. Industrial situations that dictated the perceptions and activities of those who invaded and plundered the Aboriginal managed landscape of Van Diemen's Land resulted in the establishment of industries founded on the resources such as timber, Wattle bark, fauna and salt. Recognition must be made of the administrative links to New South Wales and ultimately Westminster as these helped shape the operations of each of the industries considered herein.

By moving forward in time, a clearer sense of the development of colonial Van Diemen's Land is demonstrated. It is of historical significance and importance that the geography of not just the industries, but also of the expansion of ‘settlement’, is as factually correct as the records allow. Today, when aspects of the history of Van Diemen's Land are analysed, it is often as isolated segments of landscape, components of industry or the way some individual people either impacted on events or interacted with people within a specific time span. As a result, it is often inferred that the whole of the Van Diemen's Land landmass was affected by every stage of colonisation with resulting significant direct or indirect distortions of the historical evidence. Until and

beyond 1846 (map 9) only a very narrow inland corridor was alienated, along with limited small coastal areas. Many of the dense forests east and west of the grassland corridor were untouched until after the 1870s.

By placing historical information within the times and contexts of the occurrence of events a clearer and more accurate understanding of history developed. For a clear understanding of the British view of Trowernna the British people involved with Van Dieman's Land between 1803 and 1830 should speak for themselves from the records without any modern theoretical analysis speaking for them.

It was in the culture of those peoples of the Northern Hemisphere to plunder other countries that qualified by clearly defined nineteenth century European standards as "less civilized". Hence, the devastation which occurred to Van Diemen's Land by 1830 from the exploitation of the resources such as timber, Wattle bark, fauna and salt was such a normal occurrence to the British that its effects were seen as commonplace. The Americas, Africa and the South Pacific Islands had been devastated long before any commercial uses were found for Australia. The British plundered Trowernna in the same way as they and representatives of other countries plundered the treasures of the ancient civilized worlds of Greece, Rome and Egypt, by removing thousands of tons of statues, furniture, pottery and anything else they fancied. The nineteenth century plunderer gave no thought of the destruction they made to the remaining artifacts of ancient civilizations or for that matter the Aboriginal

landscape.⁶⁴⁹ Curios and curiosities were all the rage and every traveler sent home to family members bizarre assortments of items be they mineral, fauna or flora or cultural artifacts as novelties. In such times of Empire building, attitudes of greed and arrogance were then the British norm, as exemplified by the British invasions of China and India, two countries that had sophisticated civilizations far older than that of Britain. During this same time Van Diemen's Land was considered unpopulated, "a place created by God". By this attitude the resources were theirs to take.

The rapid and total destruction of the Aboriginal managed landscape had an expanding ripple effect from the initial alienated land margins of the invasion, through the 'settlers' attempts to replace it with the 'Britain of home' landscape. The research shows that definitive boundaries between 'wilderness' and 'cultivated', of 'wild' and 'civilized', are entrenched Eurocentric perceptions within the historical record, solely because Britain originally saw Van Diemen's Land as a place for her unwanted criminals and a source of raw materials "to supply her factories".⁶⁵⁰ This attitude had been a common feature of Imperial Britain, where the complete intact transportation of British culture and technologies occurred, as in India, Van Diemen's Land and New Zealand. Industrialisation of Britain when and as transplanted, ensured the utilisation of local native materials to produce goods acceptable to the British.

From the present looking back, the major industries of the time were considered to be whaling and sealing. By moving forward the minor industries of timber,

⁶⁴⁹Cotterell, L., *Digs and Diggers A Book of World Archaeology*, Pan Books, London. 1964.

Wattle bark, fauna and salt become a major source of revenue for both locals and the 'home country'. By moving forward the destructiveness of exploitation becomes clear. It is the sketches by Harris and Hellyer that give a clear picture of what the Aboriginal landscape was. For many, a Trowernna vision of home is difficult to comprehend. Geographically the broad sweep of grasslands from Pittwater to Bothwell, and moving northward to Tunbridge in the shape of an oblique L, surrounded by dense forests, is difficult to envision, as the modern landscape confuses the vision of the past. Copses of trees and open woodland, interspersed within the grasslands to shelter the animals, became merged with the forests in the British mind to become an unending supply of trees.

The pattern of British settlement followed the fertile grasslands and the easily cleared open woodland, and by moving forward with the invaders through the primary documents, reconstruction of the impact on the Aboriginal landscape is possible. By using the historical geographer's perspective of time – space – and phenomena when analysing the primary records, especially those of the surveyors and early 'settlers', what existed before the impacts begun in 1803, becomes very clear.

It is this rapidity of change within the landscape that forms the basis of the problems created by moving from the present to the past. Modern constructs do not allow for the 'reality' of landscape for a Van Diemen's Land prior to 1803, only a theoretical viewpoint firmly based in analyses of other landscapes, neither Australian or Tasmanian. It became clear that the Administration of the

⁶⁵⁰Morris-Nunn, M., and Tassel, C., *Launceston Industrial Heritage: A Survey*, Australian Heritage Commission and Queen Victoria Museum, Part 1, 1983.

Colonial Secretaries office was trying to preserve the quality of the resources they were exporting. It was the Administration out of New South Wales that decided where the logging camps were to be placed, whether or not a distillery for wattle bark could be erected and how and when salt was to be harvested. Only fauna harvesting was an uncontrolled industry.

The looking backwards into history view explains why Hartwell considered the Australia of 1820 - 1830 to be an empty continent with “nothing to offer the private investor”.⁶⁵¹ Instead, the moving forward in history perspective clearly demonstrates that between 1803 and 1830 Van Diemen's Land flourished as a government enterprise, even though Hartwell considers Van Diemen's Land “a prison”, with an indigenous population unsuitable for exploitation, in which “there was something to develop”. Between 1820-1830 the number of enterprising merchants increased following Kent, Loane, Birch, Kelly the various Lords, James, Edward and the two Simeon, until the colonisation of Van Diemen's Land was considered:

‘classic colonization’ the movement of the British people into empty land and their attempt to reproduce the old society in a new environment.⁶⁵²

The looking back discipline of Hartwell, Linge, and Rogers failed to discover that there was significant industrial processing endeavours from both government and private investment before 1830. Private investment was coming with London investors, free ‘settlers’ and companies like the East India Company, Van Diemen's Land Company, and the industrial forces of the naval

⁶⁵¹ Hartwell, R., *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, Melbourne Univeristy Press. 1954. p. 5.

shipyards. Export avenues became global with Calcutta, China, Isle de France and America importing processed materials, especially timber and skins. Even the British aristocracy looking for profits, were sending out emissaries to manage their estates such as Sir John Owen, Baronet, who used his younger brother Edward Lord. Then there were the international companies based in Britain and America, who had maritime operations, which had ventures in the Southern Fisheries.

The limitations within the primary records frequently make it an almost impossible task to detect where demarcations occur between introduced technology, colonial industrial invention and the evolution into a unique Vandemonian industrial experience. Traditional historical research considers there is little to no industrial archaeology for this time period and “we have to look at England - the birth place of the industrial revolution as well as most of our industrialists”.⁶⁵³ Not so. Careful reading of the primary records when moving forward in history can counteract the lack of physical and archaeological evidence, and allow actual historical and industrial events and happenings to emerge. One area where very early decisions on every aspect of colonial life:

went through a great bureaucratic chain, so that we can discover the most trifling details through the *Historical Records of Australia* and correspondence books of the Colonial Secretaries Office.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵²Hartwell, R., *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, Melbourne University Press. 1954. p.6.

⁶⁵³Morris-Nunn, M., *Industrial Archaeology*, an address given in 1981. Queen Victoria Museum Community Archives.

⁶⁵⁴Morris-Nunn, M., *Industrial Archaeology*, an address given in 1981. Queen Victoria Museum Community Archives.

resulted in records that provide an excellent foundation to understanding early Van Diemen's Land. However, not all such records survive or were even recorded within the *Historical Records of Australia* or the Colonial Secretaries Office, nor do the administrative records tell the story of the ordinary 'settler' who made Van Diemen's Land a viable industrial colony. It was this ordinary person, be they convict, military or free, who created both profits and destruction from processing the raw materials of timber, Wattle bark, fauna and salt. Historical events chronicled within the colonial newspapers broaden the perspective of colonial life and industry.

The historical record shows that the transported technology was cruder than the sophisticated methods in place in England. While colonial technological methods used were, in a sense initially medieval, they were technologically developed enough for efficiency that was reliant on human energy. Newspaper editorial and advertisements add to the evidence that industrial technology was continuously introduced.

Moving forward in history along side the 'colonists' became a compelling aspect, allowing recognition of the extensive differences and changes to the landscape over a period of time as short as three decades. These changes are graphically illustrated with the sketches of the settlement of Sullivans Cove, Hobart Town in figures 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4. The Aboriginal landscape was permanently changed in the areas alienated from the Aboriginal people by British expansion.



Figure 6.1: The 1804 picture by Harris of a densely forested Hobart Town.

Source Harris, G., *Letters and Papers of G P Harris 1803 – 1805: Deputy Surveyor General of New South Wales and Sullivans Bay, Port Philip and Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land*, Edited B., Hamilton-Arnold, Sorrento, Victoria. 1994.

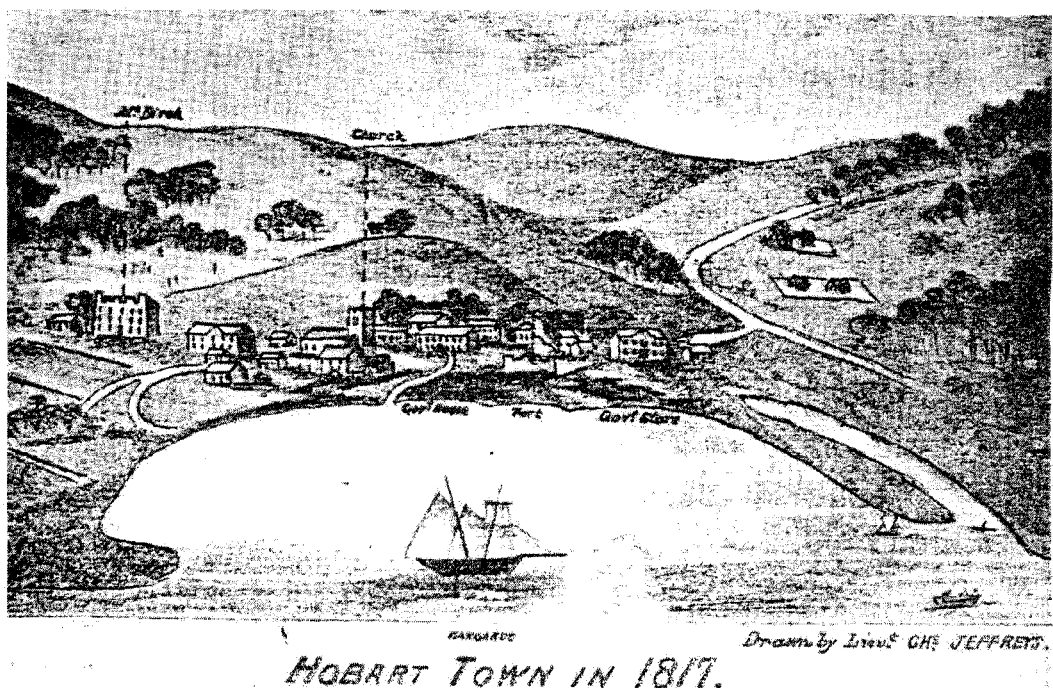


Figure 6.2: Jefferies 1817 picture of a barren landscape

Source: Private Collection



Figure 6.3: Sullivans Cove, Hobart Town,1827 Artist de Sainson
Dumont d'Urville expedition

Source: Private Collection

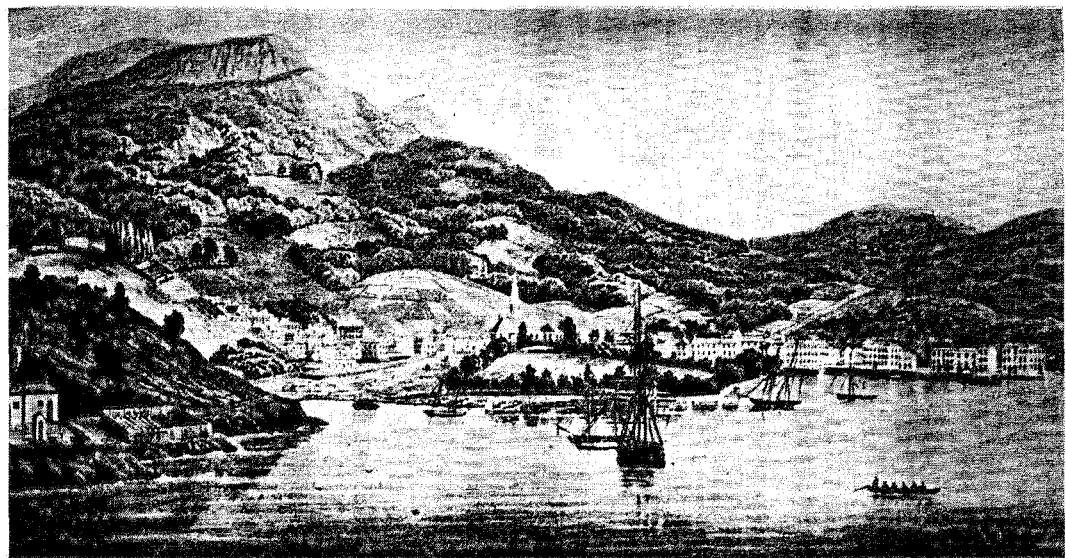


Figure 6.4: Hobart Town 1830 by Huggins.

Source: Private collection

It was not just land clearing for crops that destroyed the landscape. Draining of marsh areas changed the ground water balance so that when clearing with draining occurred, the effect was permanent. The destruction of marshes exacerbated the loss of fowl. With breeding areas gone there was no opportunity of recovery from over harvesting, especially within the swanskin industry. In map 7 we have the early surveyors view of Epping Forest, while in figure 6.5, destruction of the marshes and removal of the timber graphically demonstrates the type of land modification which destroyed the Aboriginal landscape.

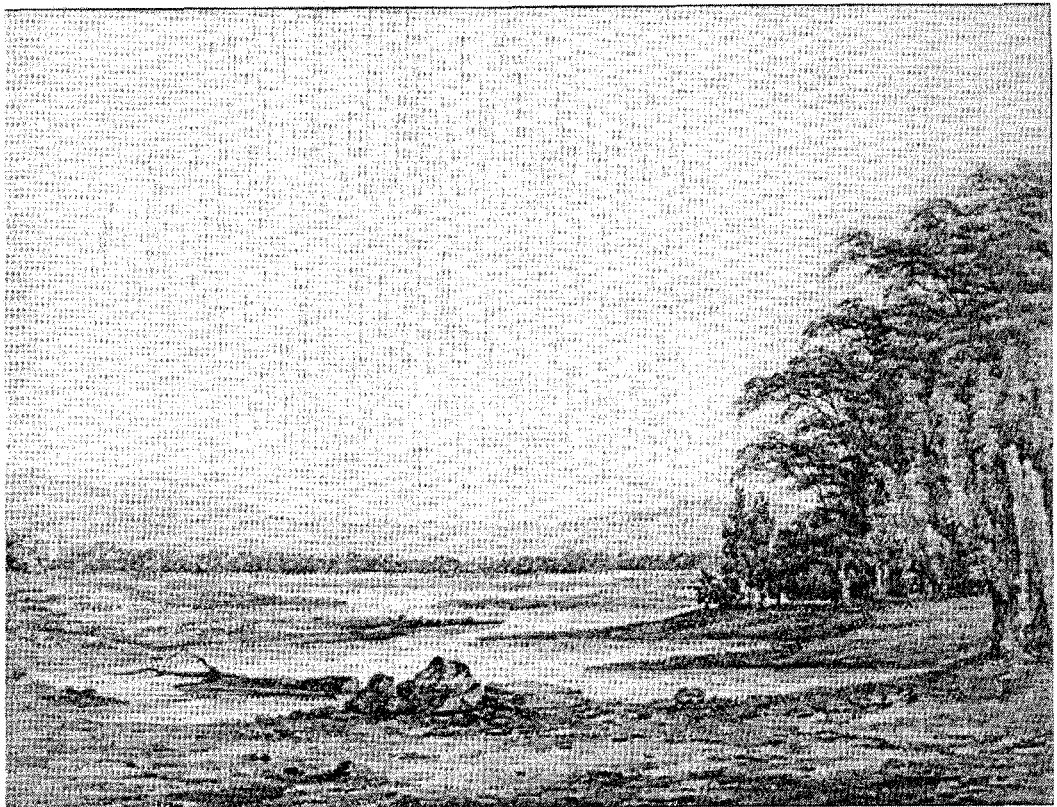


Figure 6.5: Epping Forest with land clearing and marsh drainage.

Source: Private Collection.

It is no wonder that some animals and some plant species were extinct and others on the path to extinction by 1830.

Each of the industries within this thesis has been considered as separate industrial resources, each with a separate conclusion. Each industry devastated the landscape in the process of harvesting. Thus timber removed the trees and left the land bare to be replaced by either grass for sheep or cattle and/or crops. Wattle bark encouraged colonial expansion and removed an Aboriginal food source and destroyed the meaning of a season. Salt impacted very little and can be associated within the industrial timber use of fuel. It is fauna which perhaps left the most lasting impacts. Fauna was never really considered an industry. Sealing and whaling were not fauna they were “fisheries”; swan hunters collected swan not fauna. Somehow skins of Possum, Native Cats, Kangaroo, separated from those of seals, were only a profit to be made from removing a pest, not destruction of native fauna and Aboriginal food. The gentleman’s sport of shooting and hunting was exhilarating and exciting as they chased the Boomer Kangaroo, bagged dozens of fowl, the skins and meat a by product, but it was not considered an industrial pursuit. It was not an industrial use of fauna for processing when it ended up at the Commissariat or the glue factory. Looking backward into the history of Trowernna skins past the presumed minor or lesser aspects, when they have no perceived influence on social change. These minor aspects are actually the glue for the building blocks of the historical geographer, and only by moving forward in time does their importance become revealed.

Looking backward in time Bruny Island, the place in Van Diemen's Land with the longest continuous history of invasion with permanent and transient communities, did not become recognised as a 'settled' area until late in the 1820s, even though from 1803 whaling stations permanently dotted the coastline, many built on land grants. Later in the 1820s, when Robert Roberts had distillation factories for salt, soap and the burning of Barilla with workers living near by, it was still not listed as 'settled'.

There were numerous and often unmarked whaling camps with shore or bay tryworks whose men modified the landscape by removing trees for firewood in the areas surrounding their sites, always encroaching on the Aboriginal landscape. In his field journal Hellyer indicated the true beginnings of the demise of the Aboriginal landscape with his graphic pictures of his surveying campsites which were gouged out of the Aboriginal managed landscape as he made roads for expansion, (figure 6.6 and 6.7)

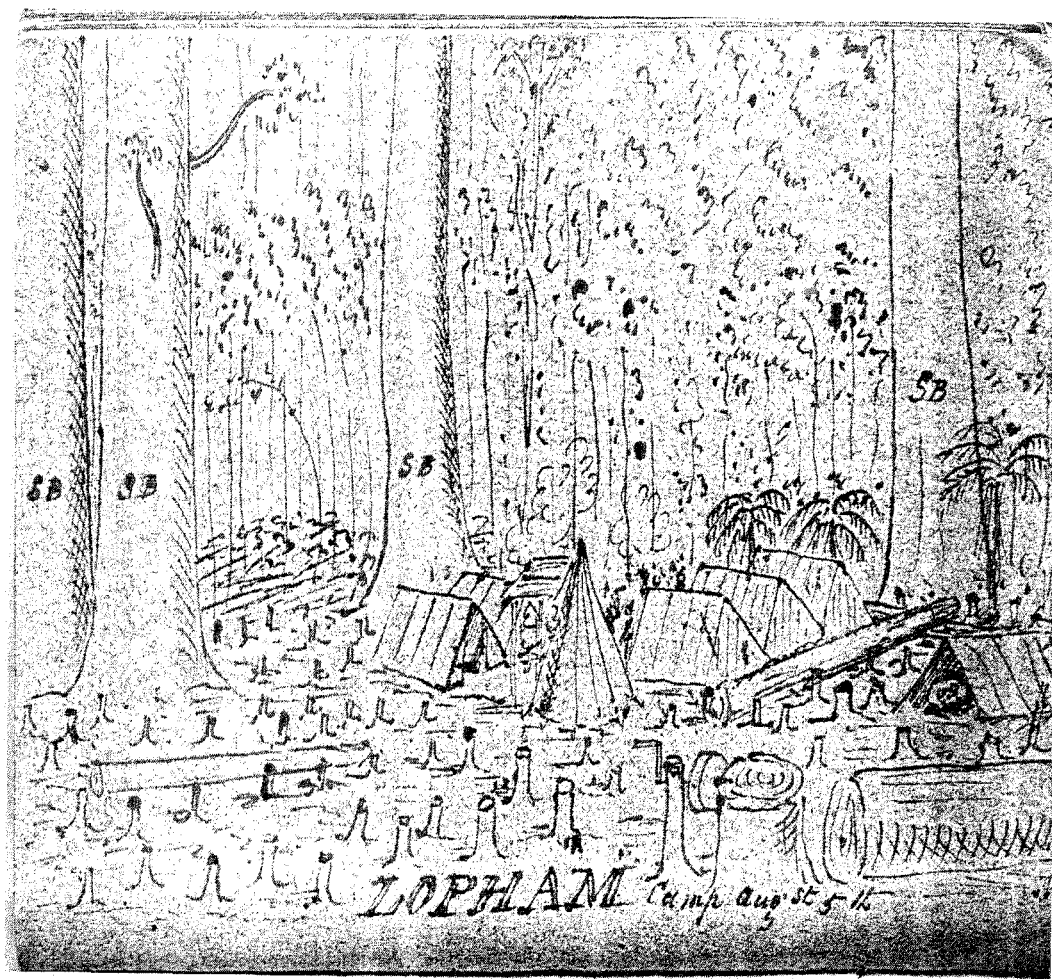


Figure 6.6: Hellyers camp 1828

Source: Hellyers field journal August 1828.

not form under me as
as soon as I can

Having prepared for
were empty in earth
which lay across the
the Creek and exca
two bars in travelling up

the whole day and kept them, always having
sent Fred to come to the old Camp to take the
Boat as high up the Creek as he could at the
house of habitation which was to day at noon
Fred returned in the afternoon - it being very
was just as we had - a few more
put new handles to the Mamel & Axes

The Mamel Huts did not answer to be placed
all together because of the well running down
between each they have other places more placed
them separately and our Camp appears
like a little village but more like a camp than
than any thing else



We descended to the side of the lake
they inhabit the hollow trunks of trees
which are rotting on the ground they come in
out 4 & 5 at a time while the men are at work
We found some very large centipedes & black horse
beetles with a sort of grasshopper legs they skip
about at a great rate

The soil here is a reddish loam of a good
consistence below but very fat upon the surface
and about 3 feet deep it is filled with lumps of
a kind of whinstone - Dripping weather very well
evening again.

Figure 6.7 Hellyers Camp showing the line of sight.

Source: Hellyers field journal 1827

Historically, the majority of views concerning Van Diemen's Land were developed from the perceptions of those people whose accounts of the early history were written later than 1830. These historical writers, and many writing as much as a century later, saw Van Diemen's Land with a jaundiced European eye of a society and landscape reflecting British civilization, and the needs of the 'colonists'. No one wrote from the perspective that truly reflected the landscape of Van Diemen's Land or the Aboriginal perspective of those times. By the same token the early journals, private papers and diaries written before 1830, recorded the landscape as it really was.

Geographically and historically to the British, Van Diemen's Land was an alien land, where 'settlers' often felt threatened by the closed nature of the landscape, the threat of bushrangers, convicts escaped or not, and after 1828/9 the Aboriginal population. If a forward moving historical geography of the period is not considered then Van Diemen's Land grows and distorts out of proportion. Later records of the landscape, flora and fauna, become reworked until the historical truth becomes romanticised. The late nineteenth century historians like Bonwick, Backhouse and Calder in their historical books follow the expected historical themes, but their private letters and journals retain the unembellished individuality of their experience.

Impacts on the original landscape by British industrial pursuits has barely scratched the surface of the existing documentation. Nor has the topic of early industries in Van Diemen's Land before 1830 been exhausted. There is more to be discovered and with constructive thought and analysis the primary

documents will give a more realistic view of Van Diemen's Land's past. The scientific approach of using only primary material moving progressively forward in chronological order has shown the uniqueness of Van Diemen's Land at the time of the invasion. The white wombat was only rediscovered by moving forward. How many other animals await rediscovery with greater research in the primary records?

The historical geography approach has clarified some of the confusing aspects of merchant behaviour and offered lines of approach that would benefit further historical research. While the confusion with Simeon Lord senior has been laid to rest, the evidence indicates that Thomas Kent has been much maligned by rumor and lack of primary research. The problems emanating from the work of Rogers concerning the Cornthwaith Hector and the Pittwater salt industry has been sorted out, but there is still research that needs to be continued. It has been the scientific geographical perspectives which brought to light linkages from the past to the present. The Van Diemen's Land salt industry has shown that the origins of the salt creates the modern salinity problems, especially in the Midlands and Coal River areas. If this thesis had analysed the theoretical perceptions of others, and moved from the present to the past, it would have remained hidden that the salt from Kangaroo Island, off the coast of South Australia, was really the furthestmost island from the Bass Strait sealing grounds, and before 1830 was part of the Van Diemen's Land salt industry.

Map 9: Backhouse map of 1846 showing the known roads of the time in red.

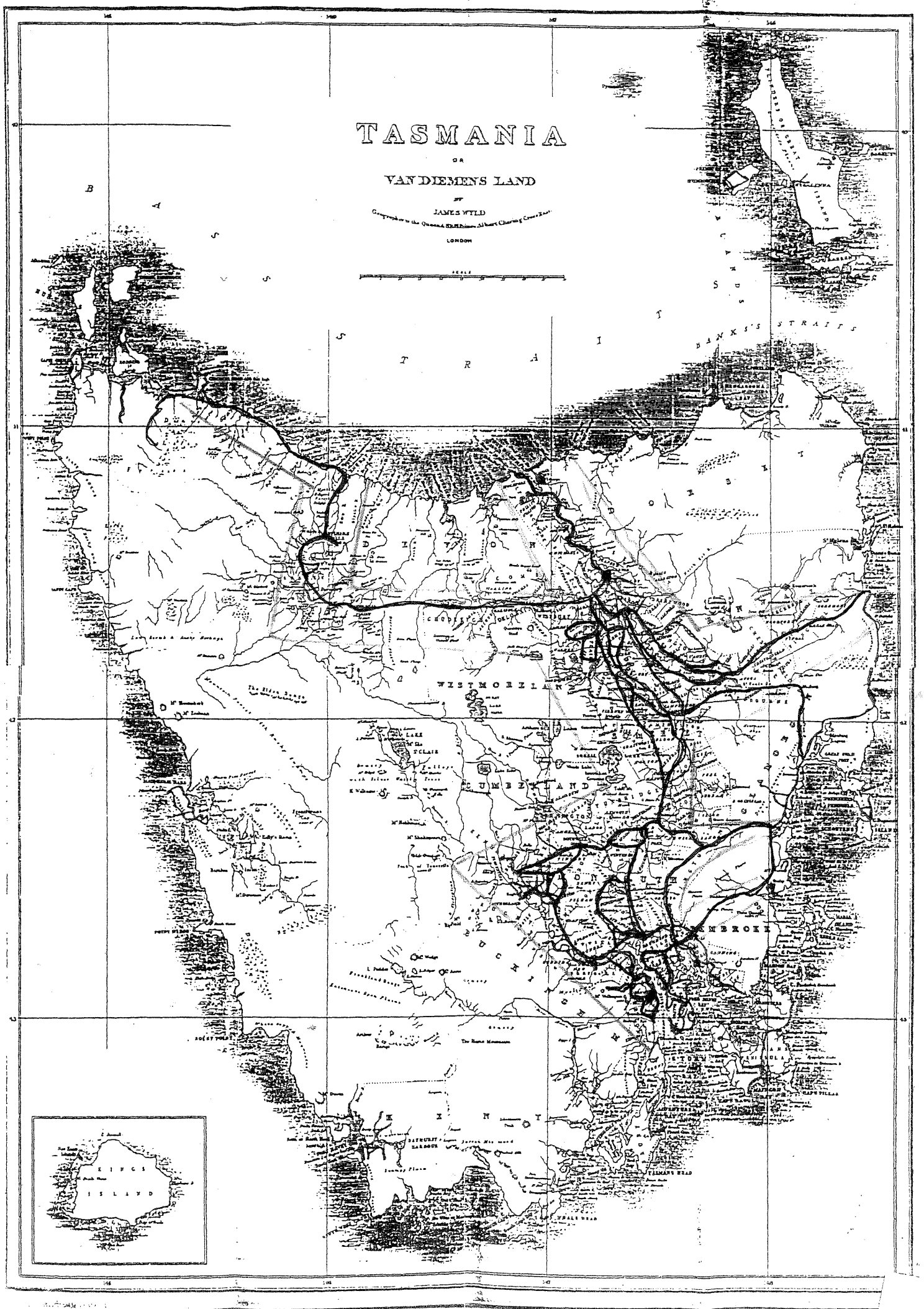
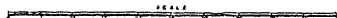
Source: Private Collector.

OR
VAN DIEMENS LAND

JAMES WYLD

James Wyld

LONDON



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Irene Schafer – Norfolk Island Group and Lady Nelson Sail Training Group.
Peter McFie – Coal River Valley Historical Association
Robert Cotterell – Tasmanian Treasury

Karl Stevenson – Blacksmith Historian
 Max Banks – Royal Society of Tasmania
 Pete Smith – postgraduate student University of Tasmania
 Rosyln Hill – Bothwell Historical Society
 J Bizette – Clarence Plains Historical Society
 Frances Mowling – Postgraduate University of Tasmania
 Brian Diamond – Archives Office of Tasmania
 Warwick Risby – Timber Historian
 Keith Windshuttle – Historian
 Ian Davidson – Archaeologist
 Lex Johnson - Able Tasman Society
 Mr. Terry - Bothwell Historical Society
 Joan Nichols - Simeon Lord descendant
 Barbara Reardon – Historical Society of the Municipality of Sorell
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