

## Chapter 2

# Convict Origins

Convicts have an iconic status in Australian history. Many modern Australians take pride in claiming descent from convict ancestors, although this was not always the case in the past. Convict ancestry provides a colourful and immediate link with the origins of white settlement in this young, settler society, and for many non-Australians, convictism is the one part of Australian colonial history with which they are familiar. The convict past that lives in popular understanding, however, is often at odds with scholarly research on the subject. There are many stereotypes of convict life that appear and reappear in popular culture. Typically, convicts were almost exclusively male and always adults. Female convicts are imagined as prostitutes, or at least sexually promiscuous. Most convicts, both male and female, were transported as a result of manifestly unjust punishment for trivial acts such as theft of food or clothing that a harsh and inequitable society forced them to commit in order to survive. Once in Australia, convicts were locked in gaols and barracks, kept in chains and flogged frequently and horrifically. They were so brutalised that they resorted to anything in order to escape, including mutiny, cannibalism and suicide.

These stereotypes are perpetuated in best-selling books, television programmes and even in museum displays and interpretive centres around the country. There is undeniably some truth in this version of the convict past. Most convicts were adult men, some had committed trivial offences and some were confined in barracks and locked in dehumanising solitary cells. Brutal floggings were endured, and there were instances of mutiny, suicide and even cannibalism. This is not, however, the whole story of Australian convictism, nor is it the only story. As a range of archaeologists and historians have now demonstrated, for most convicts their experience of transportation was quite different, and for a variety of reasons (Casella 2002; Connah 2007; Hirst 1983; Karskens 1997, 2009; Nicholas 1988; Oxley 1996).

What happened to convicts in Australia depended first on their age and sex. Almost 25,000 women were transported to the colonies, comprising almost 16 per cent of the total of 157,261 convicts sent out in the 80 years the system operated. Young boys were also transported as convicts, some as young as 9 or 10 years of age (Fabian and Loh 1980:23; Holden 1999:205). Convict experience also depended on the period when individuals were transported. The convict system, and Australian society, had changed greatly by the time transportation ended in 1868 from what it



**Fig. 2.1** Location map of archaeological sites relating to convicts in the Australian colonies

had been in 1788. Convict experience was also determined by which colony individuals were sent to, as New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Western Australia and Queensland all accepted convicts (Fig. 2.1). Finally, and perhaps most significantly, it depended on their own actions once they arrived. The worst and most stereotypical experiences, the chain gangs, solitary cells and floggings, were punishments reserved only for those who committed further crimes or offences in the colonies. The majority of convicts were not subjected to any of them, instead serving out their sentences, obtaining tickets-of-leave or pardons and becoming integrated with the rest of society. Archaeological evidence of convictism spans both of these extremes and much of the middle ground, from the chain gangs along the Great North Road and the solitary cells of Sarah Island, to the assigned servants' quarters at Lake Innes, the boys' prison at Port Arthur's Point Puer, the Female Factory at Ross and the convict-owned homes and businesses in Sydney's Rocks.

Convict places have a high profile in Australia's heritage landscape. There is a strong attachment to places where convicts lived or worked, both among those who have convict ancestors and those who do not. Public interest in convict places has been a significant factor in their preservation and community involvement has taken many forms. It has created powerful lobby groups that saved the remains of sites

such as First Government House and the convict-built road at the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney. Convict tourism at Port Arthur, Sarah Island and other places in Tasmania makes heritage an important part of the local economy, ensuring ongoing political support for heritage conservation. On the central coast of New South Wales local community organisations have taken responsibility for management of the convict-built Great North Road, and in 2008 the Australian Government nominated 12 convict sites for World Heritage status (Australian Government 2008). All of these instances demonstrate the different ways in which the wider community interacts with archaeological sites.

## **Crime, Punishment and Penal Reform**

For the first 30 years of Australian colonisation the transportation system was based on traditional understandings of crime and punishment. Gaols were for debtors and vagrants rather than criminals. Punishment for crime was directed at the body of the criminal, and sentences of death, transportation or flogging were carried out quickly with little need for long-term incarceration (Ignatieff 1978:24). Once in Australia, convicts were made to work, and the system was directed towards that end. It was their value as workers that made convicts desirable in the colonies and which led to both contemporary and subsequent identification of transportation as a system of slavery. Nevertheless, although convicts endured forced labour, they were not slaves. They retained significant rights in law, including the right to own and transfer property, their sentences were generally of limited duration and their children, unlike those of slaves, were born free (Nicholas 1988:111–113).

Initially all convicts worked for the government, clearing and cultivating land and building roads and public buildings, and they lived in the community in private accommodation (Hirst 1983). After military officers were granted land and free settlers arrived, convicts were also assigned to private masters. Whether in government or private service convict workers quickly managed to make task-work rather than set hours the norm, enabling them to complete their day's work early and leaving afternoons and entire days at the end of the week free for their own purposes. The enterprising used this time to take extra work for payment or to build up their own homes and businesses, while others used it for leisure, with many complaints about gambling and drinking. If new offences such as theft or drunkenness were committed in the colony, the punishment was flogging or the withdrawal of rations.

As Robert Hughes (1986) has graphically reminded us, flogging was a cruel and inhuman treatment. Historian John Hirst argued, however, that flogging was ineffective as a deterrent and noted that it consistently failed to produce either obedience or hard work (Hirst 1983:51–53). Stephen Nicholas (1988:180–183) has placed the flogging of convicts in the context of how workers were generally treated at the time, when whipping was widespread in England and soldiers and sailors in particular were subjected to floggings both worse and more frequent than those administered to convicts. However brutal, inefficient or commonplace, flogging and the lash was another manifestation of the immediate and physical emphasis on the body



**Fig. 2.2** Interior of Crank Mill, Norfolk Island, installed ca.1838 as a punishment site for male convicts in irons (photo P. Davies)

as the site of punishment which characterised responses to criminality at this time (Fig. 2.2). Transportation was an extension of this philosophy, where the criminal was physically removed, or banished, from the wider social body.

Transportation had co-existed with flogging for many years. More than 50,000 British convicts were transported to the American colonies between 1640 and 1776, but this practice ended following the American Declaration of Independence. Alternative sites of transportation for British convicts included Barbados, Belize and Ghana (Bogle 2008:7–19). In deciding to send convicts to Australia it was the location, not the punishment, which was new. Moreover, the new location offered clear imperial advantages beyond simply dealing with the prisoners, a point strongly argued by historians Alan Frost (1994:42–86) and Geoffrey Blainey (1966:16–37). New South Wales was selected in preference to the south-west coast of Africa, which was the other candidate for a replacement penal colony, partly because the former appeared to offer a supply of badly needed naval stores such as timber for masts and flax for sails and because it was always the British government's intention that transportation would be, in the words of the Home Office, “reciprocally beneficial” to both convicts and the State (Frost 1994:43). In addition to the immediate economic benefits, New South Wales also offered longer-term benefits that were strategic as well as economic (Frost 2003). As part of general imperial ambition in the region, an Australian colony afforded the British government a base

for furthering its interests in the Pacific and on the west coast of the Americas, countering long-standing Spanish claims and more recent French interest. Many British mercantile interests also intended that in the longer term an Australian colony would provide a new base for trading into India and China, thus opening up a trade long monopolised by the British East India Company (Broadbent et al. 2003).

For several decades after 1788 the transportation system in Australia continued in the established manner, with convicts living largely in the community and labouring at tasks for government and private employers. By the 1820s, however, the growing prison reform movement in Britain led to changes in the way male, female and eventually child convicts were treated. At the heart of the changes lay a shift in focus from punishing the body of the convict to reforming his or her mind and behaviour. Inspired in part by the philosophies of Jeremy Bentham and John Howard, and in part by the morality of evangelical Christianity, reformers believed that the appropriate physical environment would help to direct the hearts and minds of offenders into other and more socially acceptable paths. Specifically, convicts both in the United Kingdom and in the Australian colonies were to be held within purpose-built accommodation that would enable segregation by age, gender and the seriousness of the crime. They were to be employed within the facility as much as possible, and they were to be observed and monitored at all times.

To achieve the necessary level of surveillance, segregation and discipline, it was believed by some that prisons should be built along the lines proposed in the late eighteenth century by the prison reformer John Howard (1973), the architect William Blackburn and by the philosopher Jeremy Bentham in his *Panopticon* (Bentham 1962). In the panoptical design prisoners were to be housed in individual cells arranged around a central observation area. This central guardhouse permitted surveillance of any individual prisoner at any time, to monitor his or her behaviour. Interaction between prisoners was to be controlled and limited, reducing the opportunity for criminal fraternisation (Brodie et al. 2002:58–59; Casella 2007:26; Ignatieff 1978:109–113; Markus 1993:118–129). John Howard advocated separate cells for prisoners arranged in blocks, with separation of prisoners according to the nature of their crimes. An early adaptation of this model, built on a radial design, was constructed to house female convicts in Launceston in 1832 (Casella 2001c:51–52), and similar principles informed the design of the Separate Prison at Port Arthur and the New Gaol on Norfolk Island, both completed in 1847 (Fig. 2.3). Although Bentham's specific designs were not widely applied, his ideas and those of John Howard were influential and their reforms contributed to significant changes in the Australian convict system.

The first dedicated convict barracks in Australia was built in 1803 at the Castle Hill Government Farm, north of Parramatta (Wilson and Douglas 2005). The stone building was around 104 feet (32 m) long and 24 feet (7 m) wide, built on sandstone foundations. Following the Castle Hill uprising in 1804, when a group of mainly Irish convicts rose up unsuccessfully against the authorities, no further convict barracks were built until 1817, when construction of the Hyde Park Barracks commenced.





**Fig. 2.3** New Gaol, Norfolk Island, completed in 1847, built on a radial plan with five cell blocks and 10 yards (photo P. Davies)

Governor Macquarie insisted that male convicts working on government projects in Sydney had to live at the Barracks and were no longer allowed to board in the community or to undertake task work. The Barracks initially housed about 600 men, although in later years more than 1,000 were accommodated in the complex. As the number of convicts increased in the 1820s and 1830s, well-behaved inmates and those with families were often permitted to maintain their own houses in town, with more refractory convicts held in the Barracks. Similar places of confinement were also constructed in other major centres, and thereafter convict freedoms were greatly curtailed. At the same time, places of secondary punishment were also being established. These were prison complexes deliberately located in isolated places at some distance from the main areas of settlement and included Sarah Island, Maria Island and Port Arthur in Van Diemen's Land; Port Macquarie in New South Wales; Moreton Bay in Queensland; and Norfolk Island, almost 1,500 km away in the Pacific. Convicts who committed new offences once in the colonies would now be sent to these places for a further period of incarceration with hard labour. These developments marked the introduction of a new regime of graduated levels of punishment and reward (Kerr 1984:61). Newly arrived convicts entered in the middle of the system. If they worked well and behaved appropriately, they were rewarded with increasing levels of freedom, eventually earning their ticket-of-leave. If they re-offended, however, they moved down the ladder and freedoms were gradually



**Fig. 2.4** Hyde Park Barracks, established in 1819 by Governor Macquarie to accommodate male convicts working on government gangs in Sydney (photo P. Davies)

removed, until the worst re-offenders ended up in the solitary cells of Port Arthur or Sarah Island, or on the gallows.

Significantly, despite the new emphasis on reforming the minds of convicts, all of these stages had an accompanying physical component. The new residential barracks and the penal settlements were all large-scale capital works, and many have survived at least in part to the present day. Because they have survived and because they are so imposing, it is these structures and complexes that have largely shaped contemporary understanding of what convicts experienced. Many, like the Hyde Park Barracks and Port Arthur, have become museums or official historic sites and are now open to the public (Fig. 2.4). For tourists interested in convicts, these are the most popular destinations. When confronted by the sheer scale and power of a complex like Port Arthur it is easy to forget that comparatively few convicts were ever held there. The ruins at Port Arthur have become the popular face of the convict past. These, and the remains of the other institutionalised components of the convict system, have similarly dominated archaeological approaches to convictism.

## Convict Archaeology

Convict archaeology encompasses both research into the convict past and the management of heritage places with extant physical evidence. Archaeological

approaches to convictism are informed by the nature of the sites that have survived and by the desire to conserve the heritage values of these places. Archaeologist Martin Gibbs (2001) has noted that in Western Australia convict sites generally fall into three categories, and this system can be applied more broadly to convict sites elsewhere in Australia. The first category is that of the convict system itself, comprising the places where convicts were housed, punished and worked. This includes barracks, gaols, probation stations, penal settlements, factories, mines, quarries and shipyards. Sites in the second category are those associated with the administration of convicts, including offices and quarters for the military and civilian personnel who managed the system. The final category includes places that were constructed with convict labour, such as roads, bridges, jetties and public buildings.

Sites in the first category tend to be the most visible and prominent evidence of the convict past and have received the most archaeological attention. Their association with convicts is clear and unambiguous and the remains themselves often include large buildings and complexes, such as the Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney, Fremantle Gaol or the buildings at Port Arthur. Sites in the second category are not as obviously connected with convictism and, unless part of a complex like Port Arthur or Norfolk Island, may simply be identified as early colonial or administrative sites. The site of First Government House in Sydney, for example, is valued as the site of the earliest permanent structure in the colony and because of its role in early government. That it was built and staffed by convicts is a less evident, though equally important, part of the story. Likewise, the products of convict labour are not always self-evident. A convict-built road or bridge need not look any different to those built by free labour. In colonies such as New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and Queensland, however, where virtually all labour was initially provided by convicts, much of the early infrastructure is also part of the convict system.

As a result of the kinds of sites that have survived and the need to conserve and manage convict heritage for the community, much of the archaeological work that has been done has inadvertently privileged a particular kind of convict experience. It has focused on the experience of adult male convicts and particularly those who came during the later, post-penal reform period of the 1820s onwards. In New South Wales the focus has been on urban convictism rather than on convicts who lived and worked in rural areas, while conversely, in Tasmania it has been the story of convicts outside Hobart and Launceston that has predominated. Women, children, assigned servants and those transported before 1820 are not well represented in archaeological research to date.

Denis Gojak has noted that archaeologists have contributed a great deal to our understandings of punishment and penal institutions and to details of the daily shape of convict life such as diet and health (Gojak 2001). He argues, however, that archaeologists have not sufficiently addressed broader questions about the nature of colonial society as a convict society. The first 50 years of British settlement in Australia were underpinned by reliance on convict labour, a situation unique in the history of the British Empire and paralleled only by those colonies reliant on slavery. This raises important questions, such as the relationship between convictism and other forms of forced labour and migration. There are indications that archaeologists

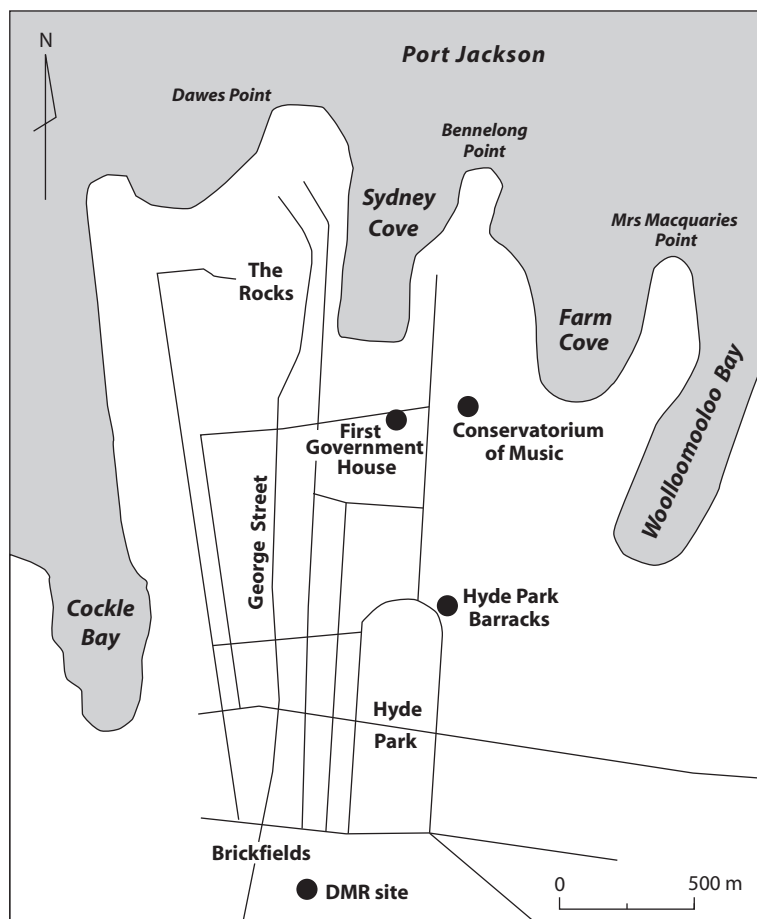


are beginning to address these gaps and to contribute alternative perspectives on convictism. Recent research on early Sydney sites, female factories in Tasmania, the Point Puer boys' reformatory at Port Arthur and the rural estate of Lake Innes in New South Wales all demonstrate the potential of archaeological remains to produce new insights that can inform general understandings of convict experiences.

As historical archaeology has developed as a discipline over the past 30 years, approaches to convict sites have also changed considerably, and at the same time convict archaeology has contributed significantly to the development of the field. Some of the first historical sites excavated in Australia, such as Elizabeth Farm, had convict components (M. Byrne and Jack 1979). At the time of excavation, however, these associations did not receive much attention, as the sites were not overtly part of the convict system, and then, as is still frequently the case, they were not thought of as "convict" sites. At more recognisable convict places such as Norfolk Island (Allen and Lennon 1978; Wilson and Davies 1980), Port Arthur (Egloff 1984), Hyde Park Barracks (Crook et al. 2003a), First Government House in Sydney (Proudfoot et al. 1991) and Ross Bridge in Tasmania (Byrne 1976), all of which were excavated as a result of conservation and development processes, the emphasis was primarily on description of the structural evidence of punishment and incarceration.

Other studies, such as Grace Karskens' work on sites along the convict-built Great North Road between Sydney and Newcastle, sought to place the archaeological evidence within a broader historical and social framework, exploring how individual sites fitted into the wider convict system (Karskens 1984, 1986). By the end of the twentieth century it was more common to acknowledge convict involvement in a wide range of sites, including the early homes and businesses in Sydney's Rocks district, rural sites such as Lake Innes and settlement sites in Western Australia's wheat belt (Connah 2001; Gibbs 2001; Karskens 1999). The definition of convict site has grown beyond institutions of incarceration to encompass all those places in which convicts lived or worked. As the field of historical archaeology has matured in recent years, more ambitious theoretical approaches have also become influential, with issues of gender and power informing work by Eleanor Casella at Ross (Casella 2000a, b, 2001b), while consumer theory has been important in work by Fiona Starr (2001) and socio-economic status has shaped Graham Connah's work at Lake Innes (Connah 2001, 2009). Archaeologists have also started to reflect on the general contributions of convict archaeology, as shown by several of the essays in a collection edited by Eleanor Casella and Clayton Fredericksen (2001).

If disciplinary maturity has altered the ways in which archaeologists think about convict places, it is also true that ongoing work on convict sites has enriched historical archaeology and enabled the field to develop. Public interest in the Hyde Park Barracks and First Government House generated the first large-scale urban archaeology projects in Australia and brought the archaeological evidence of Australia's colonial past to a wide and influential audience (Bickford 1991; Fig. 2.5). These digs played a significant role in developing greater awareness of the need to legislate for the protection of archaeological sites generally and helped to consolidate archaeology within planning and development processes. The extent, complexity



**Fig. 2.5** Map of Sydney showing archaeological sites associated with convicts

and significance of the remains at Norfolk Island and Port Arthur have ensured ongoing federal government support for conservation projects at these places, of which archaeology has been an important component (Ireland 2004).

Over this period relationships between convict archaeology and the public have also become more complex. Public interest has always been, and remains, an integral part of convict archaeology. Convict descendants were instrumental in saving the remains of First Government House from development in the 1980s, spearheading a protest that led to a major archaeological project and eventually to the construction of a new museum, The Museum of Sydney on the Site of First Government House, to interpret the architectural remains and manage the artefacts (Emmett 1996). More recently, on the central coast of New South Wales an alliance of local communities has taken responsibility for the management and interpretation of archaeological sites along the Great North Road (Convict Trail 2003). Their

work involves conservation of the sites, tourism initiatives and historical research on individual convicts and the iron gang system. Relations between archaeologists and community groups, however, are not always cordial or straightforward. In the late 1990s, when evidence of a convict-built road was uncovered during construction of the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, archaeologists were taken aback by the nature of public feeling about the site. The archaeologists and heritage professionals involved considered the remains to be of limited heritage value as the road was only partially intact and was one of many such roads in and around Sydney. Members of the public responded more immediately to the remains as direct physical evidence of convict forbears and demanded that the road be preserved. Accommodating the remains as an essentially decontextualised object in the new building cost several million dollars and resulted in continuing government disquiet about the value of archaeology (Casey 2005b; Gojak 2001; Greer et al. 2002).

Mary Casey's (2005b) report of the events surrounding the Conservatorium controversy demonstrates how evidence about the nature of physical remains can be manipulated to serve a variety of interests. This was a particularly emotive case, but it is only one of many instances where heritage values are seized on as a way of preventing development even when the heritage significance of the fabric may not warrant preservation. The strength of community feeling elicited can indicate other values, such as social significance, that are not as apparent to heritage professionals. It illustrates the ambiguous position of archaeology that destroys sites in order to preserve information and the pragmatism of a profession in which practitioners are often involved in facilitating development to which as community members they might otherwise be opposed.

Partially in response to the prominent involvement of descendant groups and the growth of heritage tourism, archaeologists are becoming more thoughtful about the ways in which archaeology is presented to the public and at times appropriated to serve other agenda. In contrast to previous generations of white Australians who wished to ignore and forget the country's convict origins, today convicts are embraced as individual and collective ancestors and convict places and relics are playing an important part in that re-invention. Themes of belonging and forming a new country with a distinctive Australian consciousness play a prominent part in the stories presented at convict museums around Australia (Casella 2005). One local community in Tasmania now has a programme for people to purchase a brick bearing the name of a convict, often an ancestor, which is then laid as part of a continuous trail down the main street. In 2004 Hobart's Cascades Female Factory was the site for a "muster" of descendants of female convicts attended by 800 people, and one of Port Arthur's most popular interpretive programmes invites visitors to identify with a particular convict individual as part of their experience at the site. Greg Jackman, senior archaeologist at Port Arthur, argues, however, that such incorporation is not unproblematic

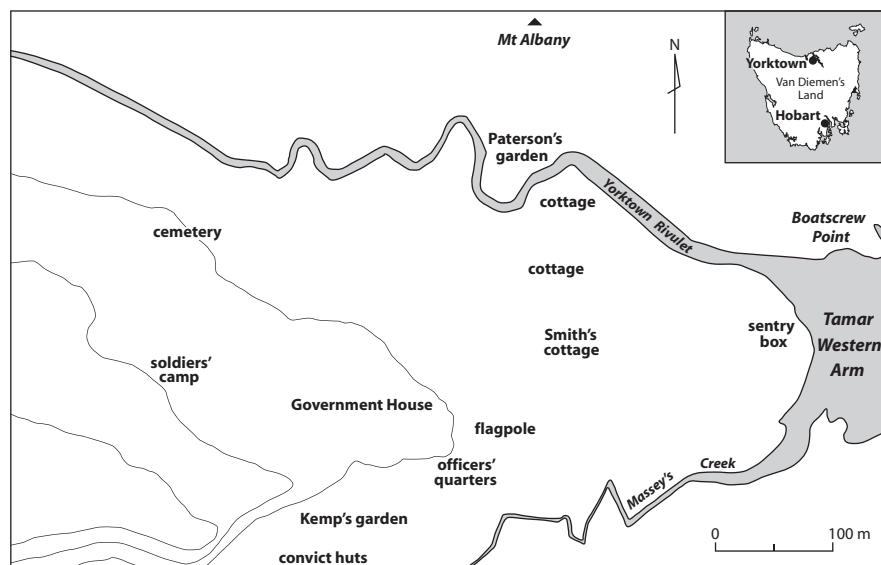
Archaeology is at risk of being driven to the fringe as subjective interpretations of the past based on the consumerist desires of visitors and social/spiritual claims of ethno-nationalists begin to divert political and economic support from evidence-based explorations of the meanings and legacies of the convict system (Jackman 2009:109–110).

## The Early Years: York Town and Sydney

Convicts and their military guards were pioneers at the beginning of a new settlement, much like pioneers anywhere else in the British Empire. They all had to cut clearings in the forest, build huts and establish crops and gardens, simply to ensure their own survival. They met Aboriginal people, sometimes on a friendly basis and sometimes with fear and violence. They watched out to sea for the next sail to appear over the horizon, bringing news and supplies from home. Today one of the few places where we can still get a clear sense of this early, anxious period is at York Town on northern Tasmania's Tamar River. It does not look like much now, and it probably did not look like much when the first convict settlers stepped ashore in November 1804. A few years earlier a member of the exploration party wrote, "The land is low and very even, but sandy and not good, being full of the dwarf Grass tree – The timber is large but not very good . . . the Shore is a Black Stone rock, in some places the landing is very good. . . Very good fresh Water was found at the head of the Arm. . ." (Macknight 1998:72–73).

Today bush has largely reclaimed the site, but the casual visitor can still see faint traces of the settlement. Fragments of handmade brick poke through the pebbly soil, and the occasional piece of black bottle glass can be found. A faint depression in the grass shows where the commandant, Lieutenant Colonel William Paterson, had his house. In 1805, it was all much more substantial. York Town (also known as Port Dalrymple) was a sprawling settlement, housing nearly 300 convicts, military and civilian officials, and their families. In addition to Paterson's house, the settlement had accommodation for the soldiers and the convicts, a parade ground, several private farms occupied by the officers, a quartermaster's store, a gaol, brickmaking pits, stockyards, a mill and all the other facilities required for self-sufficiency (Fig. 2.6). The settlement, however, was abandoned in 1808 due to its poor shipping access and limited agricultural prospects, and most of the residents relocated further up the Tamar to Launceston, which became the capital and focal point of northern Van Diemen's Land. After that the land was sporadically farmed but has remained largely undisturbed for 200 years.

In 2006, archaeological excavations were carried out by Adrienne Ellis, a Ph.D. student at La Trobe University. She investigated the remains of the soldiers' huts and the foundations of Paterson's house. Status was an important feature of life in the British military, and the size and layout of the buildings at York Town indicate a similar preoccupation, despite the small size and remoteness of the site. The soldiers' cottages were small one- or two-roomed dwellings, made of local wattle and daub, about 3.5 by 5 m across, and located at one edge of the settlement. The commandant's house, on the other hand, was a prefabricated timber building imported from England and set on foundations of locally made brick. It was also spacious, measuring almost 10 by 4 m, with a cellar, glass in the windows and plastered internal walls (Hayes 2004:32–36). Moreover, it was in the centre of the settlement, at its literal and figurative heart. Immediately adjacent was the parade ground and flagpole where convicts and soldiers both assembled at daily musters and the Union Jack flew boldly over all.



**Fig. 2.6** Plan of York Town in northern Van Diemen's Land, occupied from 1804 to 1808 (after Dent 2002; Kostoglou 2003)

While the settlement lasted, the convicts and their military guards at York Town lived cheek-by-jowl, separated from each other by status and topography, but otherwise sharing similar conditions. Single soldiers lived in shared barracks, as did single male convicts. Married soldiers lived in separate cottages with their wives and children, and convict families too lived in their own homes. Seen from a distance, the cottages would have looked similar, and as a whole, with children playing outside, paling fences and struggling plants by the front doors, the settlement must have looked much like all the other uncertain new colonies the British planted around the world at the end of the eighteenth century. York Town was abandoned before it had the chance to become firmly established, but further to the north in New South Wales other settlements that had also once struggled were becoming more secure.

In Sydney the tents and huts were becoming proper houses in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Convicts, ex-convicts and their locally born children, people like George Cribb and the Byrnes family in the Rocks (Karskens 1999:40, 2009:76–78), Catherine Lindsey in the Brickfields (Casey 1999), and William Hill and Mary Johnson in Pitt Street, Sydney (Lydon 1996:156), were able to establish businesses and build comfortable homes. Years of archaeological excavations have provided detailed evidence of buildings, gardens, consumer habits, diet, work and socialising and a developing urban landscape of streets and lanes.

Those excavations have demonstrated that convict houses were generally single-storey cottages and their placement reflects local geography more than urban planning. Until the 1830s and 1840s houses in the Rocks were built along the sandstone ridges or facing the water of Sydney Harbour rather than along the as-yet



irregular roads. Some cottages, like those of William Hill and Mary Johnson and of Catherine Lindsey, were wattle and daub with packed-earth floors, but a comfortable size, 10 m long and 5 m wide, and set well back from the street on large allotments. In the Rocks, George Cribb prospered sufficiently as a butcher to build a stone house to which he later added a second storey. He too had a large allotment, and built his house back from the street, but the adjoining shop was right on the street frontage. His neighbours Richard and Mary Byrne had a weatherboard house, but quite a substantial one for the day with a shingled roof, glass windows and three fireplaces. Like the others, the Byrnes' house was set back from the street on a large allotment.

The allotments were an important feature of the young towns. People used them to grow food and as places to work. Traces of fence lines show that William Hill and Mary Johnson kept stock in their yard, as did Catherine Lindsey in the Brickfields. Pollen grains recovered from Catherine Lindsey's house show that she placed cut flowers in her house, possibly from her own garden. Pollen grains from other sites show that George Cribb and his wife Fanny Barnett grew peas, beans, lemons and apples on their allotment, while their neighbours the Byrnes also had a large fenced garden with paths, vegetables and fruit trees. As had been the case in England and Ireland, business was often conducted at home, and the allotments provided valuable workspace. Catherine Lindsey worked as a laundress after her husband died, leaving heavy stains of blueing for archaeologists to find around her well. George Cribb used his yard for slaughtering and butchering stock, leaving offal, horn and bone to rot (see Chapter 11). Across the street, George Legg built a baker's oven on his allotment. At the DMR site in the Brickfields, an unknown woman or women had a home dairy in which she used a wide range of locally made earthenware pans and bowls for making butter and cheese.

The many artefacts found in and around these houses reveal the household goods and personal possessions acquired by this early generation of convicts. Strikingly, what they owned and what they ate was plentiful and of good quality. In the words of historian Grace Karskens, "the archaeology of convict Sydney sketches out not a prison, but households. . . and a culture of consumerism" (Karskens 1999:48). In the earliest years the convicts had suffered the general privations of everyone else in the struggling colony, but by the 1810s and 1820s they, like the colony, were becoming comfortable and even prosperous. Fashionable tea and breakfast dishes, china figurines and religious plaques were commonly recovered from convict homes of this period. George Cribb and the Hill family had tea dishes of Chinese porcelain, and the Byrnes had a very up-to-date and fine-quality meat platter. Catherine Lindsey, a single mother, was able to provide her children with special plates decorated with the alphabet. The Byrne children played with limestone marbles and a painted bisque doll.

The archaeological record of convict meals shows abundant evidence of meat. Both salt and fresh beef were popular, along with pork, goat and chicken. Butchered sheep bones made up 40 percent of the table-waste, indicating that mutton was also highly favoured. Native animals were apparently eaten only rarely by the convicts and appear hardly at all in the bones excavated. Fish were caught in the waters along

the shore of Sydney Harbour, and shellfish were collected as well. Sites around Sydney from this time contain substantial quantities of shells from Sydney rock oysters and mud oysters, indicating that they were a common foodstuff. Pollen evidence reveals that local gardens were providing people with a variety of fruits and vegetables, including peas, beans, cabbage and turnip; salad greens such as radish and watercress; and apples, lemons and peaches. Bread does not leave much archaeological evidence, but bakers' ovens have been found in the Rocks and elsewhere. A range of locally made dairying vessels reminds us of the important role of dairy foods in the diet at this time and of the work of the women, both convict and free, who were responsible for producing it.

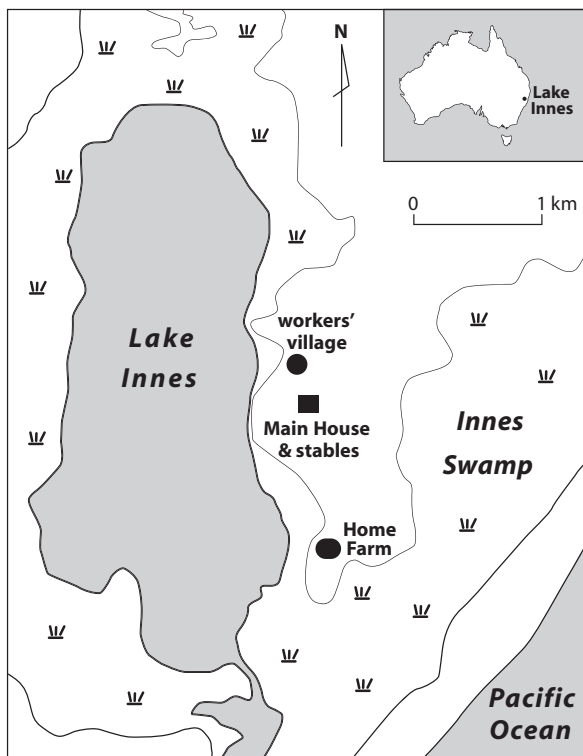
## **Assigned Servants: Lake Innes, New South Wales**

Most convicts ended up as servants assigned to free settlers, with a large proportion being sent to work in rural areas. An example of this experience is provided by the site of Lake Innes near Port Macquarie in New South Wales. Lake Innes was a property taken up in 1830 by Major Archibald Clunes Innes and his wife, Margaret Macleay Innes. The extended Innes family, members of the colony's self-styled aristocracy, lived there until financial difficulties forced them to move in 1852. At Lake Innes the family created a large and consciously impressive house and stables complex, a boathouse, a servants' village and a home farm (Fig. 2.7). The buildings and the estate were built and run by convict workers until assignment ceased in 1839 and by a diminishing number of assigned and free workers thereafter.

Lake Innes was studied by a team of archaeologists from the University of New England between 1993 and 2001 (Brooks and Connah 2007; Connah 1998, 2001, 2007, 2009). Along with investigation of the main household, which produced few artefacts (see Chapter 6), the team carried out excavations at several sites where the estate's servants were housed. This included the quarters provided in the stable complex for the coachmen, one of the two-roomed terrace cottages in the house-servants' quarters, two of the huts in the more distant servants' village and the home farm. These locations not only reveal some of the living conditions experienced by convicts in rural areas, but also demonstrate that even within a single estate conditions could vary widely. One of Connah's main objectives was to investigate the documentary and archaeological evidence of socio-economic status among residents on the estate. While differences might be expected between convicts working for different masters, in this case it appears that the range in accommodation and material goods reflects differences in rank among the convicts and free servants, and that the differences were related to legal status and personal skills. The story is not a straightforward one, however, because ranking the buildings according to size, building materials and degree of comfort produced some different results than was obtained when the type, quantity and quality of goods in the artefact assemblages were considered.

Closest to the main house were quarters for the stable staff. This consisted of four double-storey gatehouses that were part of the stable complex itself. The buildings

**Fig. 2.7** Lake Innes estate, New South Wales, occupied by the Innes family from 1830 to 1852



were relatively comfortable as they were built of brick with a kitchen/living area on the ground floor, complete with brick fireplace, and a bedroom upstairs, while both rooms had glass windows. Some of the apartments were shared bachelor quarters but at least one was the home of the married coachman, his wife, and possibly their children. The artefact assemblage here included the largest quantity of the more expensive porcelain, glass stemware and tumblers, and a small number of coins. Both architecture and artefacts indicate that this household was at the top of the estate's servant rank, and Connah suggests that the occupants were probably a free or ex-convict couple.

At the other end of the socio-economic scale on the estate was the servants' village where homes were much less comfortable. The location itself was less pleasant, being in a damp gully near the lakeshore, and the archaeological remains are far less substantial. The first house excavated here had a brick fireplace but was otherwise built of wood, possibly the customary Australian bark slabs with a wooden shingled roof. The floor was earthen and any windows were unglazed, and the artefacts were much less numerous. There were no coins, no glass drinking vessels and only a few ceramics, none of which were porcelain. This dwelling is at the bottom of the rank

in terms of both architecture and goods, and Connah believes the occupants were single male assigned convicts, probably unskilled farm labourers.

Between these two ends of the scale the archaeological evidence is more ambiguous. A second home excavated in the distant servants' village was also built of wood, probably bark slabs and shingle roof, with an earthen floor and brick fireplace, but it had at least one glazed window and a much richer artefact assemblage. There was a large quantity of ceramics, of which more than 10 percent was porcelain, and some of which may have been displayed on a dresser, as well as glass stemware and tumblers and a single coin. The proximity of a forge has led Connah to surmise that this was the home of a blacksmith living on his own, possibly a ticket-of-leave holder. While the humble architecture and uncomfortable location indicate low status, the numerous and diverse household goods suggest that the occupant's own perception of his worth was somewhat different.

At the quarters for the household servants, higher quality architecture but a lesser artefact assemblage, particularly ceramics, suggest the opposite story. Near the main house two rows of brick terraces, each row comprising three or four cottages of one or two rooms each, provided accommodation for the household servants. One of these cottages was excavated and found to be two rooms, the larger main room with a fireplace and the second for sleeping, and a small attached structure with washing facilities and bucket latrines, possibly shared with everyone in the row. The bricks were of poorer quality than those in the main house and stables and clay loam rather than lime was used in the mortar, but the walls were finished inside and out with lime render, the windows were glazed and there was a suspended wooden floor in both rooms. The assemblage of artefacts was varied, including the highest number of coins found, glass stemware and tumblers, and the greatest quantity of ceramics, but only a small proportion of the ceramics was porcelain. Connah suggests that this household was also a free or ex-convict family, and while their house indicates that they were of the highest rank of servants, well-regarded by the Innes family, their possessions suggest a lower position.

The evidence from the Home Farm seems to represent a less ambiguously middle position on the scale. Located some 1.5 km from the main house, a cottage had been built for the couple who ran the farm, as well as a separate barracks for the men who worked in the fields. The farm cottage consisted of a three or four room house with timber slab walls and a shingle roof. Unlike the huts in the servants' village, however, the Home Farm house had substantial foundations, wooden floors, a large brick fireplace and glazed windows. The architectural evidence is midway between the household servants and the village, and the artefactual evidence is likewise in the middle. The assemblage included a few coins, glass tumblers but no stemware and a large quantity of ceramics but very little porcelain. The occupants are believed to have been free settlers or ticket-of-leave holders, and it appears that the situation ascribed to them by the Innes' matched their own expectations.

Based on the archaeological evidence Connah suggests that those living in the servants' village experienced "material poverty and . . . frugal living conditions", while those in the row houses were treated, materially at least, rather better (Connah 2001:149). In 1837, the Innes family had 91 assigned convicts working for

them, although most probably worked away from the main estate. Many of these workers were highly skilled, including the brickmakers, bricklayer/plasterer, carpenter/joiner, glazier, tailors, shoemakers, millers, butchers and magistrate's clerk. The three female servants, a laundress, nursemaid and shoebinder by trade, probably lived near the main house, while the stablemen, grooms, harness-maker and horse-breaker presumably lived near the stables. For the others it is tempting to speculate on how Archibald Innes allocated living quarters and who got the snug brick terrace cottages and who got the damp bark huts. It is also tempting to wonder how the servants themselves saw their homes and whether the wooden floors and plastered walls of the row houses compensated for the close neighbours and watchful eyes of the big house or whether the free-standing houses out of site and sound of the master were worth the damp after all.

While noting the differing housing conditions, Connah also observes that "identifying assigned servants in the archaeological record is not an easy task" (Connah 2001:147). Because all the excavated sites were likely to have been occupied during the period of convict workers as well as after assignment ended, caution must be used in identifying any archaeological evidence as solely that of convicts. What is significant, however, is the way in which both documentary sources and archaeology suggest that while the legal status of categories such as assigned, ticket-of-leave and free was clear, socially and materially the categories were more fluid. As Grace Karskens has argued for early Sydney, hard-working convicts could prosper while lazy, profligate or unlucky ticket-of-leave holders might struggle, and their conditions reflected their characters as much as their legal status. The brick terraces built at Lake Innes resembled the homes of factory workers in England's industrial towns of the same period, while the bark huts are more like those built by many early Australian colonists, whether free or unfree.

Connah (2001) uses the results of his work at Lake Innes to consider the wider ramifications of the convict system in New South Wales, and in particular its relationship with other forms of forced labour in the nineteenth century. He observes that people like Archibald and Margaret Innes aspired to a station in life that would have been impossible for them in Britain, but which was made possible in the colonies by the unfree labour of others. In this Australian society was like that of the American south, where enslaved Africans and African-Americans provided the labour that created a life of conspicuous leisure for others. As we noted earlier, however, there were real and important differences between the two systems. While both convicts and slaves were involuntary migrants made to perform forced labour, convicts could not be bought or sold, served a sentence of limited duration, had rights under the law and did not pass on their servitude to their children. Archaeologically, however, there is at least one similarity between the two groups. Connah found at Lake Innes that it was virtually impossible to tell whether archaeological deposits had been created by convicts, ticket-of-leave men or free employees. Differences in the architecture and in the assemblages seemed to be more closely related to social status and skills rather than to legal status. This has also been found to be the case in the southern United States, where archaeological deposits alone are not enough to determine if the residents were enslaved or free and where cultural identity and



social status are greater determinants of the material record (Orser 1988; Singleton 1995:128–129; Stine 1990). This circumstance seems to suggest that in both cases the most obvious social and legal division between free and convict/slave was not the only influence on how the unfree lived their lives, and that those trapped by their unfree status were nevertheless able to recognise and mark more subtle and complex social relationships within their community.

The contrast between the apparent status implied by the buildings and the status implied by the goods lost or discarded by the occupants has also been observed on other historical archaeological sites, most notably the homes of the inner-city poor (Crook 2000). In that case, as at Lake Innes, the built environment was owned by others and the occupants had little control over it. The occupants had much greater ownership and control over their personal and household effects, albeit constrained by factors such as cost and income. The disparity between architecture and goods reflects a disjunction between the status ascribed by outsiders, in this case by Archibald Innes, and the status achieved or aspired to by the occupants themselves. Innes built and allocated the housing as he saw fit and according to his perception of the relative rank of his servants. In asking questions about socio-economic status Connah's problem-oriented research has contributed new understandings about the complexity of convict experiences.

## **Repeat Offenders: Iron Gangs on the Great North Road, New South Wales**

Iron gangs, where groups of men were sentenced to work in chains, were an integral part of the convict system in New South Wales, especially under later governors such as Ralph Darling and Richard Bourke in the 1820s and 1830s. They also typify the dominant image of convictism, with hard physical labour, brutal punishments and frequent escapes. Iron gangs, like penal settlements, were part of the sharp end of the convict system, the destination of the hardened men who continued to offend. The gangs were used to construct main roads in the colony, including the Great North Road between Sydney and the Hunter Valley (Fig. 2.8). For the colonial government the gangs thus had a threefold purpose, as they punished repeat offenders, banished undesirables from more populated districts and extracted useful work out of men who could not otherwise be made productive. Grace Karskens' study of sites along the Great North Road around Wiseman's Ferry illustrates how the iron gangs worked and the value of examining the physical evidence (Karskens 1984, 1986).

Karskens used the archaeological evidence to engage directly with historical debates about the nature of punishment in the convict system, incorporating the work of historian John Hirst, who argues that while flogging and the iron gangs did have a place in the system, incentives such as free time for their own work were far more effective in getting the convicts to work as desired (Hirst 1983). Karskens supports this argument, but notes that Hirst shares the view of both contemporaries and modern historians that iron gangs held violent and hardened recidivists, featured harsh discipline and lax work practices, and ultimately accomplished little.



**Fig. 2.8** Route of Great North Road between Sydney and Newcastle via Wisemans Ferry, constructed between 1826 and 1836 (after Karskens 1984:18)

Karskens contrasts this document-based perception with the physical results of the gangs' work, the often impressive and monumental engineering of the roads they built. She argues that the iron gangs were a complex environment in which men were deployed according to their degree of skill and application. The rewards that Hirst identified elsewhere in the convict system did not stop when secondary punishment was required but were also used, in different ways, within the iron gangs. Those who worked well were able to acquire considerable skill and could be rewarded with extra rations, seniority in the gangs and eventually tickets-of-leave.

The best evidence of the skills of the men and the labour organization required is in the work they produced. In some sections the stonework is crude, consisting of unshaped and roughly stacked stretches of wall, which would have required minimal skill and comparatively less effort. Other sections are massive and highly technical engineering feats, which required both knowledge and diligence to complete. Here the culverts, retaining walls and bridges show precisely worked and finely finished stone used in expertly designed structures. By comparing the documentary record,

including the weekly and monthly reports completed by the government-appointed Assistant Surveyor in charge of the road, Karskens was able to link particular gangs with the archaeological evidence of the sections they built. Some gangs were consistently associated with less demanding sections where the archaeological record shows work of poorer quality. Other gangs were put to work in sections where dealing with steep descents and gully and river crossings required considerable skill and where work was of a high standard. This suggests that both overseers and men were allocated to gangs according to their abilities and willingness to work. While the records show that most of the absconders came from gangs working on the difficult sections, Karskens observed that of the 50 men in a gang, only a few worked consistently on skilled tasks, with the remainder (and those who re-absconded), working on labouring tasks such as clearing brush and debris. As Karskens writes, “The walls they built thus reveal overlaid evidence of their remarkable perseverance and skills, of the diligent supervision of the overseers, and of the ambitious visions of the Assistant Surveyors” (Karskens 1986:27). By combining documentary and archaeological evidence Karskens has been able to demonstrate the mechanisms by which convict labour systems were made to produce the colony’s infrastructure.

## **Women and Children Convicts: The Ross Female Factory and Point Puer, Port Arthur**

Almost 16 per cent of convicts transported to Australia were women, with most between the ages of 15 and 30 years (Oxley 1996:110). For the most part they were assigned to private employers, mainly as domestic servants, and because of this their experiences within the convict system have not resulted in monumental archaeological remains. Their lives and their work are represented as layers of meaning in other kinds of sites, such as the great houses of Sydney and Hobart, rather than as sites in their own right. One of the most notable exceptions to this is the site of the Female Factory in the town of Ross in the Tasmanian midlands. The complex was originally constructed in the 1830s as a probation station to house male convicts building a bridge over the nearby Macquarie River (Fig. 2.9), but by 1847 the site was converted into a Factory to house convict women and their children. It was located centrally between Hobart and Launceston and was intended to serve the needs of the free and convict settlers in the area as a hiring depot, lying-in hospital for pregnant women and as a place of secondary punishment. The Factory closed in early 1855, following the end of transportation to Van Diemen’s Land, and by the end of the nineteenth century most of the buildings on the site had been demolished. In the 1990s archaeologist Eleanor Casella conducted excavations in the Hiring Class, Crime Class and Solitary Cells areas (Casella 1997, 2001a, c, 2002).

One of Casella’s major aims was to explore the role of power within the convict system, including not only forms of control used by the authorities, but also the techniques of resistance employed by the convict women. In this Casella has been able to build on archaeological and theoretical approaches to domination and resistance (Foucault 1977; McGuire and Paynter 1991) and to extend the research of



**Fig. 2.9** Ross Bridge in central Van Diemen's Land, built by convicts and completed in 1836. Carvings over the arches depict portraits of individuals and various rural activities (photo P. Davies)

feminist historians who have reinterpreted the history of female convicts (Damousi 1997; Daniels 1993; Oxley 1996). Casella demonstrates that material culture is an important means for recovering the perspective of women who were more often the subject than the object of written history.

For the authorities, control mechanisms in the first instance included incarceration within the Factory itself, with the rules and regulations that applied to inmates. In the second instance, prisoners were disciplined through the removal of privileges, including food, and ultimately confinement in the solitary cells. The architecture of the complex was thus an active part of the disciplinary process, and the structural remains of the buildings, yards, cells and walls represent the institutional power to which the women were subject. One focus of Casella's research was the solitary cells within the Crime Class section of the complex. Parts of three cells were excavated, all approximately 1.2 by 1.8 m in size, with packed-earth floors and thick masonry walls. Window glass was recovered from each, and they probably had small glazed windows immediately below the ceiling to admit light but prevent escape. A unique feature of the cells was the level of the floors, which appear to have been 30–50 cm below the level of the surrounding ground surface, probably necessitating a small ladder or step to enter the cells. Architecture in this case was deliberately designed to reinforce the severity of the punishment – the spaces the women were kept in were small, silent, dimly lit, cold and damp. To underline the

point, entering the cells involved a literal descent into the earth, symbolising submission, the moral descent of the prisoner and perhaps even the death and (ideally) rebirth of her reformed character.

In the archaeological deposits within the solitary cells Casella found that the material culture can be read to reveal ways in which the women resisted the force of authority and asserted their own individual wills and personalities. Buttons were found all across the site, most likely associated with the women's work in the laundry and as seamstresses, but the greatest density of buttons was in the solitary cells. As Casella points out, women within the cells were undergoing punishment and were not working at any tasks during that period, so it is unlikely that the buttons were lost accidentally while working. Casella argues instead that the buttons were used as tokens in the illicit economy that operated within the factory, part of a trade that encompassed luxury items, tobacco, extra food rations and sexual favours for both men and women. Their presence in the solitary cells, particularly in significant quantities, suggests that the women held there, who were often those at the top of the prisoners' own hierarchies, were able to subvert prison authorities by bartering for extras that helped to mitigate the deliberately onerous conditions of their punishment. This interpretation is bolstered by the discovery of a deliberately concealed pit within one of the cells, which contained sheep bones, a kaolin pipe stem, a bottle base and a ferrous artefact, possibly a food tin.

The authorities withdrew food as a punishment, and the women resisted by using their own illicit networks to supply and procure food. The authorities withdrew interaction with others, and the women resisted by maintaining casual and more intimate sexual relationships. These have left discernible traces in the archaeological record, and there were other forms of resistance as well that have been recorded in the documentary evidence. Women shouted and jeered when assembled to be addressed by visiting dignitaries, rioted, destroyed property and on occasion set fire to the factories in which they were being held.

Studying the archaeology of convict women has only just begun, and the work at Ross is literally scratching the surface. So far Casella's work has brought to light a specific dimension of female convict experience that was rebellious, independent and anti-authoritarian. However, there were other aspects of the experiences of women at the Ross Factory and places like it, and other stories that may be told. One is the archaeology of mothering and childhood, because the female factories in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales played an important role as lying-in hospitals and nurseries. The convict system criminalized unwed mothers, sending assigned servants back to the factories for incarceration as secondary punishment for the "offence" of becoming pregnant out of wedlock. Mothering and childhood are growing areas of research in historical archaeology (Davies and Ellis 2005; Vermeer 2009; Wileman 2005; Wilkie 2000, 2003), and the archaeological analysis of places like Ross can contribute substantially to this area, in terms of new perspectives on both childhood and on convict women. Perhaps unsurprisingly it is this aspect of the convict women that has drawn public attention, especially among genealogists and convict descendants, even though scholarly attention has lagged behind (Female Factory 2009).



The experiences of convict children have also been investigated archaeologically at the Point Puer settlement at Port Arthur, a site established in 1834 for the reception of juvenile convicts transported from Great Britain (Austral Archaeology 1997; Jackman 2001). The settlement was created during a period of ongoing debate in Britain and elsewhere over crime, punishment and reform, which intersected with changing notions of childhood morality and responsibility. English law recognised that “infants” up to the age of 7 years could not be guilty of a felony, but those older than this could be convicted and even hanged (Holden 1999:3). Attitudes were changing, however, and increasingly children and young people were beginning to be classified as a separate category of prisoner in terms of their criminal punishment and potential for moral reform. Until the 1820s, about one-quarter of convicts transported were juveniles, that is under 18 years of age. Demand for juvenile labour in the Australian colonies, however, was low in this period, as settlers generally preferred to be assigned adult servants without the “encumbrance” of children. This left authorities with large numbers of teenage male convicts to house, feed and clothe. There were also calls for the segregation and retraining of young offenders in this period, to prevent their corruption at the hands of older convicts and to make them more useful and productive members of colonial society. In Sydney this resulted in the transfer of juvenile convicts from the Hyde Park Barracks to the Carters Barracks around 1820 and in Britain the establishment of Parkhurst Prison for juveniles on the Isle of Wight in 1838. Point Puer was thus one of the first “juvenile prisons” in the British Empire.

The settlement was established on a narrow promontory, with a road across it serving as a line of demarcation patrolled by soldiers to separate the juveniles from contact with adult convicts. The ruins of the establishment include numerous terraces and stonewall footings, which reveal how the geography of discipline exerted over the youths changed through time. The scattered location and ad hoc nature of the prison arrangements, however, meant that constant supervision was difficult, and this allowed the boys to communicate freely with each other and to maintain their own prison culture in defiance of the authorities (Humphery 1997:6–7). A rough timber barracks was built in the first instance, which provided an all-purpose dormitory, mess-room, schoolroom and chapel for the 66 boys first brought to the settlement. Adjacent workshops were also established, where instruction was provided in trades including blacksmithing, carpentry, tailoring, boatbuilding and nail making. Limited resources, however, meant that at least half the inmates spent their days in farm labour, quarrying stones and sawing timber. They endured a 14 h day, with 7 h of work, 2 h of school and the rest in prayers, meals and musters (Fabian and Loh 1980:24). Meals, however, were better than the food served to factory children in Britain, with a daily ration of flour, fresh or salt beef and green vegetables. Most boys spent at least 4 years at Point Puer, some learning to read and write, and most learning a trade of some kind, before passing out into colonial society (Hooper 1967:10–11).

Buildings were erected that gradually increased the degree of surveillance and control exercised over the juvenile convicts. Gaol cells were built at the south end of the settlement, and around 1839 a large timber building was constructed on a

stone platform in the middle of the settlement. Used as a schoolroom and chapel, the building was located symbolically midway between the workshops representing industry and reward at the north end of the promontory and punishment in cells to the south. The cells were tiny, 1.6 m long and 0.9 m wide, and were used for the solitary confinement of boys who had escaped and hidden among the rocks and caves below the peninsula. At its peak there were 730 boys held at Point Puer. The settlement closed in 1849, as part of the growing opposition to convict transportation, with more than 2,000 boys having passed through its doors. Careful study of the archaeological remains within their physical setting helps to reveal the evolution of juvenile justice in this period and social transitions from childhood to adulthood and casts light on contemporary debates on juvenile detention and reform.

## **Conclusion**

In 30 years convict archaeology has been transformed from the recovery and description of remains associated with convict men to a diverse and conceptually dynamic field that encompasses a range of convict experiences and theoretical perspectives. Archaeologists have become increasingly engaged in broader discourses with historians and community groups. Evidence from sites where convicts lived and worked is increasingly being used to gain new insights into the material aspects of convict life and through these into their social worlds, their economic situations and even the politics of their resistance. Convicts were more often written about than writing themselves, and as is often the case in historical archaeology, the physical evidence they created themselves shows a richer, more complex and more surprising world than the documents alone have suggested.

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