**FIDDLERS & A PIPER & TWO GUITARISTS**

***Port Arthur Prison As A Cultural Site &***

***The Rare Inheritance Of Musical Traditions In Tasmania***

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Tasmania, my family’s home for 6 generations, has no visible, no shared 19thC song folk culture. No work songs, no convict songs, no songs of social protest, no original lullabies. Why is this? Did a folk culture exist?[[1]](#footnote-1) My appointment as historian (1984-91) at Port Arthur Historic Site- the former Penal Station and now major tourist heritage centre- stimulated a search for answers to these questions.

Known first as Van Diemen’s Land, (VDL) the island of Tasmania was the second Australian colony settled by the British in 1803, and followed NSW in 1788. Tasmania received 69,000 men women and boys, nearly half the total prison population sent to Australia from 1788 to 1868. Today the Tasmania population is around 500,000, with most original families having convict ancestry.

Established in 1830 as a ‘Sawing Station’ to provide sawn timber from the prolific forests of the Tasman Peninsula, Port Arthur Penal Station offered the severest form of punishment in Lt Gov Arthur’s prison program. The Station became an industrial centre, (some would argue, an ‘industrial gulag’) with a population of 1200 male prisoners there, before closing in 1877.[[2]](#footnote-2) But while Gov George Arthur wanted this perception known, the reality of the station subculture was more complex and layered.

**Illegal Rehabilitation**

Port Arthur worked as an open prison, confined within the geographical barriers of the Tasman Peninsula. Despite its severe reputation however, the rehabilitation of some prisoners was possible, sometimes - perhaps often - through meaningful, but, illegal activities. Such opportunities were most available to convicts with unique skills which made them employable by officials administering the site. This un-observed and unofficial interaction was made possible by the prison’s remoteness from administrative centre of Hobart Town. At Port Arthur Penal Settlement, the administrators, like the convicts, were temporary residents. In addition, some offices lived with families and attempted to recreate a semblance of social normality. Skilled prisoners were thus capable of exploitation by officials – however this also benefited the convict with the allowance of special privileges.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Such mutual benefiting was not uncommon in the convict system, and occurred, for example, with skilled stonemason, educated clerks, artists, and architect/ draughtsman.[[4]](#footnote-4) At Macquarie Harbour, and Port Arthur Penal Stations, artists CHT Constantini, WB Gould, and architectural draughtsman, Henry Laing, produced artistic works now highly sought after. While these are tangible productions of the period, the lives and output of ephemeral artists such as musicians are harder to document.

In trying to trace a musical heritage, a logical way to start was to see if any musical traditions had brought to Tasmania by settlers, and especially those brought by prisoners. Strong links seemed possible, but there had been years of neglect, instigated by years of embarrassment over convict ancestry, labelled by a later historian as the ‘Hated Stain.’[[5]](#footnote-5) This Stain only lifted with the new nationalism associated with the Whitlam Government of 1972.

**Music & Black-markets – Commandant & Fiddler**

Awareness of the private social role played by prisoners, including musicians, came via the few journals kept by Port Arthur officials, chiefly those of Commissariat Officer Thomas Lemprière who lived with his musical family, and Commandant Charles O’Hara Booth. When site historian in 1985, I became aware of the ‘unofficial’ request for convict entertainers by the new Port Arthur commandant. [[6]](#footnote-6) The musical skills of a fiddler, Scottish born Neil Gow Foggo came to light as a result of a request in 1848 from the next Port Arthur commandant, WTN Champ (1844-1850,) former military officer and (briefly) the island’s first Premier.[[7]](#footnote-7) By 1848, Foggo - ‘seaman & instrument maker’ – was imprisoned at Salt Water River Probation Station. With his off-sider, Cornish born seaman and juggler, Joseph Crapp, they were instructed by Champ to travel from to Port Arthur for 4 days - to entertain the Commandant’s children, a scenario which evokes a marvellous theatrical image.[[8]](#footnote-8).

**Neil Gow Foggo**

Neil Gow Foggo was a descendant of the celebrated Scottish fiddler Neil Gow. [[9]](#footnote-9) With his son Nathaniel, Gow snr helped document the disappearing Scottish fiddle tradition by performing, composing and publishing old and new melodies, becoming the ‘Robert Burns’ of the Scottish fiddle.

The bare facts of Foggo’s life are these. Born 1811, Niel went to sea aged 13, and by 1829 had been to the American colonies and the Cape of Good Hope. Returning as a 19 year old reprobate, on being charged by his middle class parents, Foggo was imprisoned in Calton Jail, Edinburgh in 1831. Released, he was re-tried in 1833 on his parent’s evidence for pawning valuables from their Edinburgh home. As a result Foggo was transported to VDL aboard the *Isabella (1)* in 1834. After serving his sentence, Foggo vanished from VDL in 1841, only to be re-transported in 1844 from Kent, for theft. Queried ship board back in Hobart Town, Foggo revealed he had originally absconded on an American whaler *Hudson*. From 1844 until his death in 1870 at Port Arthur, Foggo spent much of his time in either working for publicans, or in prisons of Hobart Town, and Port Arthur and Tasman Peninsula.

Foggo’s second prison record on his return in 1844 paints a severe portrait. The cartilage from his nose was missing, as were his eyebrows, while a large hole, apparently caused by a marlin spike, was in the centre of his forehead.

In 1990, I accidentally came across the following reference to Foggo from a 1905 Hobart Mercury, 35 years after his death. The newspaper report refers to a violin cello made at Port Arthur being for sale in a Hobart music shop, supposedly made by Neil Gow Foggo. A letter from a former Port Arthur official and part-time musician, revealed that Foggo played both violin and cello plus other unspecified instruments. The writer remembered that Neil Gow Foggo was:

..... (a) capable and clever violinist and a nephew (sic) of the celebrated player, Neil Gow..... as a musician he was a wonder. The violin was his favourite instrument. I have never heard his equal. The fullness of his tone and the accuracy of his chords and touch were remarkable.

His playing of ‘The Blue Bells of Scotland’ and ‘Caller Herrin’ were wonderfully fine performances, and his arrangement of those airs the best I have ever seen or heard.

His violincello solo, ‘The Last Rose of Summer’ will remain in my memory until I hear something better.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The un-named Port Arthur official also recalled Foggo conducting a musical ensemble of officials and also teaching stringed instruments. The former pupil recalled:

As a teacher of music, he was remarkably successful. He seemed quite at home in playing any instrument. He carried his music in his head, having an astonishing memory and could write page after page of difficult music as rapidly as shorthand writer could take down a speech.

I was a pupil of his and belonged to his string band. The ease and facility with which he would write out our various parts used to astonish me..... I never heard of what became of him....[[11]](#footnote-11)

But, with no descendants or collective memory or folk traditions, Neil Gow Foggo’s lost musical legacy was to be hidden for over 100 years.

**Alexander Laing, Scottish Fiddler, Emancipist & Port Arthur Overseer**.

Neil Gow Foggo was not the only skilled fiddler at Port Arthur in 1848. Transported & arriving in Van Diemen's Land in 1815, Alexander Laing’s fort Alexander Laing’s career as Chief District Constable of Sorell stumbled , fuelled by the death if his first wife, the 1840s financial collapse- and alcohol. He was reduced to becoming Overseer at Port Arthur Penal Station in 1847, and although there is no official proof of collaboration between Laing and the Champs, his 1863 music manuscript recently co-published by the author in *On the Fiddle from Scotland to Tasmania*, reveals that Laing wrote two tunes to the Commandant’s wife, Helen Champ neé Gibson- *Mrs Champs Fancy* and *Ms Champs Reel.* Alexander Laing’s fortunes appear to have changed, becoming a member of the Tasman Peninsula Total Abstinence Soc, and remarrying, with another tune entitled to *Mrs S. G. Laing’s Hornpipe* probably being a wedding tune.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Whether Neil Gow Foggo and Alexander Laing ever played together at Port Arthur is not known at this stage, but given the Champ’s interest in music, and Laing’s dedication of tunes to the Commandants wife , the event seems highly likely.

**Prison Officials & Music**

Using their journals, the musical and other cultural interests of officials can be teased out. For example, Port Arthur’s Commissariat Officer Lemprière, artist and amateur musician, was given a ‘keyed flute with case’ from (Captain) Kinghorne, and tried to play the key bugle (or trumpet), testing the acoustics of the nearly completed church with his trumpet. His wife played the piano, and her husband records in 1836 several musical evenings, (as well as religious occasions) when ‘Dear Charlotte once more tackled the piano and we had a ‘Dear Fanny’ in style.’[[13]](#footnote-13) Lemprière’s superior, Commandant O’Hara Booth’s (1834-43) owned several instruments, including a guitar, Broadwood pianoforte, accordion and flageolet. In 1837, Booth was apparently learning to play the guitar, an instrument presented to him by Lady Jane Franklin, wife of Arctic explorer, John Franklin. Booth ‘sang several airs in a very superior manner.’[[14]](#footnote-14) Some of the other airs Captain Booth sang - probably with his army officer friends from the adjacent subaltern’s house and barracks - were probably not the ones referred to on the above occasion. Due to their ribald content, even these songs were ‘underground,‘ and have also escaped attention.[[15]](#footnote-15) The implications of Booth’s lyrics, written in his own handwriting, are far from frivolous. One composition, probably not original, is an Irish drinking song:

**ONE BOTTLE MORE**

Assist me ye lads, who have hearts void of guile,

To sing in the praises of Erin’s Isle,

Where true hospitality open the door

And friendship Detains us for one bottle more.

[Chorus ?]

One bottle more, one bottle more,

And friendship Detains us for one bottle more.

Old England you taunt us, on our country forbear,

With pour Bulls and our Brogues we are true and sincere

For if but one bottle remain’d in the store

We have generous hearts to give one bottle more.

In Candy’s in Church Street, I’ll sing of a sett,

Of six Irish blades who together had met,

Four bottles apiece, made us call for our score,

And nothing remained but one bottle more.

Our bill being paid we men took to depart,

For friendship had grappled each man by the heart,

Where the last touch you know, makes an Irishman sore,

And with a whack from (a) shillelagh, bought six bottles more.

Slow Phoebus had shone thro’ our windows so bright,

Quite happy to view his blest children of light,

So we parted with hearts neither sorry nor sore,

Resolving to drink twelve bottles more.

Another, a bawdy ballad, ‘Stephen With Flora’, also in Booth’s hand, is as follows :

**STEPHEN WITH FLORA**

Stephen with Flora lying

On the grass one summers day

She was bashful and he was spying

Her fal lal de lal de de...

All her beauties as she lay

Soon the amorous youth was stealing

Kisses from the willing fair,

And with busy hands was feeling

Her fal etc.

The ringlets of her flowing hair.

Tell me, Flora, where’s the harm to

Rightly use these glorious charms

Where’s the harm of entering into

Your fal etc.

Such a beauteous maiden’s arms.

Long have I been fondly hoping

Long to gain those charms I strove

Now prove kind and fondly open

Your fal etc.

Those sweet lips with words of love.

Thus addressed by her lover

Gay & ardent as the Sun

Flora gently lifted up her

Fal etc.

Downcast eyes & said ‘You’ve won.’

Swiftly then as darted steel is

Flew the gay & am’rous swain

And with vigour made her feel his,

Fal etc.

Kisses o’er & o’er again.

Finis[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Free Port Arthur Officials With Musical Traditions**

The transference of musical traditions into Australian culture appears to coincide with the free or non-free status of the individual. Free officials, even if with a temporarily low status, could recover and become prominent citizens, passing on their musical traditions. One such case is Pt Arthur official – and bag-piper- Hugh Archibald Fraser. He arrived in Australia as an emigrant in 1828 and was immediately appointed magistrate in NSW. His Australian Dictionary of Biography entry then refers - in the same sentence - to how he ’later became a penal overseer at Port Arthur.’ What a career change - and why? Hugh Fraser, aged 48, had eloped to VDL with 17 year old Mary Anderson. Having apparently lost a family fortune of £40,000 in NSW, the couple sailed from Sydney to Port Albert, Gippsland, (later Victoria), then to Tasmania on the *Palmyra*, arriving on 8 May 1844. [[17]](#footnote-17) (The shipping register lists them as passengers ‘Mr. Fraser’, and ‘Miss Anderson.’) One month later, they were married at St John’s Presbyterian Church.[[18]](#footnote-18)

At Port Arthur, Hugh Fraser was appointed Overseer of Blacksmiths and then a Bush Gang.[[19]](#footnote-19) But Hugh Fraser wasn’t just any penal overseer or failed magistrate, but descended from a long line of Scottish bagpipers. At Port Arthur the couple had a child, Simon Fraser, born in 1845, who went on to become a celebrated settler, bagpiper, buck-jumper, stockman and stockwhip maker in the Mansfield district in north eastern Victoria. Simon’s bag-piping skills, learnt as a child from his father Hugh - initially perhaps at Port Arthur- were such that his knowledge of the classical traditions of piping were evident in his mastery of the ‘pibroach’ vocables, secretly handed down from mother to eldest son. These were passed on to the young Simon, by his mother Mary Anderson, who was descended from the McCrimmins, celebrated pipers to the Clan McLeod. The vocables are known as the ‘canntaireachd.’ Hugh had also learnt the secret language of pipers, which allowed certain notes to be inserted in the melody, and these acted as warning to clan members. These were also documented in 1816 by Hugh Fraser before he emigrated, and were passed on to his son, Simon.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**Bag-piping the Cattle in Australia and Scotland**

Later in Victoria, the large Fraser family entertained the district. When the Port Arthur-born Simon Fraser and his brother were driving cattle, Simon used to ride at the front of the herd playing the bag-pipes, part of a long Scottish tradition. The easing of controls (after the Restoration) was reversed as a result of the Uprisings of 1745, the English government placed severe restrictions on Scottish traditional music.

‘When the Disarming Act was in force (1747-1782) the bagpipes were considered as weapons, and banned. However, drovers, because of the dangerous nature of their work, were exempt, and thus could play the bagpipes legally and publicly.’[[21]](#footnote-21)

So the Australian bush reeled to the pipes of the Scottish drovers.

**Port Arthur’s Other Convict Musicians**

The lack of documentation concerning music and musicians at the penal station is due is function a severe prison, where inmates and staff were supposed to be un-frivolous, with no superficial pleasures. However, on the one hand, officials lived with their families and tried to live ‘normal’ lives, but were breaking rules of their own administration by allowing prisoners to instruct or entertain them with a non-essential activity.[[22]](#footnote-22)

The private journals revel that officials relied on the instrument making and repairing skills of prisoners. Lemprière refers to his trumpet being repaired after dropping it.[[23]](#footnote-23) In 1837, the Pt Puer carpenters returns for 1836-7 lists a ‘violoncello made for Divine service’, and valued at £2.[[24]](#footnote-24) Neil Gow Foggo’s indent records his training as ‘seaman and instrument maker.’ In addition, a rare surviving bench book of offences at Pt Puer Boys Prison, much in the hand of Booth, records as a note, ‘5th of March 1838, 'Neil Gow Foggo to Visit Establishment.'[[25]](#footnote-25) Was this the violincello for sale in 1905? Unless performing church or other established musical forms, their performance of convict musicians is implied rather than overtly stated.

**A Spanish Guitarist, Convict & Mutineer**

In September 1837, Lemprière recorded: ‘got de Custumas to string a guitar of Lady Franklin’s for Captain Booth, … who sang and played several airs in a very superior manner.’ Commandant Booth’s guitar tuner, “de Custumas,” was John Perez de Castanos, aged 35, tried in London in December 1836, with Piedro Calligani, aged 28, for stealing gold seals. While de Castanos’ ‘Native Place’ is given as ‘Carthagina/ Cartagina’ on Spain’s Mediterranean coast, Calligani's native place is given as ‘Carara, Italy.’ Transported on the *Sarah*, on arrival in VDL in October 1836, their personal details were recorded- physical features, occupation and criminal record. The *Sarah’s* voyage was troubled by sickness- and an attempted mutiny. Four other prisoners also implicated were former mutineers who several years earlier in VDL had seized the brig Frederic, sailing the ship to Chile. On landing in Hobart Town , de Castanos was, ‘Sent to Port Arthur immediately on landing for being one of the ring leaders in the Mutiny on Board his prison ship Sarah when on passage from England.’ So, a year after arrival and despite being a ring-leader in a mutiny, de Castanos was tuning – and possibly playing- the guitar of Commandant Booth at Port Arthur Penal Station. ‘The Church,’ whether established or new sect, offered Tasmanian community one way of escaping the stigma of convictism. Calligani for example was assigned to Reichenburg, a former military bandmaster and choir master of the Catholic Church in VDL. However, musicians who wished to perform ‘profane’ music became increasingly discriminated against. [[26]](#footnote-26)

**The Fiddler As Radical In Van Diemens Land**

While the guitar and other instruments were accepted at Port Arthur and in colonial society, the fiddle was not so readily adopted. At the beginning of the 19th century, the fiddle was part of folk culture. By 1850 in VDL the instrument had been effectively banned in public places- but only selective public places. The instrument was allowed in theatres, but not in public houses. Such banning was part of a long tradition in British history. Some examples from VDL history suggest its role and threatening image to the establishment.

In 1828, the fiddle was used by prisoners as a ruse in the mutiny on the brig *Cyprus*. Hurburgh the ship’s mate recalled later that lax supervision on the ship at Recherche Bay, southern VDL, allowed (prisoners) to:

perambulate around the deck after dark, and that frequently one of the convicts was allowed to come into the cabin to play the fiddle for the amusement of the passengers.[[27]](#footnote-27)

After Martin Cash and two comrades escaped from Port Arthur in December 1842, they established themselves in a fort situated at Mt Dromedary above the Derwent River north of Hobart. From here the trio raided neighbouring properties, supported by local timber-getters and farm workers. On returning to their fort with plunder, including alcohol, they celebrated, assisted by a fiddler variously known as ‘Kreigan Hill, or Vinegar Hill. Cash’s ghost written autobiography records several instances of the musician joining them: After returning from a series of raids in the Hamilton district, Cash recalled:

We took the nearest route to Mrs B--n’s at the Dromedary, where we celebrated our triumphant return ... and being joined by our friend the fiddler, we kept up spree for the next six days without the slightest intermission or any fear of interruption.

On another occasion, after sending Mrs Blackburn to town for supplies, they:

contrived, with the assistance of the fiddler, and old Hibernian, to pass the next eight days very much to our satisfaction.[[28]](#footnote-28)

After a furthur raid in the lower Midlands, they again sent for ‘their old friend, Vinegar Hill, as we familiarly termed the fiddler,’ who came from Hobart Town. A section missing from later additions of Cash’s ‘Adventures’ adds:

He taught us on this occasion, to dance the Bolero, which he represented as a Spanish dance, at the same time expressing his opinion that it was of Irish origin, as he never did hear of anything that was successful or ornamental that did not come from Ireland.

Cash added, ‘I have rarely met with a man who had more of his national characteristics than our musician.’[[29]](#footnote-29)

In contrast to the folk fiddlers whose skills were purveyed in public houses or bush hideouts, a former fiddler and conductor with the 99th Regiment, Joseph Megson, was a well known performer in Hobart in the 1850s. A publican at the Shakespeare Hotel, he appeared at the Theatre Royal, one of Australia’s longest running stage venues.[[30]](#footnote-30)

**Other Gow Descendants In Van Diemen's Land**

**the Formal Victorian Culture**

The Gow legacy in VDL was added to by another descendant of Neil Gow arriving. This was to be a conservative inheritance, and among her descendants is Australian media magnate and inventor of world series cricket – Kerry Packer.

Augusta Gow was the daughter of Nathaniel Gow- the guardian of the Foggo family- and was also an accomplished musician. She married Frederick Alexander Packer, organist of Reading Abbey and associate of the Royal Academy of Music - and supposedly a friend of Mendelssohn. In July 1852, the couple emigrated to VDL with their eight children on the barque *Sylph*, where FA Packer became Hobart organist.[[31]](#footnote-31) Among his pupils were two Tasmanian born sopranos, Lucy Benson nee Lemprière, a local celebrity, and Amy Sherwin, who received acclaim in the opera houses of Italy and England. [[32]](#footnote-32)

Augusta and FA Packer’s son, Frederick Augusta Gow Packer followed in his parents footsteps, being organist, teacher and composer, inventing compositions for special occasions, including royal visits. The organ in the Hobart Town Hall was acquired largely through his efforts, and he became the first town organist. Eventually moving to NSW, among his descendants were Tasmanian public servants, while others include the Packer media family.[[33]](#footnote-33)

At the time of FAG Packer’s death in 1902 he was Clerk of the House of Assembly. His obituary also referred to the Neil Gow legacy:

Mr Packer was the fourth generation of a race of musicians on his mother’s side. His great grandfather was Mr Neil Gow, a Scotch musician of some celebrity in his day, and his grandfather was Nathaniel Gow, composer of the famous scotch song, ‘Caller Herrin.’ – in itself sufficient to give fame.[[34]](#footnote-34)

But FAG Packer’s compositions did not originally enter the Australian mainstream; they were part of the high Victorian, rather than the folk culture of their cousin Neil Gow Foggo.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**Discrimination - 14 Fiddlers Petition, Hobart Town 1848**

While the above Gow descendants adhered to the formal Victorian musical mores, emancipist fiddlers were actively discriminated against. In 1848, fiddler George Perry coordinated a petition signed by 14 fiddlers **–** all former convicts- protesting against an extension of the Licensing Act, which prevented them playing in the public houses of Hobart Town. As many of them were crippled, their treatment by police deprived them of their livelihood. Police Magistrate Burgess was unsympathetic:

An application of such a nature hardly deserves a remark, but it may as well to state, that I have with much pain and opposition succeeded in putting a stop to fiddling in conduct and character in consequence and dancing in Public Houses, which have been much improved. The practice of fiddling in Public Houses was the means of congregating together vicious and dishonest characters of both sexes and was the source of much evil to the community - against this a few individuals - however respectable - is not for one moment to be weighed.[[36]](#footnote-36)

One of the 14 fiddlers who signed the 1848 petition was James Brinkworth. He was 19 year old from Shoreditch, London when convicted in 1841 for burglary and theft of smelling bottles at Kingsland, and transported to VDL for 15 years on the *Isabella (2)*. Brinkworth’s convict conduct record lists his trade as ‘Musician, violin etc’ The only offence that alludes to his trade occurred in 1859 when he was charged with ‘Misconduct in being at the Victoria Theatre without authority.’ (One month’s imprisonment with hard labour.)[[37]](#footnote-37)

The long term impact of discrimination against popular folk music may perhaps be seen in Brinkworth’s later life. In 1851 he married Elizabeth Currie aged 16, from County Kildare, transported for theft on the *Australasia* in 1849. In 1865, James Brinkworth, aged 43, died of tuberculosis in Hobart.[[38]](#footnote-38) How James earnt a living between 1851 and his death is uncertain, but his early death perhaps suggest an inability to gain meaningful employment as a musician. By contrast, another petition signatory, Isaac Pear, not identified as a violinist on his record, became a prominent Hobart publican at the Duke of Clarence. He was horse racing enthusiast, who gave his rank on his wedding registration as ‘Gentleman.’ (His convict record lists several charges for ‘gambling.’)

The 14 fiddlers’ petition was rejected. Secretary JE Bicheno commented: ‘There is no harm in fiddling itself... the harm in it is made subservient to rows and disorder. The Governor will no doubt refuse the prayers.’ Lt Gov Denison agreed.

The restrictive laws affected Neil Gow Foggo. On Boxing Day 1849 when working for publican Benjamin Walford in Launceston, he was charged with ‘Playing a fiddle for public amusement in his master’s public house,’ the *London Inn*.[[39]](#footnote-39)Foggo was employed by a number of publicans in northern Tasmania before being returned to Port Arthur for uttering a forged check in the name of his employer, Thomas Ritchie jnr.[[40]](#footnote-40) The full impact of this Act on local musicians in VDL, and whether its restrictive measures were repeated in other Australian colonies, is yet to be investigated.

**Music at Port Arthur Prison Post 1860.**

In the 1860s, a brass band existed at Port Arthur, a photo of which survives. The formality of brass instruments and music with its military inheritance eradicated the folk traditions and radicalism of the violin and harp. A clarinet c1850 that belonged to Sergeant Thomas Browne who was Deputy Superintendent of Port Arthur in the 1850's. Browne was formerly bandmaster of the 49th Regiment.[[41]](#footnote-41) Private musical tuition was also practised at Port Arthur. In 1864, Assistant Overseer Conrad Walkedine, a Dane, on suspension, mentioned having taught Dr Eckford’s son music.[[42]](#footnote-42)

However, the position of prisoner musicians at this time is mostly unknown. At Port Arthur in his final years, Foggo was treated severely, with periods in the feared Pentonville or Model Prison; however he was recalled teaching another official the ‘cello, and apparently had an easy existence, as ‘all Gow Foggo did, was to keep a meteorological journal and play the ‘cello in church.’[[43]](#footnote-43) Even Foggo’s misty melodies recalled by the former Port Arthur official were of things Scottish, not current injustices or celebrations of a new home.

**Post Transportation Status of Itinerant Emancipist Musicians**

After Transportation to VDL ceased in 1853, prejudice in the Tasmania community against folk music appeared to strengthen, as embarrassment over the first generation’s origins grew. To this was added the legalised discrimination against folk musicians and their instruments. In July 1861, Henry Seton of the was fined for having a ‘blind tambourine player on his doorstep, and the for *White Conduit House* allowing his child to be dancing.’[[44]](#footnote-44) The same day, Joshua Simmons of the *Sir John Franklin* public house pleaded guilty and was fined 20 shillings for ‘permitting music and dancing’ to a violin. A week later, Seton was again fined because of having a ‘strolling tambourine player led by a fiddler, the former blind’ who sat down and played. Seton was fined for music played around 7 o’clock, and for permitting music to be played in a licensed house. (Fined 20 shillings and costs.)[[45]](#footnote-45) In early December 1861, Mrs Ellis Bell of the *Garrick’s Head*, was refused a license for allowing music and dancing in her house. Henry Seton was also refused a license, as he had several houses adjacent let to women of ‘bad character.’[[46]](#footnote-46)

**What was the Legacy??** One of the melodies remembered being played by Foggo at Port Arthur in the 1860s was ‘Caller Herrin,’ - or the ‘Herring Sellers’, a very popular melody of the 19th century, composed by Nathaniel Gow. As Foggo’s great uncle, Nathaniel had been guardian for his sister’s family - or Foggo’s parents- so he and his melodies would be well known to Neil Gow Foggo. ‘Caller Herrin’s popularity in the Australian colonies is indicated by the tune being performed at a timber camp at Port Esperance (later Dover), southern Tasmania, in 1870. Other melodies by Neil and Nathaniel Gow were included in the family music book of Georgiana McCrea, a musical family of settlers in south eastern Victoria.[[47]](#footnote-47)

The implications for prisoners with musical or craft skills at penal settlements such as Port Arthur need to be further explored. The broader impact of the convict system and its cultural aftermath on Australian colonial society also requires exploration. Initial observations indicate that the convict system fractured the lives of families and communities. Unlike Scottish or Irish settlers who emigrated to Canada in family, village or clan groups, convict men, women and boys were extracted as individuals from their British communities by the transportation system. In their home communities, songs and music had meaning, binding people together. (This however was probably not true for the newly urbanised areas of industrial Britain.) By contrast, in the new Australian society built around the convict system in NSW and Tasmania, there were no communal structures with which to share old songs.[[48]](#footnote-48) Consequently, the new society turned its back on the inherited and fractured past.[[49]](#footnote-49) Not surprisingly, the new society, eventually made from combined free and emancipist families, attached itself to the new Victorian culture based around the piano, imported sheet music, and brass bands of military origin.

Well know Australian historian, Humphrey McQueen argues, ‘the piano… was not a passive partner in the naming of the Australian legend, but and active participant.’ This is illustrated by the origins of the supposedly archetypal Australian ‘folk song’, ‘Waltzing Matilda.’ The words were written by iconic bush poet, Banjo Paterson set to a melody played on a piano by Alice McPherson at Oondooroo Station, Queensland in 1895. While historian Russel Ward believed ‘Waltzing Matilda’ epitomised the defiant Australian attitude toward authority, the songs wider acceptance came only after it had ‘received the imprimatur of Thomas Wood, a visiting pianoforte examiner from Trinity College of Music in 1922.’ As McQueen asks insightfully, ‘What kind of nationalism needs the endorsement of an English musical examiner, and…. what kind of radicalism gives such a prominent place to the piano? [[50]](#footnote-50)

The tenuous link between popular music that survives and that which is lost is evident. The formal traditions may survive, but the rat-bag Scottish and Irish fiddlers, blind tambourine players, jugglers and Spanish guitarist do not - unless we look for and resurrect them. I’m still searching, still resurrecting, still chasing musical ‘escapees.’ Perhaps someone might put this vanished epitaph, from St David’s Cemetery, Hobart, to music:

Blue-eyed Jenny, a whore and Strumpet,

Lies here awaiting Gabriel’s Trumpet

We have done

This and that together

Standing

Sitting

Lying

When the grave gives up its dead

We are going to do it

Flying.[[51]](#footnote-51)

**ENDNOTES**

1. While some current collectors in Tasmania, such as Steve and Marjorie Gadd, have discovered melodies collected in various part of Tasmania, none relate to the early colonial period, but seem instead to cover the experiences of free settlers. None of these later melodies became part of a popular mainstream musical culture. See Gadd, Steve & Marjorie Tasmanain Heritage Apple Shed Tune Book, Tradaitional Schottisches, Mazurkas, Polkas, waltzes, Reels, Jigs and Novelty Tunes as played in rial Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Maxwell-Stewart, Dr Hamish, Lecturer in Department of History & Classics, University of Tasmania. Pers comm., 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The contribution of Tasmanian poet Louise Oxley, and Dr Peter Hay is acknowledged in the development of these ideas. PM 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See i) MacFie, PH ‘Dobbers & Cobbers, Informing and Mateship Among Convicts Officials and Settlers on the Grass Tree Hill Road, 1834-1850’; *Tasmanian Historical Research Association* , 35, pp 122-127.

   ii)MacFie, PH ‘Henry Laing, Convict Architect’, Port Arthur Conservation Project, National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Reynolds, Henry, etc “That Hated Stain:” The Aftermath of Transportation in Tasmania, *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand,* vol. 14, no. 53 (1969). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. When stationed with his regiment at Sarah Island, Macquarie Harbour, Champ had not been averse to some black-market trading in artefacts made by prisoners, including carved walking sticks Pers comm, Dr Hamish Maxwell-Stewart.2006 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Champ was laster Governor of the new Pentridge Gaol, Melbourne, settling at *Darra* in the Western District. See Australian Dictionary of Biography entry. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. GO 33/73, p. 59. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The assistance of Scottish researcher Val McKay is gratefully acknowledged. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Mercury 20/3/1905 p. 5. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Mercury 20/3/1905 p. 5. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *MacFie, Gadd & Gadd,* *On the Fiddle Fro m Scotland to Tasmania.* *The Life & Music of Alexander ‘Sandy’ Laing (1792-1868), Convict, Constable, Fiddler and Composer.* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Lemprière, 14/5/1834; 16/4/1838. in Glover, Margaret ‘Civilian Officials of Port Arthur; their Life and Lifestyles,’ Port Arthur Conservation Project, National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1984, p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lemprière, 13/9/1837. Glover, op. cit. p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Heard, Dora (ed.) The Journal of Charles O’Hara Booth etc p. 80; Glover, ibid, p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Miscellaneous Papers of Charles O'Hara Booth. AOT. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Pike, D. (ed.)Australian Dictionary of Biography Vol 8 p. 578; file Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Fraser, Hugh, Correspondence File, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority; Broxam, Ian Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Tasmania, vol3 1843-1850, p. 30. Ceremony performed by Rev James Bell, witnesses were Simon Fraser and Margaret Fraser. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Colonial Secretary’s Office 50/19/1844, p252, & Colonial Secretary's Office 50/20/1845, p.252. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Pike, ibid. Whether these Frasers are related to the Simon Fraser whose collection of fiddle tunes and other melodies published in 1816 became a basis for Scottish traditional music, is at this stage, unclear; Simon’s knowledge of these traditions was such, (claim family members) that later, when an appeal came from Scottish folklorists wanting to collect the formerly traditions, Simon Fraser sent letters and manuscripts back to the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh to become the basis of a major collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Alburger, p. 225 f 12; sourced as ‘Scrapbook of Musical Activities; a collection of advertisements and articles from newspapers, magazines etc. 3 vols, Edinburgh Public Library, W/ML/46. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Founder of Port Arthur Prison, Lt Gov George Arthur, (1824-1836) insisted both architecture and work life there be ‘’severe.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Glover, ibid, p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Colonial Secretary's Office 5/178/4230. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Tasmanian Papers 134, Reel CY 3097, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Perhaps Commandant Booth had heard of the temporary shipboard success of the prisoner boys transported to Port Arthur on the Frances Charlotte, under the benevolent tutor Alexander Nesbitt, taught the boys to dance on the deck during the voyage from England. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. CON 31/7 (not 31/11 as listed on the Archives Office of Tasmania database.) Both men were transported for 14 years; Southerwood, T The Convict’s Friend, p. 283. Clarinettist Reichenburg was active in 1837 at the opening of St John’s Catholic Church, Richmond. MacFie, PH ‘Silent Impact: The Irish Inheritance at Richmond, Tasmania,’ *Irish-Australian Studies* 1995, p. 491. By 1841, Calligani was at Government House. In 1839, de Castanos was at Campbell Town briefly, but back at Port Arthur by 1839, and still there in 1843 as a constable-that is, a rank allowing him to be allocated as wished by the Commandant. His pardon was gazetted on 14/1/1845. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Plomley, NJB Friendly Mission, the Tasmanian Journal and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834, 25/3/1833, p .111. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Burke, JL Cash Adventures, NS 62, Archives Office of Tasmania, p134. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. op cit, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Correspondence File, AOT. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. FA Packer died 10 years later in 1862, leaving Augusta to rear the family. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Cyclopaedia of Tasmania. Vol 1, P?? [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Pike D. (ed.)Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol 4, FA Packer, pp. 387-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Mercury, 2 August 1902. Correspondence File, AOT. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. FAG Packer’s works have been rediscovered by a new generation of musicians, including Hobart born soprano Maree-Rose Jones. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. CSO 24/78/2476, 11/11/1848. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. CON 33/20, AOT. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Cowley, Trudy A Drift of Derwent Ducks, Hobart 2005, CD ROM pdf, Elizabeth Curry. The two Brinkworth sons later became master mariners in New South Wales. Pers. comm. Nina fair-weather, Brinkworth descendant. 2006. (My thanks to Trudy Cowley for instigating the contact.) [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Button, Henry Flotsam and Jetsam, Launceston, nd, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. CON 37/80, Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Wishart, Elspeth, Curator of History, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. MM 62/41, Jan 1864. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid, 1864. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Hobart Town Advertiser, 8/7/1861 p. 3 c. 2. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Hobart Town Advertiser, 15/7/1861 p. 3 c. 3, Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Hobart Town Advertiser, 3/12/1861 p. 2. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Beechey, Norm and Baker, Dorothy A History of Dover & Port Esperance - Tasmania, Dover, 1997, p. 73; Richards, Rosemary ‘Frae the Friends and Land I Live’: The McCrae Homnstead Music Book’, A musical and biographical ananysis of the favourite music of Georgiana Huntlry Gordon McCrae from the ‘McRae Homestead Music Book,’ Melbourne, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Some families tried to keep in contact at an individual level, having themselves deliberately transported for re-unification. At government sponsored family reunification scheme for male convicts where wives and UK children were given free travel on female convict ships was ad hoc , and united occasional families, rather tan communities. See Parrott, Jenny ‘“For the Moral Good?” The Government Scheme to Unite Convicts with their Families 1818-1843.’, MA thesis, University of Tasmania, 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Pers comm., Dr Peter Hay, Department of Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, June 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. McQueen, Humphrey *Pianists,* in New Britannia, Pelican, Melbourne, 1980, p 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Archives Office of Tasmania. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)