

Historical Tasmania Series

CHANGES & CONTINUATIONS
The Post-Penal Settlement
of
Tasman Peninsula

1877-1914

Peter MacFie

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CHANGES AND CONTINUATIONS

THE POST-PENAL SETTLEMENT OF TASMAN PENINSULA, 1877-1914

by Peter MacFie

Port Arthur Conservation Project

The history of Tasman Peninsula during the initial post-penal period from 1877-1914 is presented and discussed. Settlement of the peninsula after the closure of Port Arthur prison resulted in two distinct communities — one providing recreation facilities and services to tourists and the other dependent on farming, orcharding, logging and fishing. During this period Tasmanians began to come to terms with the convict history represented by Port Arthur, with Eaglehawk Neck and Port Arthur becoming foci for the developing tourism industry.

Key Words: Tasman Peninsula, Tasmania, Port Arthur, post-penal settlement, free settlers.

From SMITH, S.J. (Ed.), 1989: IS HISTORY ENOUGH? PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE USE OF THE RESOURCES OF TASMAN PENINSULA. Royal Society of Tasmania, Hobart:97-106.

Introduction

1877 is seen as a watershed in the history of Tasman Peninsula. Water-locked land, retained as a prison since 1830, was open to free settlers. No area better epitomises the quandary facing Tasmanians over their past than Tasman Peninsula. In virgin forests of the northwest and northeast, such reminders could be forgotten. The new settlers who arrived after the closure of Port Arthur were faced with unavoidable reminders. Although the new arrivals brought new traditions, free occupants of the peninsula entered an existing and continuing administration, based on those officials of the Convict Department who chose to remain. The free occupants also inherited an existing infrastructure of roads, buildings and jetties. In some areas, especially around the Probation Stations, land had been cleared by prison labour and gardens established. The post-1877 settlement of Tasman Peninsula resulted in two distinct communities; one, increasingly "cosmopolitan", was centred on Port Arthur, providing services for tourists and recreation; the other, centred around a series of communities on the northern coastline, relied

on small-farming, orcharding, logging and fishing. The latter two continued near Port Arthur and Long Bay also.

Central features of the post-1877 settlement of Tasman Peninsula are:

- (1) the continuing administration of Convict Department officials;
- (2) the inheritance of an infrastructure of roads, buildings, jetties and tramway;
- (3) the migration of free settlers from around the Derwent estuary to the northern Peninsula;
- (4) the concurrent development of free-settlement and religious fundamentalism;
- (5) a continuing and distinct personality for Port Arthur;
- (6) development of a long-realised commercial potential based on primary resources and building materials;
- (7) the gradual growth of tourism centres at Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck;
- (8) unacknowledged labour of forestry workers around Port Arthur, Koonya and Taranna; and
- (9) a confused reaction by occupant and Tasmanians generally to the stigma of the "hated stain".

Commercial Potential

The scenery and the commercial value of the Tasman Peninsula were recognised attractions throughout the penal era. A reporter with a parliamentary delegation in 1860 heard and saw the area's timber, fishing and coal mining potential.¹ The larger portion of the peninsula was, however, considered "worthless for agriculture". At Port Arthur and Cascades (Koonya), wooden tramways carried timber from convict fallers to mills to awaiting craft.

The 1860 Joint Report of the Tasmanian Parliament on the desirability of opening up Tasman Peninsula heard evidence from a number of witnesses who referred to the fishing and milling potential. Charles de Graves, shipbuilder, referred to the "1st Class quality of the blue gum, stringy bark, swamp gum and light wood". Mr King, fishmonger, referred to his fourteen years of knowledge of the "land, bays and ports" of Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas.

King had obviously fished the coastline and believed Fortescue Bay a potential fishing station because of:

... trumpeter, gurnet, perch, habuker and John Doree found there.

He found a market overseas for his smoked fish. He believed, with accurate foresight, that fishermen would purchase small lots of land for themselves and families.

¹ Mercury 23 August 1860.
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Captain Gourlay of the steamer *Culloden* also believed that "many persons would settle on the Peninsula for the sake of the fine timber". Ballantine, former Superintendent of Cascades Probation Station, also believed that, if opened to the public, "settlement for fishing, sawing and splitting timber would be established", and had no doubt the "grazing land would be occupied". The buildings, he felt, might enhance the value of land on the peninsula, particularly at Saltwater River.

As observed by fishmonger King, fishing vessels had worked the coasts of Tasman Peninsula. The Parliamentary Committee viewed the peninsula during their in-depth excursion and were reported as believing the:

... Hippolite Rocks, the greatest fishing ground of the Colony.²

These fishermen and owners of larger boats, with an intimate knowledge of the coast, were the first to ferry excursionists to the peninsula after 1877. Previously, they had only been allowed permission to shelter in the ports. By 1879, these were in full use, as a report reveals that four fishermen, William Veal, James Cowen (*Tasman*), George Massey (*Parir*), and Edward Fitzgerald (*Alemwake*), had helped prevent the government schooner *Spray* from coming around in a storm.³

Ironically, the fishermen who ferried visitors were probably ex-convicts as, in 1864, Boyd, Port Arthur commandant, complained of "the constant presence of fishing and other boats about the shores of the peninsula [which] induces convicts to plan escapes [as] many of the persons working these boats are old convicts who are quite ready for the sake of a bribe to assist."⁴

In the last decade before closure, timber merchants Henry Chesterman and Risby Bros had gradually gained access to the "door" of the peninsula. In 1874, Chesterman had extracted timber from the gullies around Eaglehawk Neck; Joseph McGinnis, working for Chesterman, occupied buildings at the Neck.⁵ In 1874, timber cutters and oystermen wanted to occupy the Eaglehawk Neck buildings for housing. In that year Risby sought — and was granted —

² *The Mercury* 23 August 1860

³ Colonial Secretary's Department, Series 10, Vol.6, p.95, 26 August 1879, (TAHO.).

⁴ British Parliamentary Papers on Transportation, 1864, pp.51-52, TAHO.

⁵ Colonial Secretary's Department, 07/61/1514, quoted in Glover Papers, Vol.1, Hobart 1979, TAHO.

permission to land at Eaglehawk Neck, and also rent a timber barge at the neck.⁶ Chesterman purchased the Port Arthur Military Barracks for demolition. McGinnis, probably Chesterman's foreman, occupied Smith O'Brien's Cottage which Chesterman gratuitously saved from destruction. In 1881, Joseph McGinnis occupied the Catholic Chaplain's House, also purchased by Chesterman (next door to Surveyor Blackwood.)⁷

Although Tasman Peninsula was "terra incognita" until 1877, one district on the peninsula had been open to private occupation from 1848. The Coal Mines, Saltwater River, failing because of "moral and economic" reasons, had been worked by various lessee companies with increasing lack of success. Although formally abandoned in 1867, the birth register indicates that miners were still active at the Coal Mines in the early 1880s. Alfred Mansell Lord was both farmer and miner in 1879-82 (as was Martha Annie Burdon).

A Continued Administration

A number of ex-officials apparently used their knowledge of the peninsula to establish themselves. Thomas Ballanie remained from the old convict administration as Sub-Inspector of Police to supervise new settlers, also purchasing land. Others included Government Surveyor Archibald Blackwood and Joseph Mawle, Port Arthur official and store-keeper, and his father-in-law, A. W. Chatfield. Mawle had been in the Service of the Convict Department for over 20 years. Chatfield had been employed similarly since the 1850s. Following closure of Port Arthur, Chatfield lived in the Parsonage for a number of years. Together they had considered a business partnership at Port Arthur in the closing stages. Joseph Mawle's son, "Alf (H'elms, H'oaks and H'ashes)" Mawle, became the familiar "authority" on Port Arthur during the 1920s to 1940s.

This hegemony was kept "in the family" of the old administration, with Blackwood's son, J.T., marrying Elizabeth Ballanie.⁸ Mawle and later Ballanie, were local Deputy- Registrars of Births. Ballanie was also in charge of the public buildings at Port Arthur. In addition, he acted as Clerk of the Court of General Sessions when the public hearings began in the early 1880s, plus Registrar, Bailiff, Deputy Clerk of Peace, and until 1886 was also Post-Master.

⁶ Colonial Secretary's Department, 10/54/1236, 15 December 1874.

⁷ Assessment Roll, Government Gazette 1881, TAHO.

⁸ Registrar General's Department Births, Reel No.33/67, TAHO.

Archibald Blackwood was the first official to buy property at Port Arthur. He had reported on land on the Tasman Peninsula in 1873, and conducted the survey for alienation of Crown land in 1877.⁹ Like other Church of Christ followers, Blackwood had settled originally at Long Bay, Middleton, on the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Here his wife and family ran the farm while he surveyed the district. Scottish born and, according to relatives, of a hard disposition, Blackwood arrived with his family in Tasmania in 1853, working as Surveyor with the Royal Sappers and Miners.¹⁰ He acquired the Medical Officer's House in 1879, from where his daughter eventually operated the local postal and telephone service. He also bought land at Garden Point (site of the old convict garden), while his sons Alfred and John had property at Long Bay, later Oakwood.

John Evenden, the Official Caretaker for Port Arthur after its closure, had been employed in the Convict Department for a number of years, being remembered by Martin Cash c. 1844. - During the 1860s, Evenden "occupied" the government farm at Saltwater River, where 200 acres had been cleared and grubbed by prisoners. Where 3000 sheep had grazed, Evenden ran cattle and battled against the 500 or 600 deer which were constantly destroying his crops.¹¹ Evenden and his family purchased property at Port Arthur, initially "garden" land and then a house while his son bought garden and land at Stinking Bay.¹²

In addition to the structures, new settlers, particularly at Port Arthur, inherited an existing bureaucracy, also a labour force of an unknown number of paupers (some of whom acted as Port Arthur guides) and bush-workers, probably emancipists who returned to the peninsula.

Free and Fundamentalist Families

Initial reaction to the sale of Crown Land was poor, with only five of the 75 town lots being sold (including the military barracks) and 23 of the 64 country lots. The eventual purchasers and residents of Port Arthur became, by 1890, a civilian reflection of the penal era.

If prospective residents of Port Arthur were hesitant, the men and women who perceived the potential of the northern Peninsula were not. The birth records of the Registrar General's

⁹ Colonial Secretary's Department, 10/48/996, 24 September 1877, TAHO.

¹⁰ Blackwood1987, pp.24—29.

¹¹ Hobart Town Advertiser 23 August 1860.

¹² Assessment Roll,1880-81.

Department reveal that families moved quickly to occupy land and began a small baby boom. From 1879 to 1890, 165 children were born. Births occurred at Impression Bay (37), Carnarvon (36), Cascades (35), Wedge Bay (17), Long Bay (13), Norfolk Bay (12), Saltwater River (9) and Safety Cove (4).¹³ During 1884, the total population passed 600.¹⁴

In 1884, a journalist visiting the Ragged Tiers, Kellevie (from where many new settlers came) and the new settlements of the northern peninsula, commented on the large families. At Ragged Tiers were produced, he claimed (tongue-in-cheek), "6,000 pigs and I forgot how many children yearly."¹⁵ His (serious) advice to his Ragged Tier friends applied equally well to those transferring to the Peninsula urging them, in view of direct steamers to England, to "lay out at least two acres in fruit, small and large, and to keep their gardens in good order from the first. Those who have good orchards are going to make money."¹⁶

Missing from official records are the spiritual affiliations which bound families in their pioneering adventures. Yet these are responsible for the mores, attitudes, music, word and culture, plus personal characteristics, which create a community. The conversion to the fundamentalist principles of the Church of Christ, by settlers moving to the northern peninsula, is a distinctive feature of settlement post-1877. The contrast between here and Anglican Port Arthur was, until recently, still valid, with one elderly descendant of Surveyor Blackwood jocularly describing to me the "Dippers" on the other side of the peninsula — i.e. practising total immersion baptism. Within the last 15 years, the granting of a liquor licence at Nubeena caused controversy. The bars of Port Arthur's hotels contrasted with this teetotal viewpoint.

The chief initiators of the Church of Christ in the peninsula were George Spaulding and his friend George Kingston. Prior to arriving at Impression Bay in 1882, Spaulding had moved farms on several occasions after his marriage in 1873. In 1876 he was at Peppermint Bay, Kettering, part of a Church of Christ group including George Kingston. These two families

¹³ Registrar Generals Department, 1877-1900.

¹⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 5 July 1884, TAHO.

¹⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 28 June 1884, p.27.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

moved to the Ragged Tiers, Carlton River, in 1878.¹⁷ Early converts included Samuel and Elizabeth Mundy who settled at Saltwater River in 1879.

At first services were held in homes and then at the various chapels which, by 1885, were at Impression Bay, Oakwood (Long Bay) and Port Arthur. There services were held in the home of "Brother and Sister Archie Blackwood."¹⁸ A degree of democracy was apparent in the administration of the Church, with women, as indicated, being recognised as "Sisters", and being elected as "Deaconesses" — but not Elders. This equality reflected the shared role of parents in a pioneer community and contrasted with the traditional division of roles within the middle and upper-class Anglicans. The egalitarian character of the Church of Christ settlers, however, involved a degree of austerity both in behaviour and social customs. One elderly resident told me of being refused permission as a girl to attend dances and fairs.

Visiting the Peninsula during the boom year of 1884, a commentator noticed how "right through the peninsula, settlers (timbermen) and their families, number about 600."¹⁹ At farms near Prices and Impression Bays, large families occupied settlers' houses:

There are farms in the early stage at both these [places] and also in the interior. It goes without saying that whenever there is a roof there are children. Only 5 stared at me outside a house at Prices Bay, and by peculiar sounds ... There was a reserve of another five if anything happened to these.²⁰

He was also impressed with the seven children of Constable J. Hanigan at Saltwater River, whose wife offered hospitality to passing visitors. M. J. Clark had successfully tendered for alterations to the building for Police Quarters, at Saltwater River, then occupied by Constable Hanigan's family. Constable Hanigan stayed on the peninsula, becoming at one stage proprietor of the Taranna Hotel.

The former doctor's residence at Saltwater River was occupied by Jacob Burden. Jacob Burden (then aged 11) and his brother Reuben (9), natives of Wiltshire, had left Southampton aboard the *Kingston* on 26 August 1854 with their Wesleyan father John. Aged 31, John was accompanied by his wife Edith (31), Jacob, Reuben and Isaac (7). Also on the voyage were

¹⁷ Neville, C.C., Church Of Christ, Tasman Peninsula Centenary Celebrations, 1878-1979. Hobart, 1979: 18 pp 1979.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁹ Tasmanian Mail 28 June 1884, pp.27-28.

²⁰ Tasmanian Mail 28 June 1884, pp.27-28.

Jacob's Uncle William (24) and wife Avis (21), May (2) and an infant George.²¹ They first settled near Valley Farm, Impression Bay. Jacob Burden and his brother Reuben occupied the old Saltwater River Station area, owning 720 acres freehold and leasing another 4000, including land at Slopen Main.²² By 1884, Burden had been on his new purchase 18 months, but on the peninsula for five years, being one of the first settlers to occupy the north of the peninsula in 1879²³. Burden grazed 1300 sheep — "Merino and cross-breds, and a few Shropshire Downs" — plus from 50 to 80 cattle. The Burdens became adherents of Church of Christ.

Thomas Perkins and Herbert Smith jointly owned 3000 acres by purchase, leasing several thousand more on which ran 3000 sheep (the same number grazed on the sheep farm of the convict era), plus cattle and "the usual strength of oxen and horses". Their homestead was the former Deputy-Commandant's Quarters, where the neglected garden and surroundings, once refurbished, would provide "a nice country seat of it."²⁴

Cascades: Logging, Demolition and Bird-Watching

While the district around Impression Bay concentrated on agriculture and grazing, at Cascades and Taranna, logging and splitting employed men working for Messrs Clark and Chesterman. At Cascades, :

... a number of cottages have been renovated and are occupied by work-people employed in the timber trade. Mr. Clark resides here in a superior house, with the usual garden plot in front.

Brick buildings were "tumbling down in every direction, and men are at work on cleaning some to be shipped to Hobart."²⁵

During the period between vacancy and occupancy, the probation station sites were pillaged for materials. An elderly visitor recalled how, when visiting Koonya in 1877

"The buildings, which were being raided by bargemen and people from the Sorell side, suffered additional reverses. There were plenty of lead sheets on the roofs of the model prison and the gaol, and several enterprising yachtsmen got industriously to work, and commandeered every ounce they could conveniently get at, and turned it into ballast. Two enthusiastic individuals broke the doors of the silent cells, and brought them up to the city."

²¹ Immigration Board, Series CB 7/12, p.2, Nominal Register of Immigrants Arrivals, TAHO.

²² *Tasmanian Mail* 28 June 1884, pp.27-28.

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ *ibid*.

²⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 28 June 1884, pp.27-28.

By hopeful contrast, on a later visit, he noted,

"There are one or two of the old Imperial buildings extant, which are used for utilitarian purposes. There are some fine orchards and mixed farms observable, and the inhabitants of the district, if they did not have a cheque book hanging out of their pockets, seemed well-to-do, content, and happy [in 1915]." ²⁶

Cascades/Koonya developed unique characteristics. Henry Chesterman purchased the old settlement in 1882. Despite stands being worked for over 20 years in the convict era, timber from the Cascades supplied piles for wharves at Dover, U.K., and South Africa before the turn of the century. Cascades timber was used in the vehicular ferry *Kangaroo*, which plied the Derwent between Kangaroo Point (Bellerive) and Hobart from 1855 to 1926.

Nine years later, James Roxburgh McClymont (M.A. Edinburgh) was owner. McClymont had earlier settled at Koonya, calling his property (with deference to Henry Thoreau) "New Walden", from where he observed the bird-life of the Tasman Peninsula. In 1887, the Royal Society published his "A First List of the Birds of Tasman's Peninsula", a unique list of 70 birds.²⁷ According to the introduction, the list was compiled, not by a scientific ornithologist, but by "one who has spent a good many hours in the bush, an interested observer of the manners and customs of birds". The birds observed were mainly "within the radius of one mile of the settlement of Koonya". In 1894, McClymont donated land for St Albans Anglican Church, Koonya, opened in 1904.

James Dysart Lacy purchased the Cascades in 1907 and ran a cheese factory until, after volunteering, he was killed in action, France 1915 (his memorial plaque is located in the church).

The continued influence of at least one official is evident at Koonya, where Robert Cahill, the brother-in-law of Robert Ballantine (Superintendent, Cascades Probation Station) later took up land. In later years his daughter noticed a surviving headstone of a child at Koonya belonging to "Robert Ballantine", the son of the Superintendent and Harriet (Cahill)— the headstone of her first cousin.²⁸

²⁶ Un-named newspaper cutting, c. 1926, author's collection.

²⁷ McClymont 1887.

²⁸ Copping; MS. held by Tasman Peninsula Historical Society 1986.

LIBERAL NON-CONFORMISTS

Other non-conformist sects which established on the peninsula included Congregationalists. Between 1856 and 1880, Rev. R. E. Dear, Congregational preacher, regularly visited peninsula townships.²⁹ Burial and baptism registers gave an indication of religious allegiances. During the 1880s, George Spaulding conducted burials, while in the 1890s several Congregational clergy served the scattered community. In 1889, John Bufton had charge of Port Arthur, Bream Creek and Carlton. In 1894, he oversaw:

... 9 preaching places, riding 20 miles on horseback six days a week to perform his duties."³⁰

In the early 1880s, George E. Clarke, a young jackeroo, worked for Perkins and Smith at Saltwater River before resigning in a dispute over wages.³¹ The son of Rev. Geo. Clarke, Congregational minister and educator, Clarke moved to "*Lottah*" overlooking Wedge Bay in 1884, where he established orchards and briefly a eucalyptus-oil extracting plant, later becoming a local magistrate, J.P., coroner and leading Congregationalist.³²

Clarke's farm diary for 1892 describes attendance at a Sunday service at home conducted by John Bufton. In the afternoon, Clarke killed a lamb for Moses Clark, a fellow Congregationalist.³³ This incident epitomises the difference between the Anglicanism of Port Arthur, and the pragmatic pioneering Christianity of leading nonconformists such as George Clarke, who obviously felt no contradiction in killing a lamb (with its symbolic connotations) on Sunday after church.

Evolving from that attitude is a more egalitarian community, without the great distinction between larger landholders and workers. A sense of mutual support existed, made easier by the small farm sizes, and without the paternalism of Tasmania's older wool growing regions. Congregationalists were, like the Rev. G. Clarke, "of liberal principles", philanthropic, without

²⁹ Sharples, E. Congregationalism In Tasmania, 1830-77. Hobart 1977, p.19.

³⁰ Sharples 1977, p.19.

³¹ Alison Shoobridge, pers. comm.

³² Assessment Roll, 1884.

³³ diary 1892, possession of Alison Shoobridge, Lottah, Tasman Peninsula.

the puritanism of the Church of Christ followers, particularly in regard to dancing and drinking.³⁴

The sheltered slopes of Lottah and Highcroft provided ideal apple and pear orchard sites. In 1886-87 another active non-conformist purchased land at Highcroft. Dr Harry Benjafield, a founder of the Baptist church in southern Tasmania and an energetic homeopathic doctor and innovative agriculturalist, gave young emigrant Carl Hansen responsibility for overseeing the establishment of the Highcroft orchards; descendants of both are still orcharding.

Tourism

The Convict Era

Port Arthur and Tasman Peninsula as a scenic and tourist destination had attracted the attention of visitors throughout the convict era. The first excursionist to put a vice-regal "stamp-of-approval" on the peninsula as a holidaying venue was Sir William Denison, who with his wife and family retreated to "a little cottage of six rooms" on the shore of Pirates Bay, Eaglehawk Neck in 1847, with nine children and three servants; a local soldier and his wife acted as "cook, housemaid and general factotum". The house was formerly the military officers' quarters.³⁵ The same building acted as "Honeymoon" Cottage for newly-wed military officers. Eaglehawk Neck was described as "exceedingly picturesque" by a visitor in 1851. The first "guides" there consisted of the "pretty wife" of the young subaltern, who "undertook to guide our party on a visit to the two natural curiosities ... Tasman Arch and The Blowhole". At Port Arthur the visitor imagined he had "dropped into Paradise ... this beautiful corner of the universe."³⁶ Mundy's jocular account contrasts with Quaker Frederick Mackie, who visited the peninsula prisons less than two years later, talking to individual prisoners, and not carrying the "half a dozen bottles of champagne" that Mundy brought for the subaltern and his wife at Eaglehawk Neck. While Mundy concentrated on the hale prisoners, well-fed and indulged, Mackie observed and sympathised with their plight.³⁷

³⁴ Pike 1974.

³⁵ Denison 1870.

³⁶ Mundy 1855.

³⁷ Nicholls 1973

Journalists, with official approval, and parliamentary delegations continued to inspect the peninsula through the 1860s and 1870s. Both groups agonised over the quandary involved in deciding the future location of prisoners if the peninsula were opened up, and the problem of "how to deal with the criminal elements that are yet present in the social system."³⁸ As on other occasions, the "visitors" made a "tour of the settlement". The visit by the official party ended with a concert at the Commandant's cottage, where readings plus vocal and instrumental music resulted in a "general feeling of enjoyment". The visitors on return stopped at the Neck to see "two of the most wonderful spectacles probably ever seen by tourists".

A correspondent of 1870 described the "very pretty panorama" presented by "this charming spot", Port Arthur, yet saw no contradiction in ridiculing the pauper who also travelled on the *H.M. Harriet*, describing him as of "low stature, very repulsive looking, dressed in an old sparrow-tail coat", and whose "restlessness and imbecility" gave the author the idea of a "wild animal". On arrival the correspondent inspected the "lions" — prisoners — a phrase used over 40 years earlier by Commandant Booth.³⁹ Excursionists continued to visit Port Arthur during the 1870s. In 1876, the *S.S. Southern Cross* carried visitors to the site, carrying 70-80 pleasure seekers and a number of invalids. Also on board was Mr Winter, the photographer, who took views of the parsonage and the settlement.⁴⁰ A wall was even then being demolished for use in repairing the Cascade Gaol, Hobart.

The Carnarvon Era

Following the closure of Port Arthur, visitors continued to arrive at Carnarvon, despite the absence of facilities to cater for them. The first visitors who arrived in 1877 on the *Southern Cross* caused considerable destruction to the abandoned settlement. Although the *Southern Cross* and other large steamers sailed directly to Port Arthur, excursionists continued to arrive via Norfolk Bay (by 1884 called Taranna). Whitehouse Bros' small 13 ton steamer, *S.S. Pinafore*, the "Pinny", brought parties to the peninsula; one such group used "all the horses, conveyances and saddles on the north of the Peninsula". Despite this, some visitors "still had to come on foot."⁴¹ The

³⁸ Mercury 1 October 1869.

³⁹ Mercury 24 March 1870.

⁴⁰ Mercury 25 July 1876.

⁴¹ Tasmanian Mail 21 April 1884, p.20.

Whitehouses also owned Taranna's only accommodation, the *Tasman Hotel*, formerly the Commissariat Store. By 1884, Whitehouse's oyster farm was in operation in Norfolk Bay.⁴² Beginning in 1881, the *S.S. Pinafore* left Hobart on Mondays and Thursdays for Norfolk Bay, leaving Norfolk Bay on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Smaller sailing craft including the ketch *Coral* and the fishing smack *Foam* also brought groups of visitors before heading for Wedge Bay. Three visitors from the *Foam* sailed from Carnarvon with wet clothes hanging on the rigging to dry, their owners having fallen overboard while being rowed ashore in a small boat; all swam safely ashore. Another fishing boat, the *Surprise* (owned by Watchorn & Risby) arrived with three visitors including photographer Joshua Anson, before leaving for Maria Island. Not all excursionists made the journey from Eaglehawk Neck to Port Arthur, some from the *S.S. Pinafore* and *S.S. Huon* preferring to walk to the natural sites near Pirates Bay.

At Taranna, visitors were accommodated on board prior to the opening of the *Taranna Hotel*. Rowing out to Woody (now Dart) Island, the genteel visitor took a shotgun to despatch some of the grey, yellow and black rabbits which populated the island — presumably from the days it was part of the semaphore chain and a boat crew was located there. Visitors also indulged in fishing. On another occasion, the *S.S. Pinafore* was seen at Taranna with her rigging laden with rabbits shot by yachtsmen on Woody Island.⁴³ Being loaned a horse by Mr Ballanie, the more important visitor, a journalist, rode and walked to Port Arthur, taking turns with his brother. On other occasions a bullock wagon was used to convey tourists from Taranna to Port Arthur.⁴⁴ Wedge Bay was a regular port of call for yachtsmen and visitors. The *S.S. Huon*, calling there in May 1884, dropped anchor beside the *Ella* and the *Coral*, two yachts laden with excursionists.⁴⁵ In 1884, the first large vessel built on the peninsula since work on the convict dockyards at Port Arthur ceased was under construction. The *S.S. Taranna* was built at Taranna by William Bayes for Whitehouse Bros, and launched on 22 July 1884. In 1888, she was joined briefly by the *Koonya* on the peninsula trade, and in 1890, the *S.S. Nubeena* replaced the *Taranna*. The *Nubeena*,

⁴² *Tasmanian Mail* 28 June 1884.

⁴³ *Tasmanian Mail* 10 May 1884.

⁴⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 17 May 1884.

⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 1 May 1884.

like other ships, also worked the jetties of the Huon and Channel, as well as Koonya, Premaydena, Saltwater River, Nubeena and, if necessary, Badger Creek on Wedge Bay.

Only three years after closure, a tourist guide book described the attractions of the Tasman Peninsula.

"Besides the connection (with) the great gaols and Model Prison at Port Arthur, the Peninsula affords much enjoyment to the tourist ... There is good fishing and excellent deer and kangaroos stalking ... Between trips of the steamers agreement can be readily made with the deep sea fishermen, for moderate sums, to take parties to either side of the Peninsula."⁴⁶

(The deer hunted in the 1880s were introduced in the penal era, giving their name to Deer Point, their last refuge.)

A later handbook refers to

"Port Arthur, the once dreaded and most vile spot of the tight little island, has undergone considerable change; instead of its being the exile home of prisoners, hundreds of honest colonists are there now, clearing the bush, ploughing the lands, building up neat little cottages."

"(At) Cascades, Impression Bay, Saltwater River the Coal Mines ... most of the old buildings and dungeons are falling into decay, so in the course of time all signs of the past will be gone... The great drawback is the want of proper accommodation."⁴⁷

By the 1890s, the value of Port Arthur and Tasman Peninsula as a tourist destination had been recognised. Port Arthur was a well-established tourist centre and described as "a spot as lovely in its position, as it is ugly in its memories."⁴⁸

The posters of Whitehouse and Pitfield, advertising the *S.S. Nubeena*, refer to both the "Natural Scenery" and "Historical Monuments". The latter included "The picturesque ivy-clad ruins of the Church, the Prisons, with dark and silent cell, the romantic Island of the Dead, and the tales of old convict days - the scenes of "The Term of His Natural Life", thrill the visitor with interest." By the 1900s the *Carnarvon Hotel* (Mrs Cowan, proprietress) offered "Best wines, spirits etc.", and boasting "Splendid Scenery, Boating, Fishing", and George Wellard offered "Conveyances" from Taranna, promising "A beautiful drive and every attention to Passengers."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Thomas 1880.

⁴⁷ Anon. 1889.

⁴⁸ Tasmanian Steam Navigation Co. 1887.

⁴⁹ Former Tasmaniana Library, TAHO.

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"Carnarvon" Cosmopolitan

If the old officials were uncertain about Port Arthur's future, a new generation of occupants from the mid 1880s gave the Settlement a distinctively Establishment character. These included recently arrived British emigrants, Lt Col Albert Peel Gamett, Thomas Mason and Rev. J.B.W. Woolnough.

A retired army officer, aged 44, Garnett had served with the 11th Hussars, or Prince Albert's Own.⁵⁰ A native of London, with his wife Ada (aged 30), he arrived aboard the *Sir Walter Raleigh* in 1883, with their six children.⁵¹ Shortly after arriving Gamett purchased the Parsonage and Accountant's House at Port Arthur. In early 1884, his servant, James McArthur, while burning off behind the Parsonage, caused the church to be gutted by fire.⁵²

Arriving in Tasmania in 1884 was the Mason family, led by Thomas and wife Fanny, brother Francis and adult children Walter, Heather and Annie. Purchasing "*Clougha*" (the Magistrate's House at Port Arthur), Thomas Mason and Walter became involved in the Carnarvon Town Board following its establishment in 1889. The arrival of the Mason girls coincided fortuitously with the arrival of another expatriate Briton, bachelor potter James Price. A native of Staffordshire, Price apparently arrived in Tasmania in 1884 and purchased land and buildings on the site of the Brickfields, Port Arthur. (The site included the recently restored beehive kiln.) Like the convicts at the Brickfields, James Price produced functional outdoor clayware — pipes, flowerpots and urns. He also made distinctive indoor pottery of his own — vases (with two or more arms), cups, plaques, crucibles, mugs, plates and a child's tea-set. The pottery work attracted the interest of the Mason sisters, described by Walker (1976) as "simple, nice girls (with) an enthusiasm for art". In the 1894—95 International Exhibit of Industry, Science and Art, held on the Queen's Domain, Hobart, they exhibited hand-painted clayware. In the "Women's Industries" section, Heather Mason's exhibits included a "Portrait, Crests and candlesticks etc." (and a bas relief in clay modelling), while Annie Mason's was of "Port Arthur Pottery, Hand painted."⁵³ Francis Mason died in 1897 (aged 49), and is buried at the "new" Port Arthur

⁵⁰ Hart, 1870.

⁵¹ Immigration Board, CB 7/25, p.37, TAHO.

⁵² Mercury 4 March 1884.

⁵³ Exhibition Catalogue, 1894-95, TAHO.

cemetery, located on the entrance to the historic site. His death may have precipitated the return of the Masons to England the same year.⁵⁴

The Establishment character of Port Arthur is epitomised by the Rev. Joseph Boss William Woolnough, "gentleman", entrepreneur, clergyman, and M.H.A. from Sorell. Educated at Oxford, he served in a number of English parishes before emigrating to Tasmania in 1883.⁵⁵ Woolnough used his organisational and business skills within the Tasmanian Anglican Church, being Financial Secretary of Synod, Diocesan Inspector of Schools (1883-1900) and Defence Forces Chaplain (1885-1906). In 1884, Woolnough purchased the Model Prison for £630, an association with two other Carnarvon residents being rumoured.⁵⁶ Shortly after, he was Chairman of the new Carnarvon Town Board in the 1890s, plus its Licensing Bench and Road Trust, and the Tasmanian Tourist Association Committee. In 1894, he persuaded the Government to give custody of the Penitentiary to the Town Board of Carnarvon for "recreational purposes."⁵⁷ Keys for the complex had been (reluctantly) handed over only a matter of days before the great fire) of 31 December 1898, which resulted in the building's destruction.

Reverend Woolnough intended to upgrade the Model Prison into a high class hotel and pleasure resort. At least one visitor was anxious for the future of the pews and pulpit being removed from the Chapel, which she vainly hoped would be put in the "archives of the nation " for future generations. Meanwhile in the Model Prison,

"the chapel has been turned into a billiard room, where the walls will resound with the voices of merrymakers who seek to kill time and care. The partitions separating the cells will be torn away, and spacious bedrooms with soft beds and downy pillows will invite the weary pilgrims to rest in this spot made sacred by the 'hand of Oppression'.⁵⁸

Messrs Mason and Woolnough were Trustees of the derelict Anglican Church and apparently responsible for the petition to Queen Victoria seeking funds for its restoration.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Port Arthur Cemetery Register c. 1906-22, Tasman Council Chambers, Nubeena.

⁵⁵ Bennett & Bennett 1980

⁵⁶ *Mercury* 13 March 1889.

⁵⁷ *Mercury* 4 January 1898.

⁵⁸ Ackerman 1896.

⁵⁹ Assessment Roll, 1886.

Laurence Reynolds, Bench Clerk, Hobart, bought Government Cottage (destroyed by fire) and became a farmer in the district. At the time of the fire, G.R. Eldridge, house steward of the Tasmanian Club, purchased the Guard Tower, and a brick and stone conjoined house.⁶⁰

Two names still with Port Arthur connections also arrived in the late 1880s. Johann Danker and Heinrich Frederick Frerk, who had arrived from Hamburg, Germany, in late 1885, occupied land owned by Inspector Ballanie at Long Bay in 1887.⁶¹ Both were joiners by trade, Danker, aged 27, being three years older than Frerk. They were probably friends, having arrived together aboard the *Procidea and Waiapa*. Danker's wife Maria, who at 39 was twelve years his senior, also travelled with their three-year-old son Heinrich.⁶² A year later, their Christian names had been Australianised to "John" Danker and "Henry" Frerk.⁶³ Following the destruction of the Asylum by the fires of 1897, Henry Frerk was the builder contracted by the Carnarvon Town Board to renovate the burnt-out shell under Architect Fagg. Danker refitted part of the burnt-out Parsonage, including construction of the precariously steep staircase.⁶⁴ "H.F.W. Frerk" was later proprietor of the *Tasman Villa Hotel*; after his death the establishment was continued by his wife. He was also a well-known guide around Port Arthur in the 1920s.

Danker eventually purchased land on Point Puer. His opinions, written in exercise books, and reported in the local press, scoffed at the "horror and morbidity" of Port Arthur.⁶⁵ His opinions are said to have strongly influenced a young journalist, Coultman Smith in writing the "soft" version of the penal system depicted in "Shadow Over Tasmania".⁶⁶

Although the Carnarvon Town Board was not formed until 1889, the town already possessed a Schools Board and a Cricket Club. In March 1884, Carnarvon and Wattle Hill Cricket Clubs met on the Bream Creek cricket ground with "the Carnarvon men victorious by 6 wickets."⁶⁷ Secretary of the Carnarvon Cricket Club was W. A. Downie, teacher at the Cascade and Impression Bay schools.

⁶⁰ *Mercury* 4 January 1880.

⁶¹ Assessment Roll, 1887.

⁶² Immigration Board, 1885, CB 12/14, p.3, TAHO.

⁶³ Assessment Roll, 1888

⁶⁴ Allan Briggs, pers. comm.

⁶⁵ *Mercury* 10 March 1938, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Allan Briggs, pers. comm. 1986.

⁶⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 15 March 1884, p. 19.

The first elected Trustees of the Town Board were Thomas Mason (Chairman), Archibald Blackwood (Treasurer), Rev. G. B. W. Woolnough, J. C. Cowan and Albert McGuinness. Shortly after the first meeting, on 28 August 1889, the Board received the keys from the Government to their future offices, the Asylum Buildings. The Board shared the building with the State School, a relationship which existed with the Tasman Council until well into this century. Resolving that the complex be known as "The Public Building, Carnarvon", the Trustees felt a "high sense of importance of the charge committed to their trust."⁶⁸

In addition the Carnarvon Town Board, shared the building with a theatrical group, and leased one wing as a gymnasium (that section later demolished) to the Carnarvon Athletic Club.⁶⁹ In 1892, the Sports Committee gained approval to hold a competition on the Reserve on Boxing Day — (provided no intoxicating liquor was offered).

In 1885 a Court of General Sessions was empowered to act at Carnarvon. Its first two resident chairmen were Col A.R Garnett and Thomas Mason. These English gentlemen, hearing disagreements concerning the value of timber cut and split, of livestock and goods, must have suffered somewhat from culture shock.

As well as catering for divine service and lectures, the public chambers were used for fund-raising. In February 1894, a "Bazaar and Dance" were held to raise funds for a public hall at Koonya.⁷⁰ Mr Mason — possibly because of his house being nearby — complained politely, of dances occasionally "continuing in the Public Buildings until the morning hours". Destruction by fire of the Asylum in January 1895 dampened the early optimism of the Board. Fortunately insured for £500, the buildings were restored, while the Board met temporarily at the *Carnarvon Hotel*.

Timber Workers: the Convict Connection

Concentration on property and ownership gives an unbalanced view of activity on the Peninsula. People without property leave no record for a materialistic society to easily trace. Such a group were the bush workers — timber splitters and log haulers. Most were apparently

⁶⁸ Minutes, Carnarvon Town Board, 7 January 1890, Council Chambers, Nubeena.

⁶⁹ *ibid.* 21 June 1890.

⁷⁰ Minutes, Carnarvon Town Board, 14 February 1894.

itinerant workers, who were to Tasmania what the shearers were to pastoral Australia but without the latter's organisational strength. Only those who remained to become farmers on the peninsula, such as George and Thomas Harris and George Seabourne, are listed as splitters at Carnarvon in 1890. Johann Danker recalled living with four convicts who "had been employed in paling splitting in the bush since their release."⁷¹ As the journalist from the *Tasmanian Mail* noted, the settlers were also "timbermen". In both cases — the itinerant and the farmer settlers — records are scattered, often held privately. Local government records including court proceedings can reveal the extent of their labour. The labour of wives and children is even less documented.

In 1881, Caretaker Evenden reports that, as at Eaglehawk Neck and Koonya, a number of cottages at Carnarvon were occupied by splitters working for Mr H. Chesterman.⁷² Johann Wocannawitch was logging blackwood behind Impression Bay, and using bullocks to supply "cut piles" to Gates the jetty builder in 1885. John Best, splitter of Carnarvon, was in debt to Mr Chesterman's account (for trousers, 10 yards flannel, 10 yards calico and 1 pair of women's boots — plus one bag of flour, 40 lb; beef, 20 lb; sugar and 2 lb tea (but could not remember six boxes of sardines)). In defence, Best had drawn the goods because he and his mate (Williams) had to repair the old (convict) road before cutting 9000 72-ft palings (at 4/6d. per 100) and 2100 7-ft palings (at 3/0d. per 100).

Best was indignant that he had been lowered to mere road making — "I was 8 days mending the old road ... I was not to make the road — it is not the custom for a bushman to cut the roads."⁷³

The collection of pre-cut firewood by "craftsmen" (small inshore boat-operators) from along the northern foreshore for use in Hobart began early. The "Taranna Wood Company" was contracted to cut timber by 1885. Samuel Crisp, bushman of the Cascades, sought recompense for mistaken collection of wood from off the foreshore. Verbal contractual agreements caused conflict. David Harris, splitter between Carnarvon and Wedge Bay, agreed to supply Albert McGuinness with 10 000 6-ft palings at 9/6d. per 100 delivered to town (i.e. Hobart). "The

⁷¹ *Tasmanian Mail* cutting c. 1938, author's collection.

⁷² Colonial Secretary's Department, 13/23/257, 21 April 1881, TAHO.

⁷³ Carnarvon Court Records, 2 November 1885, Council Chambers, Nubeena
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conversation took place at the paling shack the week after I took the order." Splitter Harris had drawn goods on McGuinness's account at Trentham's store, Port Arthur — paying Harris' splitting licence. On another occasion conflict arose over a stack of box palings sent to King Island. The incident reveals that agreements were often made casually — in this case in the bar of the *Carnarvon Hotel* on Boxing Day 1894.

The severity of treatment for defaulters is indicated by the case of Joseph McGuinness, splitter of Carnarvon. In ill health, and out of work for ten weeks with three children, he relied on the eldest boy of "16 or 17". "Between us we only earned 12/- per week at splitting." McGuinness was given one month to pay or a month gaol in default.

Unaffected by Victorian morality, George Seaborne, bushman and splitter, cohabited with Anne Lawless at the Cascades. Her son Elwin Read, living with his mother "and Seaborne", gave evidence in his favour over 40 staves freighted to Hobart by Thomas Spaulding, master of the *Gazelle*.⁷⁴

Character Established

By the 1900s, the communities on the northern coast had distinctive routines. Annual sports based on running, wood chopping and sawing, were run by committees — for many new men probably the first encounter with public office. With the development of the fruit industry, case-making became a form of competition on the sports days. Orcharding resulted in the first public body, the Tasman Peninsula Fruit Board, being established in 1888. Meeting at the Koonya State School, Messrs J. T. Blackwood, J. H. Cowen, G. Manning, Reuben Burden, James Noye and Captain David Melville (Chairman) formed the Codlin Moth Board, with T. F. Locke as Collector and Secretary.⁷⁵

A Board of Agriculture based at Koonya developed the Koonya Show. Orcharding, fishing and logging provided chief employment. The families in the district just becoming established are the names who feature on the World War I memorials, an event which changed the community irreversibly. With its Rifle Clubs and British patriotism, the peninsula was ready for the demands of 1914—18. Not all were swayed; even the peninsula had its conscientious objectors.

⁷⁴ Carnarvon Court Records, 7 April 1890.

⁷⁵ Minutes, Carnarvon Town Board, 1888.

The exploitation of the peninsula and Tasmania as a colony continued, despite Federation — and arguably, still continues, with timber (for wood chipping) still a major employer.

The Hated Stain and Tasman Peninsula

Port Arthur and Tasman Peninsula provoke questions about the common themes of Australian history — such as mateship and attitudes to bureaucracy. In particular, Tasman Peninsula demands explanation of its own, and Australian, conservatism. Why, in such a provocative natural and human landscape, did a typically cautious community develop? Why did Port Arthur become a showpiece for the macabre? Why were basic questions about Australian society never asked — such as what has this experience done to us, both ex-prisoner and ex-guard?

At Port Arthur, the experience of prisoners was first told to visitors by paupers and the few officials remaining. The next generation of guides who retold these experiences were either sons of officials (Alf Mawle) or sons of European emigrants (Harry Frerk). These people were living outside the tradition and therefore comfortable in their exaggerations. But at least Port Arthur was the one place where the convict past was confronted (if superficially) and adapted by a community. At the Port Arthur Sports, chopping matches were held in the convict-era sawpits, while the locals looked down at the "gladiators."⁷⁶

One possible explanation for our island's social schizophrenia is in the impact of the convict "stain", which made Tasmanians "cringe" more than other Australians and disregard the past that shaped us, even in our denial. This denial of self, which continued for nearly 100 years — four generations — allowed buildings to be pillaged, tombstones to be smashed and relatives forgotten. Despite the adulation of Tasmanians for Queen Victoria and "British" qualities, an urge to be known and to know kept intact folk memories and memorabilia which enthusiast and specialist are both rediscovering. Perhaps in another generation Tasmanians and Peninsularites will be at ease with their past — or has the denial shaped us too permanently?

⁷⁶ A. McGuinness, pers. comm. 1987.
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