

**Cultural Tourism**  
**or a**  
**Tourism Culture?**

**A Survey of the Impact of Tourism on Tasmanian Society**  
**1860-1991**

Peter MacFie

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## Cultural Tourism or a Tourism Culture

The appeal by locals for things British implied the locals were tourists themselves, always planning to 'go back' to 'Britain' for a visit. So much were the locals 'visitors' they modified the topography to assuage their guilt, so that even today the Tasmanian landscape is a reflection of their shame.

With the formation of the Port Arthur Management Authority, as a NGBE in 1987 I was given responsibility for the guiding and interpretation function at the old penal settlement (until then no formal training had been given to staff). Dealing with travel agents, travel writers, film and television crews, coach operators and visitors, 1987-88 was a crash course in cultural tourism. Questions of the appropriate or ethical use of the site arose quickly. The site was seen by advertisers and film-crews as a back-drop and rarely did they look behind the facade. Journalists did occasionally. Should the Model Prison be used for showy parties and receptions? Should the site have control of the images being filmed, which would convey an impression overseas? A Japanese film crew from a top-rating TV show "How Much for the Whole World" focussed on articles thought by the crew to be bizarre (I was given a 'T' shirt as a memento). Another Japanese TV crew wanted to film footage for a 'punishment tour' of Port Arthur while a panel were to guess which were 'true' punishments.

The management regarded the coverage as a godsend; free access to a multi-million dollar market. My guiding staff registered co-operation.

Focus on wilderness over the last 15 years has been to the detriment of debate over the built heritage. Not only have issues involving cultural heritage received less attention, but this neglect has been reinforced by the media's pre-occupation with the wilderness issue, type-casting speakers. A press release from Christine Milne, MHA, - in support of local groups' opposition to a proposed development at Eaglehawk Neck - did not get a run by the Tasmanian media, despite her being a history graduate with an honours thesis in tourism.<sup>1</sup>

Growth of the heritage tourism industry coincides with a critical turning point in the lives of many Tasmanians who are still coming to terms with the island's convict past. Something has been going on in our minds - the shutting out of a painful experience causing reactive behaviour in people - just when tourism seeks to capitalise on the surviving past; the buildings, the records, myths and memories. What is the impact on the island's society? What do they feel to be valuable? Tourism imposes and interferes with our understanding of ourselves.

The conflict is because while we are trying to understand ourselves - by coming close to the 'real world' - tourists are by travelling, distancing themselves from their home and from us as hosts. According to Turner and Ash, 'A holiday is a political action' and holidays are the ultimate products of an advanced consumer society.<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, holidaying was/is a rest and recuperation. Cultural tourism implies the tourist wants to get to know the host country. David Uzzell argues for a 'hot approach' to the presentation of history, to challenge both the local and visitor, yet our museums and

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<sup>1</sup> Pers comm., 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Turner and Ash, p. 181.

institutions have traditionally encouraged a detached, quiet 'objectivity' so-called. Interpretation is persuasion and not mere entertainment. There is very little of this in Tasmania at present.

In another sense, tourism has created a culture to which we have to adjust e.g. Port Arthur, Richmond, Sovereign Hill. Can we keep our integrity? While Sovereign Hill is a picture-post-card mock town, outside, the real Ballarat suffers from aluminium shop windows, demolition and garish signs. The visitor approaching Port Arthur sees a jumble of dwellings - many with flat roofs - and a pseudo-Tudor motel, the *Fox and Hounds*. The danger is that, as the myths become established, the Real Port Arthur, Richmond or windmills will be unnecessary, having been replaced by the image created by the entrepreneur.

Cultural tourism can educate and broaden the visitor or local. Our interest in history should precede and direct an interest in tourism and not the reverse. What about the impact of cultural tourism in Tasmania?? The impact is not new. In 1890 a newspaper noted:

"Once again we must be permitted to observe that all this Quixotic fuss and flutter about providing amusement for 'Our Visitors' is going just a little bit too far. Don't let us make ourselves ridiculous. The visitors are well able to look after themselves, and don't want to enjoy their outings with their evening dress clothes on. Is Mount Wellington to be planted with strawberries? Are wild cows to be turned out on the Ploughed Field so as to have cream on the spot? Are toothpicks to be supplied all round, and postage stamps given away at all the hotels? How much further is this business to go? We are very glad indeed to see our Australian cousins, but we can't promise to wet-nurse them (the Hon. N.J. Brown says *dry-nurse*) all round. They come to Tasmania for a rough-and-tumble pic-nic, and don't want to do it arrayed in velvet and fine linen.<sup>3</sup>

The phrase 'cultural tourism' has become popular in recent years in Australia and Tasmania, but the definition and wider implications of the term are little understood, especially by those in the tourist or heritage industry. About 1989, Tasmania held a 'Japan Week'; included were artefacts and costumed attendants from a Shinto shrine. These were supplied by the Japanese Ministry of Culture. In Tasmania the week's events were directed and promoted by the Department of Tourism. The difference in emphasis symbolises the varying contrasts to cultural tourism - in Tasmania it seems we have a 'Tourism Culture', rather than 'Cultural Tourism

A Chinese speaker (Wang Gunguru) at an Australian seminar on tourism entitled 'Who Owns the Past?' took an alternative approach to the other speaker. His paper 'Loving the Ancient in China' explained:

This essay is not about the ownership of all aspects of the past. It leaves out the physical objects and focuses on ideas and values embodied in literate artefacts ownership is not about exclusive possession but about a shared heritage.<sup>4</sup>

This describes my approach at Port Arthur Historic Site also, and goes on to discuss, "the right to select the past for all to use, about who determines what about the past should be

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<sup>3</sup> Tasmanian Mail, 1.2.1890 p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> p.175.

perused<sup>5</sup> We are 'life tenants' of our heritage as an elderly friend in the Richmond district once expressed it.

The effect of this emphasis on a Tourism Culture in dictating priorities, the possessive attitude and often neglect under which local communities are placed in preference to the temporary visitor, and the ensuing conflict of interest are areas of concern to historians and should be of concern to cultural managers and tourism operators.

I'd like to examine the effect this emphasis on tourism is having on the communities from which it's drawn and in particular the double-edged nature of tourism.

Chris Koch, in 'The Doubleman' uses a description for the sensual. Mrs Dillon who was 'two people beneath her respectable blue cardigan and tartan skirt, she was the other nameless woman in the lit window'<sup>6</sup>. Koch on a recent visit also described Tasmania as 'another country'. I'd like to explore later this 'other country', this nameless woman which is alternatively promoted and suppressed as the true identity of Tasmanian society.

Before examining the contemporary use and abuse of cultural tourism, an examination of the evolution of the island's twin levels of consciousness are worth outlining. One is the formal published account (often by visitors) and the other the often un-written, tacit, semi-tangible nature of the soul of the Tasmanian community with which it's grappling, and amongst which we live.

The evolution of Tasmanian society from 1856 to 1970 - post-transportation to the beginnings of convict re-recognition - are intricately bound up with the beginnings of tourism.

Knowledge of Tasmania's attributes and drawbacks were documented in publications beginning in the 1820s. First, in books giving advice to would-be immigrants. Second, in novels with an Australian setting. Third, in accounts of missionaries. Fourth, in descriptions of the genre of travel writers which grew in number after 1850 particularly. Fifth were accounts of the convict system sometimes by ex-prisoners, and included lectures, pamphlets and publications, e.g. John Frost (ex Welsh Chartists and Horrors of Transportation ), and Governor du Cane's lecture and publications and the North American political prisoners. All interacted to promote conflicting images abroad - and at home - of the island's worth, both physically and morally.

Typically, most publications represented the opinions and aspirations of well-to-do middle-class travellers. From the 1820s, Curr<sup>7</sup>, (manager of the VDL Co), Surveyor Evans' "Advice to Emigrants"<sup>8</sup>, Messrs Prinsep<sup>9</sup>, Hill and the various almanacks and yearbooks all gave useful if predictable advice with strong loyalist over-tones.

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<sup>5</sup> Wang Gunguru,

<sup>6</sup> Chris Koch, *The Doubleman*, p81.

<sup>7</sup> Curr, Edward, "An Account of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land: Principally designed for the use of Emigrants"

<sup>8</sup> Evans, George, "Advice to Emigrants"

<sup>9</sup> Prinsep, Augustus. "The Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land"

Other publications such as Thornley's<sup>10</sup> advice to emigrants first published in the 1840s gave a romanticised and dramatic account of settling and went on to 7 editions, plus translation into Dutch and German.

Alternative accounts came from the pen of Quaker missionaries Backhouse<sup>11</sup> and Walker, and later Fred Mackie<sup>12</sup> who sympathised if not empathised with the prisoners' plights - as well as those of the settler - contrasted with the pompous point of view of ex-military travellers Mundy<sup>13</sup> and Butler-Stoney<sup>14</sup>, and Lt. Gov. Denison's journal, all published in the 1850s. By then, the whistle had been blown on the convict system by a number of authors, including those mentioned, plus returning government officials, conscience stricken clergy (such as Rev Fry<sup>15</sup> and Bishop Willson), exposing to Britain the failures of the convict system.

All the 'advice' publications emphasised the island's unique scenery and flora and fauna, after the initial shock by first settlers. This emphasis increased to near-hysterical-cum-laudatory descriptions the worse the convict system became; and is best illustrated by focusing on Anne Meredith's works. With the growth of the 'convict -cringe' post 1860, emphasis on the scenery and its likeness to British and European places acted as an anti-dote to feelings of inferiority. So much so that by 1870 Anthony Trollope on a literary lecture tour thought 'everything in Tasmania is more English than in England itself'. The row of pine trees on the foreshore at Penguin - and other towns - planted to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee and, later, World War I memorial avenues bear witness to Trollope's statement.

While the early emigrant-guides ignored the socially divisive origins of the colony, novelists did not fear the subject; although they were hardly fearless. Caroline Leahey's<sup>16</sup> much-ignored 1859 novel "The Broad Arrow" fronted (if rather sanctimoniously) the convict stain issue. But, like Lancaster<sup>17</sup> in her 1931 "Pageant" - an historical novel set in the Campbell Town district - both authors were British 'tourist' writers who were instrumental in influencing the popular conception of Tasmania. Marcus Clark's "Term of His Natural Life"<sup>18</sup> was similarly written - though with a more condemnatory stance - and being originally syndicated in *The Argus*, Melbourne, had a far bigger impact than "The Broad Arrow".

While the tourist-authors came and went, Tasmanian society was evolving the various phases of settlement reflecting markets, availability of labour and the impact of conviction.

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<sup>10</sup> Thornley, William "The Adventures of an Emigrant in Van Diemen's Land". Pub 1840s Ed. John Mills in 1899

<sup>11</sup> Backhouse, James. "A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies" (London, 1843)

<sup>12</sup> Mackie, Frederick, "Traveller Under Concern: The Quaker Journals of Frederick Mackie on his Tour of the Australasian Colonies 1852-1855. M. Nicolls (ed.), 1973, Foot and Playsted Pty Ltd Launceston (Tas).

<sup>13</sup> Mundy, Godfrey Charles "Our Antipodes: or, Residence and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies, with a Glimpse of the Gold Fields". Richard Bentley, London, 1855

<sup>14</sup> Butler-Stoney, Henry. "A Year in Tasmania: including some months' residence in the capital; with a descriptive tour through the island". London, 1856

<sup>15</sup> Fry, Rev. Henry Phibbs "Penal Discipline, &c., in Van Diemen's Land. London, 1850

<sup>16</sup> Leahey, Caroline, "The Broad Arrow"

<sup>17</sup> Lancaster, G.B. (Edith Joan Lyttleton), "Pageant", Endeavour Press, Sydney, 1933

<sup>18</sup> Clark, Marcus, "For the Term of His Natural Life"

This impact is most noticeable on the Tasmanian landscape, where regional differences in farming, clearing and the use of exotic plants is physically reflected in the surviving landscape. The greater the fear of the convict stain, the more 'English' the conversion of the countryside became. The Midlands - dry sclerophyll, grazier owned - occupied in the 'open' phase of convictism, when the ancestry of all was known.

The north-west and north-east once heavily timbered with swamp gum and tea-tree, cleared in the final phases of settlement coinciding with the growth of the 'hated stain'.

Was the 'Anglicising' of the countryside done to give absolution to those emancipists and free settlers who sought desperately to prove their Britishness? Socially this was reinforced by the growth of brass bands and rifle clubs post-Crimea and post-Sudan.

By 1890, Tasmania was a severely divided society. Publicly convictism did not exist (???? not Port Arthur) but privately and officially, emancipists were prevented from obtaining positions in the public service and native-born juvenile offenders had their parents listed next to their names if they too had been convicts.

In 1904 on the first centenary of white settlement, convicts were not mentioned on the official program and S. O. Lovell, Inspector of Schools, also failed to mention convicts in a small official history then, and wrote of the bush rangers who led a 'wild wicked life' in the bush - but hinted that children's parents could probably tell them of their exploits<sup>19</sup>.

In the 'second society', folklore and legend kept alternative opinions of the convict system alive. They were helped by the 1893 publication of the memoirs of Mark Jeffrey's "*A Burglar's Life*"<sup>20</sup> and Martin Cash, 1870, who presented the convicts' view from the inside.<sup>21</sup>

The 'new' Port Arthur had also kept the interest alive and did so until the 1960s - and was virtually the only place in Australia where convictism could be viewed and discussed 'openly'. Henry Button in Launceston, intrigued with the elderly ex-prisoners in the invalid homes also described these and other 'characters' from in and around the city in the 1890s. The pages of "*The Bulletin*" and "*The Lone Land*" allowed the popular view of an unjust society to be read about and acted upon. In 1915, one the most popular of histories of 19th century Tasmania was produced by "*Truth*" magazine<sup>22</sup>.

The Archives copy in Hobart belonged to Harry O'May, ferry owner and author of books on Tasmanian shipping. "From authentic sources", *Truth's* "History of Tasmania" promised to tell in a plain way the true story of the bad old days in VDL. Forcefully anti-British and anti-government, the book spoke of "The concern of convictism spreading its consuming ravages over the face of the land"<sup>23</sup>. But the conclusion is as naively optimistic as any tourist guide-book, as by the end of the century, Tasmania "as a beautiful woman stepped forward over the dead ashes of the past to a far happier destiny". However, advertisements on the inside

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<sup>19</sup> S.O. Lovell, "Tasmania: its First Century" Published Hobart Launceston, J.Walch & Sons; A.W. Birchall & Sons, 1907, P 25

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey, Mark, "A Burglar's Life"

<sup>21</sup> Cash, Martin, "Martin Cash: The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land in 1843-4: A Personal Narrative of his Exploits in the Bush and His Experiences at Port Arthur and Norfolk Island." Hobart, 1961

<sup>22</sup> "From Authentic Sources", "History of Tasmania", *Truth* magazine, 1915

<sup>23</sup> *Truth's History of Tasmania*, p 67

covers indicate that the true history was 'underground' and for men only, - the ads offering 'free consultation for all diseases including Venereal Disease, Lost Manhood etc...'. Other advertisements were for Fosters Beer and the Queensland Government Railways.

Historian George Arnold Wood's 1921 "History/Australia" which blamed the Home Country, not the transported sinners, for the first time allowed the country to debate the issue of the hated stain, reinforced by the 1926 filming of the "Term".

By the 1930s a reaction had set in with Moore-Robinson<sup>24</sup> and Emmett<sup>25</sup> claiming the horrors had been exaggerated - all reinforced by Coitman Smith's<sup>26</sup> 1941 "*Shadow of Tasmania*", now in its 19th edition. The foreword by Premier Robert Cosgrove (who wanted Port Arthur levelled) welcomed Smith's approach which treated the convict days in a "bright common-sense manner, with none of the morbidity and horror which have too often stamped such work" which he hoped would be a revelation to the general public, the tourist and "the most blasé and prejudiced reader" (1974).

Smith's depiction of a fair advanced prison system for the criminal class pre-dated Manning Clark and Lloyd Robson's 1960s findings which described the convict ancestors as being from the "professional criminal classes".

Throughout the 1880s and 90s, tourism continued to grow. Superimposed on the evolving island colony's self-denial was an increasing number of excursionists arriving to escape the heat of the mainland and India. Excursion steamers brought Melbourne visitors to Port Arthur by steamer such as the *SS Flora*.

The opportunities presented by tourism forced writers and some locals into coming to terms with the island's ancestry.

During the 1860s - before the stain was fully understood by visitors - the new guide books were open and descriptive of all facets of the island; its history as well as its scenery. Henry Thomas' 1869, "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania (Dedicated to all in Search of Health, Recreation and Pleasure)" was effusive with compliments about the gardens of Hobart and Launceston, the latter being well-off in gardens 'private and public'<sup>27</sup>. The visitor was advised to inspect the Gorge and Cara Lynn. The writer was not impressed with Launceston's theatre "which being neither elegant nor clean and (was) not likely to draw any but lower strata of society and (was) evidently neglected by the upper 10".

Thomas described other areas 'in this pretty Land of Nod', including Cleveland ('a dirty looking place, the most squalid in the island and the pig and potato style of the whole was anything but cheering')<sup>28</sup> )

Oatlands (where he heard stories of tricks on the traveller who paid for meals with no time to eat).

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<sup>24</sup> Moore-Robinson, J. "Historical Brevities of Tasmania". Written for the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Hobart, 1937.

<sup>25</sup> Emmett, Evelyn Temple "A Short History of Tasmania", Sydney, 1937

<sup>26</sup> Smith, Coitman "Shadow of Tasmania" 1941

<sup>27</sup> Thomas, Henry "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania", 1869, P74

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, Henry. "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania" 1869, P81

At Jericho the coach changed horses for the 8th time.

At Bridgewater, Thomas describes in detail the construction of the causeway by convicts, empathising with the 'poor prisoners'<sup>29</sup>.

Richmond - had the 'faded importance of a town bypassed by a railway'.

This section - and others - were missing from later editions of Thomas' guide book, which was reprinted for nearly 10 years.

Thomas also visited - as part of his sight-seeing - the Brickfields Invalid Department (the present site of North Hobart oval) - where he saw a corps of 214 ancient labourers and a 'smiling garden' - the Queens Asylum for Destitute Children (New Town), plus St David's Cathedral, the Town Hall, Library and House of Parliament. (In Launceston he also visited the Home for Old Men and Women). Thomas confronted the problem of Tasmanian ancestry in a way no Tasmanian then would - and assured the would-be traveller there was no need of the 'absurd prejudice which exists with many, who cannot forget the antecedents of the colony'<sup>30</sup>. He found the people 'proverbially hospitable', there being 'an entire absence of anything likely to recall the fearful ordeal through which the colony has passed'.

He also found Tasmania 'lamentably dull in developing the rich resources of the colony' believing 'an infusion of new blood' was needed.

Despite this the travel writer played to the full his visit to Port Arthur.

Thomas' ultimate horror was to visit Port Arthur which was then still running. His less than sympathetic description (one year prior to Trollope's) no doubt conveyed to mainlanders - if not Tasmania - the shame of the place. Here he felt 'your Port Arthur criminal is not an everyday criminal, he simply represents incarnate wickedness... They have most of them... reached the point of human existence... in which the human being becomes an animal... With such a cage of tigers to look after... precautions were (understandable)". The sleeping prisoners she visited looked alike and 'thoroughly depraved like a bull-dog with the same savage jaw, low forehead and half sulky, half threatening eye'<sup>31</sup>.

Like Smith O'Brien and many others she wondered why 'this earthly hell had been slipped into this earthly paradise'<sup>32</sup>.

By 1885, Thomas' guide book was much smaller - little detail was given on Port Arthur and only a brief history of the 'Anglo Saxon Spirit of the Pioneers'<sup>33</sup>.

New guide books became merely descriptive, concentrating on scenic views and added sections on angling. The 1908 "Handbook for Tasmania" (Australian Health Resort) described the clean air of Burnie, 'like the Mediterranean but without hot winds and sickening evil smells'<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas, Henry. "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania" 1869, P86

<sup>30</sup> Thomas, Henry. "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania" 1869, P126

<sup>31</sup> Thomas, Henry. "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania" 1869, p.158

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, Henry. "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania" 1869, p.159

<sup>33</sup> Thomas, Henry. "Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland to Tasmania" 1885, p.142

<sup>34</sup> Handbook for Tasmania" (Australian Health Resort), 1908, p.148



The 'cleaning up' of the embarrassing aspect in Tasmanian history coincided with the growth of the organised tourist industry and the formation in 1893 of The Tasmanian Tourist Association. The 1893 Association was preceded in 1889 by the Launceston and City Suburban Improvement Association which was formed to beautify Launceston and attract tourists<sup>35</sup>.

The Deloraine Improvement Association (1894) and the Swansea and Spring Bay Tourist Bureau promoted local districts. The 1890s saw regular publication - and regular steam ships - by Melbourne-based shipping companies - and their steamers were all seen in early tourist views of Port Arthur. By 1912, 40,000 tourists were visiting the island yearly<sup>36</sup>.

J W Beattie, photographer and tourist promoter, was a member of the initial Tasmanian Tourist Association committee, and the only Tasmanian to forcefully confront Tasmania and tourists with their past. But he concentrated on the objects, removed from time and place. Folk collectors intrigued by convict and other relics began an industry of their own.

While the tourist publications avoided the contentious, popular editions bought by tourists and Tasmanians alike confronted the ethos, often in a romantic and inaccurate light. Novels by Roy Bridges and G.B. Lancaster kept the issue alive. Other novelists and poets like Marie Bjelke-Petersen used the Tasmanian setting for romantic novels with quasi-religious themes. Only the much under-rated Norma Davis wrote with a passion for her home-land exclusive of a British conscience.

The formal tourist industry proceeded to gain in political clout. In 1913 proposals for the conservation of parks came into being with the first national park - Mt Field, near Maydena - established under the *1915 Scenery and Preservation Act*, overseen by a Board. At Port Arthur, concern over the fate of the ivy-clad church and ruined Penitentiary led the government (under pressure from the Tourist Association) to re-acquire both structures from the tour board.

## Contemporary 1990s Tourism

Change in the impact tourism had on Tasmania grew in the 1960s and 70s - partly aided by the decline of the rural economy.

Neglected towns and properties and derelict barns and shearing sheds began to provide alternative hospitality to urban-bound mainland commuters seeking assurance that there was another way in the past and - at a price - today. Wilderness provides the same rejuvenating escape experience. Both survive in Tasmania by default rather than deliberate policy; historic buildings because the owners could not/would not renovate and 'the bush' because no use could yet be found for it commercially.

The neglect was probably due to the years of enforced inferiority and the patronising clichés of visitors and apologetic expatriates. Locals had not come to terms with their surroundings both aesthetically and spiritually, many regarding moving into a brick and tile from a weatherboard or colonial brick home as 'progress'.

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<sup>35</sup> Roeson 2, p.284

<sup>36</sup> Morris, p.34

Despite progress in the form of hydro-industrialisation, the old patterns still remained. In Hobart, old people feared being sent 'behind the clock' of the church tower of St Johns Park; formerly the Queens Orphanage and still a public hospital. School students ridiculed each others' sanity and indicated with a spinning finger that your eccentric behaviour would send you 'up the river' (Derwent) to the New Norfolk 'nut house', i.e. the Asylum - still in use today on the same site since c. 1829. At Oatlands, the infant school was situated in the old gaol yard, where the only gallows outside Hobart and Launceston had operated, and the cells of the prison were excavated to hold the town swimming pool.

In Launceston, the first hospital gained notoriety for being a brothel run by Assistant Surgeon James Spence. Jane Torr, servant to Ronald Gunn, had slept the night with Surveyor Thomas Scott (for 'one pound in silver')<sup>37</sup>. Controversy had been common in the hospital's administration for many years but this house of ill-fame disappeared, as did most of the Launceston Georgian public buildings which may have acted as a reminder. The mining boom of the last quarter of the 1800s saw to that, and progress saw the demolition of gaols and military barracks scattered from Southport to Westbury and Swansea to Kimberley on the Mersey. Still some practices persist; Braddon noted that in Launceston in the 1870s, he had difficulty in finding business people as although the 'one o'clock dinner is an institution of the country, respected by all men and as the dinner law is elastic - respected by all men - it makes a considerable hole in your working day'<sup>38</sup>.

The new non-midlands towns of fundamentalist communities in pioneering back-blocks established their chopping carnivals, wheel and running races, Rechabite Halls and brass bands, libraries and Mechanics Institutes and church rituals. Grandparents - forgetting their records to be discovered later - invented stories on the family's arrival in Tasmania.

Expatriate groups arriving in Tasmania marvelled at scenery, architecture and the towns' ideal places for people of artistic taste and refinement to settle, at least temporarily.

Until 1970s, tourism was something locals could avoid if they wanted. But many came to stay and with political clout - reinforced by the selective memory of the National Trust - and both re-enforced their own ideals of what history and culture were about.

Nationalism allowed vent in the Whitlam years gave use to the practice of planning schemes. The State tourist department proposed 'taking over' Richmond as a quasi-Williamsburg only to recoil in horror at the hostility shown by locals at a public meeting. Similar insensitivity was shown by town planners drafting the first Port Arthur Management Plan (1979) which proposed levelling the row of pine trees in the Memorial Avenue planted for the Peninsula's WW I volunteers. The first step in making Port Arthur into an historic 'ghost-town' began with compensation to the local council for its removal from the Asylum/Town Hall which they had occupied since 1895 - to new premises at Nubeena. Other dwellings were gradually acquired and with the \$9 million Federal-State Conservation Project, the last of the locals - ex-guide Tony Weldon - vacated his Port Arthur home in 1986.

The one Tasmanian community that had faced the past - by necessity - more than any other, was removed from its centre.

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<sup>37</sup> Daniels (ed), p.16-17

<sup>38</sup> Reynolds, p.123

The conflict and alienation felt by the formal imposition of external restrictions on a local community are only too common. The experience of Richmond (Tasmania) and, I expect, Evandale and Deloraine (etc) are duplicated in that shared by the residents of Beechworth (Vic). In Tasmania the conflicts were complicated by a low level democratic involvement of local government. But unlike Beechworth, until recently Richmond and Evandale had no real tourism industry - and in particular no involvement from the townsfolk.

Today Richmond is crowded at weekends by vehicles and visitors but the locals are nowhere to be found - 'it's not the same' is often heard in private.

The 'Tourism Culture' is starting to separate us from our history as Aborigines have been isolated and removed from their sacred tribal lands. We must reclaim our sacred places.

This separation began with the romantic notion of the aesthetic escape. In the 1960s Leslie Greener (noted Egyptologist) wrote a submission on 'Richmond Tasmania - A Charming Setting for the Arts' and he believed that the town would become a cultural and historic centre and not a tourist gimmick, as 'people of taste and discernment' were coming to reside there<sup>39</sup>.

Today, do you hear of the poverty of Richmond townsfolk who relied in the 1890s on regular hand-outs from the Ogilvys of *Inverquainty* for tea, sugar, meat, fruit and vegetables and the occasional plug of tobacco?<sup>40</sup> The gaol, the court-house, the pubs and sale day once conditioned the response to locals. The down to earth, 'don't-give-me-that bull' contrasts with the Tourist Association who run an occasional fair, dressing in period. Note that the locals wouldn't dress up but only for special occasions - like the sesqui-centenary -when a great effort was put into a grand parade. But to dress up (ie kow-tow) is not acceptable. Apart from the pub and stores, tourism in Richmond offers little direct employment to locals.

The sheer numbers mean that genuine interest is replaced by a glazed-eyed service geared to high traffic turnover. At Ross, I was asked by a frantic bonneted tea-room proprietor to move to another table for the monthly interstate bus-group. A hard-pressed couple running a bark-mill at Swansea were too busy (for a start) to talk in detail with a persistent historian who wanted more detail than the tourist spiel offered. They admitted later they hadn't had a holiday themselves for 18 months.

At Beechworth, Tom Griffiths describes the 'new tourists, like museum visitors arriving in droves, never staying long, gawking but not giving and seeking quick information and gratification'<sup>41</sup>.

The search for relics and photographs has meant that many a farm/town/home history has been pilfered/saved. At Richmond, the owner of a photographic museum 'borrowed' many local's photos, only to move 'his' collection interstate.

Archives, museums and collectors similarly scan the country side, removing the historical soul of a district, rather than using skills to establish de-centralised regional museums. The Queen Victoria Museum is unique in reflecting and collecting a city's history. However, the

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<sup>39</sup> Tas. Lib. T.C. p.Q706

<sup>40</sup> Whishaw, p.16

<sup>41</sup> Griffiths, Tom, p.88

onus for archival responsibility for their own records needs to be on bodies private and public - sheer weight of material will 'draw' the limited resources of public institutions. In NSW and overseas, archives are being returned to local governments (under professional supervision).

The alienation felt by Beechworth and residents of other historic towns is understandable; the new aesthetic made buildings and not (local) people the historical centre-piece. 'Locals saw an intrusion of an impersonal ... view of architecture ... an obsession with that part of their environment which least touches the heart'<sup>42</sup>.

In their keenness to convert old structures, many interiors, including stables, kitchens etc., are gutted and evidence of their functions removed for cultural tourism, while carefully retaining the facade, and a period colour scheme - but few to the point of paint scrapes. The character is changed too - the rough *Bridge Inn* at Richmond carefully restored externally, now has boutiques in the 'Mews' to the rear - the old courtyard out-buildings [add village store - rake and wallpaper]

Beechworth (because of Ned Kelly) and Tasmania (because of the 'hated stain') had no local historical societies until the 1980s. The state's narrow view of itself was dominated by the National Trust's focus on grand mansions and middle to upper class British heritage. However, new arrivals are re-writing history before the locals have been able to understand the immediate past.

## The Heritage Industry in 1989

Wide gaps, tensions and misunderstanding exists amongst people who are ostensibly connected with the heritage industry; between government tourist departments and professionals, tour and coach operators and historic sites and museums, amongst the heritage professions (poorly represented by historians) and between academic scientists and applied historians.

The non-involvement by professionals is exemplified in Tasmania by the lack of full Australian Studies syllabus at all levels, non-training of guides and operators at historic buildings and sites, and the non-existence of heritage legislation - the ultimate proof that convictism is still with us.

Heritage professionals are strangers to the tourist industry, apart from occasional Adult Education or Elder-hosted guest spots. To most archaeologists and 'serious' historians, tourists interfere with 'real' work i.e. the production of another 'dig' on 'paper' to add another notch on their CV. Why does Harvard University have a Chair in Australian Studies and not most universities - including Tasmania?<sup>43</sup>.

Professor Mulvaney noted with concern that, although there had been much 'publicity about the greening of Australia... the awakening of Australian historians to the urgency of preserving our cultural past and making it known at all levels of education 'is of great concern'<sup>44</sup>. Ironically, he observed - (as I have) that most people involved with the saving of historic buildings, and artefacts, documents and the writing of local and family histories are

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<sup>42</sup> Griffiths, Tom, p.102

<sup>43</sup> McShane, Ian p.1

<sup>44</sup> Mulvaney, p.2

not historians. With the exception of a couple of notable exceptions the same is true of Tasmania's tertiary milieu.

No Australian historians are on any curriculum board, in Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, at Port Arthur historic site or on local council staff - or on Museum staff.

Ian McShane sees the urgency for cultural heritage establishing the cultural significance of a place - as a key process - 'Historical scholarship and understanding' he says will be dragged centre-stage 'kicking and screaming, perhaps.'<sup>45</sup>

To have any meaning, all places, objects (and ourselves) need an historical context - tourism (and at present many historians) don't give that relevance.

While history is being represented by museum designers, curators, archaeologists and politics - and the tourist industry - only history can be its antidote, as Donald Hoe noted.

The best organised heritage professionals are curators and archaeologist - the latter particularly so. While Kay Daniels and Richard Flanagan stridently - and with some accuracy - criticised the archaeologists for making Port Arthur a tribute to the 'process of conservation' rather than the process of history. These two professionals work aggressively in public heritage with set pay rates, annual conferences, lobbying - which make historians appear 'wet' by comparison. The new critics, like their academic fellows, launch their attacks from the safety of distance - hit and run history - leaving antagonism but no resolution.

The emphasis on architectural and archaeological assessment of sites creates problems for historians as history is perceived by the former as site-located only. Historians see relationships - of themes and the research and interpretive skills of historians - and the time needed to extract and evaluate these is poorly understood by architects and archaeologists. Yet, if not done, the object on structure has a lost de-humanised significance.

When used, historians are too often seen as fact-finders for archaeologists and architects, providing structural data on historical detail for signs. An historian friend who is a consultant researched a Tasmanian wind-mill due for Bi-Centennial 'restoration', in a key tourist attraction but was ignored by the steering committee once his report was to hand. His interpretive skills were not seen as relevant in deciding conservation priorities, yet the structural alterations made lessen (or heighten) the historical significance of the structure under restoration.

The committee's main concern was for the white sails of the wind-mill to be easily seen by tourists, who would hopefully bring the dollars into the town.

Historians are not just technicians for heritage conservation. The general Australian historical work is an essential background for cultural resource management, small or large.

At present as Sharon Sullivan says, the vacuum left by historians' non-participation in the popular heritage movement - including tourism - is allowing the mythologisers to move in and to abuse and alter our past for the wrong reasons.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile local historians and genealogists pour much time, love, enthusiasm - and varying levels of skill and hedonism - into small and large publications. Many of which are

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<sup>45</sup> McShane, Ian p.36.

<sup>46</sup> Sullivan, Sharon p.16.

relied upon by tourist operators for local history and building details. Too many of the local and family histories written in Tasmania in the past five years are appalling re-hashes of earlier works, newspaper clippings and sourced gossip and lists of who begat who and who inherited what.

Real historians 'tut-tut' from a safe distance and indulge in objectivity; 'French Revolutions' or the 'Medieval Wool Trade'. "Serious" writers and historians all leave Tasmania anyway, to return with a supercilious air and talk at luncheons and workshops - and leave again, leaving the locals to grapple alone with archives, unknowing teachers, vanishing skills and elderly folk, threatened buildings and weak local and state governments.

Locals are wary of giving too much of their belongings and privacy to colonial and other accidental developers, or yuppie historic home-owners who want minute house details from elderly residents, but would not be seen dead socially with them or offering them a lift.

Instinctively, they sense the soullessness of development without a heart, without meaning to stay and share the highs and lows of a local community - only capital-gain and off.

No historians are employed by the Tourist Department. Some employees in that department are very eager to seek the marketing opportunities of historical data and are always on the lookout for new 'products'. They could not believe their luck when I told them about the 96 North American political prisoners being transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1840 for their part in the Upper Canada rebellion!! The story was in a Qantas in-flight magazine before I could say 'William Gates'. They - and the Port Arthur Ghost tours - are now receiving world-wide promotion. But what do they say about our society - about us?? Then and now??

Many tourism staff are Tasmanian and share a love for the island and its history - a 2 person cultural tourism unit is tackling the area. But without historical societies and confident councils and with dismissive professionals, where do those interested in cultural tourism draw their ideas, rather than just produce brochures?

What is not seen, is that 'Tourism Culture' sells us short on cultural values, including historical ones. We need to decide what is of importance about ourselves - each community.

Unfortunately without local museums or historical societies, the only sense a visitor gets of many places is the antique or second hand shop. In Wynyard neither travel agents, banks nor the council could supply me with a brochure to walk around the town with - Rocky Cape (yes!), Stanley and the VDL Co (yes!) - but a unique (mainly) weatherboard Tasmanian town - (no!). Most seemed surprised I asked.

Tourism has locked visitors and us into believing only the convict-towns of the midlands are of 'historical value'; the National Trust's first publication waxes strongly on the British influence on Tasmanian buildings of brick and stone. Wood doesn't rate a mention. (This view in the Trust has fortunately passed, but not in the Hobart industry and ourselves.)

Such views prevent genuine access by local people to their own culture - warts and all - by the isolation and fossilising of set images. These images give the visitor a false brief vicarious 'sharing' - they also allow (or force) the locals to distance themselves behind the smokescreen of the myth - or to ignore it altogether. In the process, both are being betrayed.

The selective amnesia of Tasmanian history - as with other cultures - shuts out those dramatic events which have shaped us, even in our neglect. Tasmanians have survived by denying 'the social reality of the Tasmanian experience' as Richard Flanagan observes (Island) including the 'cobbers and the dobbers' who have shaped us.

### Solutions

To help find that other self and to keep a culture for ourselves which visitors may experience many options are open - and are worth a seminar in themselves. These include:

- the formation of historical societies;
- subsidies and monetary assistance (e.g. publishing) for local publishing houses;
- a University- or Fremantle-Press type of publishing house to print new works;
- employment of historians in museums, Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, Port Arthur, local government especially tourism;
- historical curricula in all levels of education, including:
  - tourism training e.g. Drysdale House
  - park rangers
  - historic site guides
  - interpretation staff.
- publicity on pending sale and removal of historical documents and artefacts from districts;
- control by heritage professionals and locals of marketing and publicity (not the opposite);
- teaching/traditional trade skills;
- distribution to local councils etc of historical reports (e.g. National Estate, Parks Wildlife and Heritage etc.) and seminars on (as done by QVM<sup>47</sup>);
- historians in residence.
- work experience in history
- the 'giving-away' by professionals of their skills - to local skill base and level / understanding/resource management.

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<sup>47</sup> Queen Victoria Museum and Art gallery, in Launceston

## Index

- A Burglars Life* .....6  
 Aborigines .....11  
 Backhouse, James .....5  
 Ballarat.....3  
 Beattie, John Watt.....9  
 Beechworth .....11, 12  
 Bjelke-Petersen, Marie .....9  
 brass bands.....6, 10  
 Brickfields Invalid Department.....8  
 Bridges, Roy .....9  
 Bridgewater.....8  
 brothels .....10  
 built heritage .....2  
 Burnie.....8  
 bushrangers.....6  
 Butler-Stoney, Henry .....5  
 Button, Henry .....6  
 Campbell Town.....5  
 Canadian political prisoners.....14  
 Cara Lynn..... *See* Cora Lynn  
 Cash, Martin .....6  
 Cataract Gorge.....7  
 chopping carnivals.....10  
 churches  
     St David's Cathedral .....8  
 Clark, Marcus .....5  
 Cleveland .....7  
 convict -cringe .....5  
 convict stain .....2, 5, 6  
 Cora Lynn.....7  
 Cosgrove, Robert.....7  
 cultural heritage .....2  
 cultural tourism.....2, 3, 4, 12, 14  
 Curr, Edward.....4  
 Daniels, Kay .....13  
 Davis, Norma.....9  
 Deloraine .....11  
 Deloraine Improvement Association .....9  
 Denison, Sir William.....5  
 du Cane, Sir Charles .....4  
 Eaglehawk Neck.....2  
 emancipists.....6  
 Emmett, Evelyn Temple.....7  
 employment of historians .....15  
 Evandale.....11  
 Evans, George.....4  
 film backgrounds .....2  
 Flanagan, Richard .....13, 15  
 Frost, John .....4  
 Fry, Rev. Henry Phibbs .....5  
 Greener, Leslie.....11  
 Griffiths, Tom .....11  
 guide books.....8  
 Guide to Excursionists from the Mainland  
     to Tasmania .....7  
 Gunn, Ronald .....10  
 Handbook for Tasmania .....8  
 hated stain.....6, 7, 12  
 heritage industry .....12  
 heritage tourism industry .....2  
 Hill, ?.....4  
 historians in residence.....15  
 Historical Brevities of Tasmania .....7  
 historical societies .....12, 14, 15  
 history curricula .....15  
 Hobart.....7, 9  
 Hoe, Donald.....13  
 holidays .....2  
 Home for Old Men and Women,  
     Launceston.....8  
 How Much for the Whole World.....2  
 inns  
     *Bridge Inn* .....12  
     *Fox and Hounds* .....3  
 interpretation.....3  
 Jeffrey, Mark .....6  
 Jericho .....8  
 Kelly, Ned .....12  
 Kimberley.....10  
 Lancaster, G.B.....5, 9  
 Launceston.....6, 7, 8, 9, 10  
 Launceston and City Suburban  
     Improvement Association .....9  
 Leahey, Caroline .....5



libraries .....	10	Scott, Thomas .....	10
Lloyd Robson, Leslie.....	7	selective amnesia.....	14
Lovell, S.O. ....	6	<i>Shadow of Tasmania</i> .....	7
Mackie, Fred .....	5	ships	
Manning Clark, Charles .....	7	<i>SS Flora</i> .....	7
Maydena.....	9	Smith O'Brien, William .....	8
McShane, Ian.....	13	Smith, Coitman.....	7
Mechanics Institutes .....	10	Southport .....	10
memorial avenues .....	10	Sovereign Hill.....	3
Meredith, Louisa Anne (Mrs Charles) .....	5	Spence, James .....	10
Midlands .....	6	St Johns Park.....	9
Milne, Christine.....	2	Stanley .....	14
Model Prison.....	2	Sullivan, Sharon .....	13
Moore-Robinson, J .....	7	swamp gum .....	6
Mt Field National Park.....	9	Swansea.....	10, 11
Mulvaney, John .....	12	Swansea and Spring Bay Tourist Bureau .	9
Mundy, Godfrey Charles .....	5	Tasmania .....	3
National Trust.....	10, 12, 14	Tasmania: its First Century .....	6
New Norfolk Asylum.....	10	Tasmanian Tourist Association.....	9
New Town.....	8	Tasmanian Tourist Department.....	14
Nubeena .....	10	tea-tree .....	6
Oatlands .....	7, 10	television shows .....	2
Ogilvy family.....	11	Term of His Natural Life.....	5, 7
O'May, Harry.....	6	The Broad Arrow .....	5
Pageant .....	5	theatres .....	7
Penguin.....	5	theft	
Penitentiary .....	9	historic artifacts.....	11
photos, historic .....	11	memories .....	14
Port Arthur.....	2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15	photographs .....	11
Port Arthur Ghost tours .....	14	Thomas, Henry.....	7, 8
Port Arthur Management Authority .....	2	Thornley, William.....	5
Port Arthur Management Plan.....	10	Torr, Jane .....	10
poverty.....	11	tourism .....	2, 4, 10, 11
Prinsep, Augustus.....	4	tourism culture .....	2, 3, 4, 11, 14
properties		tourism developments .....	2
<i>Inverquainty</i> .....	11	Tourist Association .....	11
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery ..	11	tourist gimmicks .....	11
Queen Victoria's jubilee.....	5	tourist guide-books.....	6
Queens Asylum for Destitute Children ....	8	tourist-authors.....	5
Queens Orphanage .....	10	Transportation System .....	4
Rechabites.....	10	travel agents.....	2, 14
re-writing history .....	12	travel writers.....	2, 4
Richmond .....	3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12	Trollope, Anthony .....	5, 8
rifle clubs .....	6	Uzzell, David .....	2
Rocky Cape .....	14	Van Diemen's Land Company .....	4, 14
Ross .....	11	Walker, George.....	5
running races .....	10	Wang Gunguru .....	3, 4

Weldon, Tony .....	10	Willson, Bishop Robert.....	5
Westbury .....	10	Wood, George Arnold.....	7
wheel races.....	10	work experience in history .....	15
Whitlam, Gough.....	10	World War I memorials .....	5
wilderness issue .....	2	Wynyard .....	14