

THE EMPIRE'S FIRST 'LOST GENERATION'

The 1834 'CLASS'

at

POINT PUER JUVENILE PRISON,

Van Diemen's Land

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On 10th January 1834, sixty eight boys who were a nuisance at the Hobart Prisoners Barracks were sent to a new site selected for them across the bay from Port Arthur Penal Station. These boys had arrived in Van Diemen's Land along with other juvenile offenders and adult convicts toward the end of 1833 on either the *Isabella* or *John 2*.¹ They weren't the first boys transported from Britain; some had arrived in Sydney, others had been sent to Macquarie Harbour. Twenty two boys had been sent to Port Arthur in 1830 to train as sawyers.² But in the sense that the sixty eight who arrived as the first intake to the new purpose-built juvenile institution of Point Puer, they can be called Australia's first 'lost' generation. Within two years Britain was sending ships with dedicated cargoes of boys to Pt Puer.

The process bears uneasy parallels with the British child migrants sent to Australia post World War II, and the forced integration of Aboriginal families over the last fifty years. The new 'accidental' institution of Pt Puer was the first in the English speaking world, pre-dating Parkhurst - the juvenile facility on the Isle of Wight - by 4 years.³

The contrast between the myth surrounding Pt Puer and the real subculture is an area that had received little attention from historians. John West's description of Pt Puer as 'an oasis in the desert of penal government' has been repeated from Hooper to Lloyd Robson through to Robert Hughes. But did the reformation and trade training really work?⁴ Research on the first sixty eight reveals that the optimism was ill-placed and repeated without question for 160 years. Only by a study of what really went on at the penal station, and the final history of the boys as adults can the success or otherwise of Pt Puer be established.

If we cannot get to the realities behind the veneer of officialdom, how can we really understand the workings of an institution such as Pt Puer. In particular, what was the impact of such an experience on its inmates and their subsequent role as parents, employees and employers?

Most of the records of Pt Puer have been destroyed. Surviving are the boys' conduct records. When the records of the boys were collated in chronological order patterns began to appear. Boys who offended collectively, or abused others or escaped or dallied on the rocks behind the Point could for the first time be identified. The ring-leaders and rebels were revealed when the dates fell into line.

¹CON 86, AOT.

²Brand, Ian: Penal Peninsula, p Hobart, nd, p. 6.

³Peter MacFie's interest in Pt Puer grew from being Port Arthur site historian from 1983 until 1990. In 1985 a summer history program resulted in the arrival of Canadian born historian, Dr Robyn McLachlan. With the help of other summer volunteers, we assembled the Pt Puer Lads Database. Robyn collated the data from two 'graduation lists' of boys ready for employment, in 1837 and 1841, totalling 118 'lads'. While at Port Arthur, research into Pt Puer led PM to family enquiries, only to find that Fred Hooper -whose book based on his 1955 MA thesis "The Point Puer Experiment" popularised the Point - had been a childhood friend of his mothers'. When PM visited Fred at his home in Koo-Wee-Rup, Victoria in 1987, Fred explained that his father was the Methodist clergyman at the church in Launceston attended by PM's parents-to-be in the 1930's. In addition, Fred had stayed with PM's family in the 1950's when researching his thesis in Hobart. Nigel Hargraves is a descendent of John Hargraves, one of the original Pt Puer class of sixty eight. Nigel has undertaken extensive archival and genealogical research into the Pt Puer boys.

⁴MacFie, P. *'The Pt Puer Lads: a reappraisal with the aid of a computer'*, THRA, 33, p. 51-5.

This paper is an interpretation of the collated research, as well as other research, such as on the descendants of some of the boys. From them we can see evidence of the "Dobbers and Cobbers" ethos.⁵

Where were they from? The *Isabella* boys were mainly from London/Middlesex and the Home Counties. Three were from Edinburgh, and one each from Glasgow and Inverness. Two came from Bristol, one from Devon.

The *John 2* boys predominantly came from the Midlands - Stafford, West Riding, Leicester, Chester, Lancaster, with a further small group from Middlesex/London. William Bowles was an outsider too, convicted at Gloucester but a native of the West Indies, and described as 'complexion fair'.⁶

But how had the stolen generation been convicted? Several were part of organised gangs. John Hargreaves confessed that he 'he belonged to a gang of 25 Thieves (sic) who used to meet at the public house in High Street in Halifax'⁷ and who were 'pilfering everything they could lay hold of. Character very bad.'⁸ He was convicted of 'Stealing of shoes after my friends died. I used to go about Halifax pilfering.' Edward Gardener was 'connected to bad party of juvenile offenders.' After several theft offences he was transported for stealing printed cotton. Edward confided to the clerk, 'I belonged to a gang of about 25 at Sheffield. They met at High Street, at a bad house kept by a man named William Hall who arranged everything and then sent us out. Some were sent to pick pockets, others to rob houses. He used to take us out at night to prey. The gang was broken up while I was waiting for trial....'⁹

Walter Paisley of Newport, 4ft 1 & 1/2ins 'short' was sentenced at Buckinghamshire for housebreaking. 'My brother Francis, Alfred Taylor, John Simpson, David Reading and Benjamin Tarrell were all with me. They put me in at the window. I was the only one tried, the rest could not be found.' ('Once for a handkerchief, 3 months, and flogged.')

Nathaniel Harding a 5ft 1in Labourer's Boy of London was 'taken at Greenwich Fair. Supposed to belong to a gang who frequent such places.'¹¹

Two pairs of boy were sent to the Point for cooperative offences. Thomas Briggs (a Labourer's Boy aged 17) and Robert Wheeler (a 4ft 7ins Boy) both from London¹², were convicted of 'stealing coral beads from a child' in London.¹³ Peter Martin (a 5ft 1ins 16 year old Labourer of Portsmouth) and William Allen (a 5ft 2ins 16 year old Baker's Boy of

⁵MacFie, P. *Dobbers and Cobbers: informers & mateship among convicts, officials and settlers on the Grass Tree Hill Road, Tasmania 1830-50*, THRA, 35/p. 112-27. TL.

Boys referred to who were from other ships have their boat identified (except where cited by other authors); all others are either from the *Isabella* or *John 2*.

⁶CON 18/11, CON 31/5, AOT.

⁷MM 33/2, AOT.

⁸CON 31/21, AOT.

⁹CON 31/16, AOT.

¹⁰MM 32/2, CON 31/35, AOT

¹¹MM 33/2, CON 31/21, AOT.

¹²MM 33/2, AOT.

¹³CON 31/5 & CON 31/47, AOT.

London)¹⁴ were convicted of 'stealing coals and linen' at Southwark, Surrey on 22 July 1833, and transported for 7 years.¹⁵

After being convicted many of the boys were housed in the hulk *Euralyus*, on the River Thames, sailing to Van Diemen's Land in late 1833 on the *Isabella* and *John 2*, and within six months were at Pt Puer. Police Magistrate Forster wrote to Lt. Gov. Arthur, suggesting the training of the boys who had arrived were 'a dead weight upon the government' and there were more prisoners than could be assigned. The 'evil had much been increased,' he wrote, 'by the arrival of the *Isabella* and her miserable cargo.'¹⁶

Charles O'Hara Booth was commandant of the Port Arthur penal settlement and out-stations on Tasman Peninsula. These included Pt Puer across the bay from Port Arthur, site of the proposed juvenile establishment. Booth had a barrack prepared for the boys at 'The Point', but apart from this, the site was undeveloped.¹⁷

The boys were to sleep in hammocks, and asked each boy bring 'his hammock, blanket and rug.'¹⁸ In the end, only 40 hammocks could be found. Booth's intentions toward the boys appears to have been well-intentioned - at first. The boys arrived with a cargo of adult male prisoners. They had broken into the ship's hold and were 'in a perfectly senseless state of intoxication having access to a case of port; a number of prisoners were in the same state....'¹⁹ Rather than resort to punishment, Booth lectured the boys. He explained to Arthur,

..... as I propose to reform them by mild measures if practicable, I, on this occasion adopted no harsh measures towards them but endeavoured to convince them of their error by lecture.

I feel fully confident that the plan adopted by His Excellency of sending these misguided little creatures down here, with proper care and attention, which is fully performed by all whose duties call for it, cannot fail to eventually bring into the right path the majority, if not the whole of them.²⁰

Analysis of the boys' indents reveals that most were young and unskilled; older boys from the townships and those who were skilled were immediately assigned. The lads sent to Pt Puer are described as 'Boy'; this appears to be a bureaucratic description for 'unskilled' and/or 'small.' (Taller 'boys' tended not to go to Pt Puer.²¹) The first sixty eight spent varied lengths of time at Pt Puer, the last lad being sent for assignment in 1839. These boys saw the optimistic start of the institution degenerate to the despair of the 1840s; a despair hidden from public gaze.

The first offence at Pt Puer indicates an immediate challenge to the administration. Thomas Player, a 4ft 11ins 18 year old from Bristol transported for 14 years for stealing from the person - the classic 'stealing a handkerchief'²² - was accused on 30th January 1834 of 'Making

¹⁴CON 18/11, AOT.

¹⁵CON 31/2 & CON 31/30, AOT.

¹⁶CSO 1/690/15198, 23.11.33.

¹⁷ibid

¹⁸ ibid, 20/12/33.

¹⁹ibid, 6/2/34.

²⁰op cit.

²¹Nigel Hargraves Archives.

²²MM 33/2 & CON 31/35, AOT.

use of insolent and contemptuous language to the schoolmaster.' Twenty days after arrival, the boys were being schooled, and the charge system was in place.²³ This was Player's only offence at the Point.

Despite being boys, under British law they were to be treated as law-breakers, even for minor offences. Booth tried to avoid the 'grand-standing' formal trials allowed, and which gave the ring-leaders an opportunity to show-off, but he was over-ruled. For the historian however the minor offences form the inside story of the prison.²⁴

The stated aims of reform and training were set against a prison regime and culture whose main emphasis was punishment. Arthur had described them as 'wicked' but still 'objects of compassion.' The dilemma was never really resolved.

The street-wise and 'hulk-wise' boys soon became 'prison-wise' and 'bush-wise'. Cooperative behaviour between boys occurs, with the same names recurring. The boys developed a culture of their own which became ours. They were no longer 'Exiles', but 'Australians.' Many of our modern cultural attitudes are arguably evident in their behaviour, not all complimentary.

One of the first offences for which a Pt Puer boy was tried was for assaulting a boy who informed, (i.e. a 'dobber') when Peter Martin 'maltreated William Brandz' who reported on another un-named boy for 'throwing a stone and injuring him on the head.'²⁵ Brandz subsequently became one of the most rebellious lads at the Point.

Assuming boys who challenged the administration first were more assertive/aggressive, another early rebel and chronic repeat offender was Walter Paisley, who, despite his a 4ft 1 1/2ins stature²⁶ and status as smallest boy in the first intake, on 6 February 1834 showed 'insubordinate conduct toward the Superintendent.'²⁷

The boys slept in a barracks which, with hammocks rolled up, served as a day time school room and mess hall. Nearby was the workshop, Catechist's and officers' houses. Beyond were the gardens, saw-pits, and jetty.

A serious part of the culture behind the 'mask' of a prison is the black-market. Stealing food and tobacco were the two most common types of theft. Potatoes came from the store or the Point garden. Peter Martin, 27 June 1834, was charged with 'Stealing or receiving a quantity of potatoes.'

Thomas Briggs was found with 'fresh meat' and was severely punished.²⁸ Nathaniel Harding was charged with 'secreting a cask of government pork on the wharf which he was discharging from the *Tamar*' and on a separate occasion, 'conniving at another prisoner, Tams, (with) having turnips.'²⁹ Thomas Kelly was found with a 'ration of beef, part of that

²³Player received a Ticket of Leave in 1838 and Free Certificate in 1846.

²⁴I'm aware of the vulnerability of records annotated by prison officials, but there are no other sources.

²⁵CON 31/31, AOT.

²⁶MM 33/2, AOT.

²⁷CON 33/35, AOT.. A colloquial compliment for a man of short stature who showed a cocky bravado was, 'game as a piss-ant,' a reference to the small black native ant of the non-lethal kind.

²⁸CON 31/5, AOT.

²⁹CON 31/21, AOT.

stolen from the store.'³⁰ He reacted with 'insubordination when placed in custody', and received 25 lashes on the breech, a harsher punishment than boys who went Absent Without Leave.³¹

Corporal punishment at Point Puer was inflicted as 'stripes (occasionally 'lashes') on the breech' (ONB) - that is a beating on the buttocks. At Port Arthur, stripes referred to lashes on the back of prisoners using the cat o' nine tails.³² Compared to adult convicts, authorities were limited in the alternatives available for punishment. Apart from being beaten, the main type of coercion consisted of periods on bread and water in the cells and restricted play opportunities.

According to Horne in 1842, the diet at Pt Puer was relatively more generous than the male convicts.³³ This is illustrated by the example of Thomas Briggs. When he arrived in 1833 aged 15³⁴ his height was given as 4ft 9 & 1/2ins.³⁵ When convicted for burglary in Victoria in 1845, 12 years later (as George Jackson), his height was listed as 5ft 3 & 1/2ins, an increase of 6 inches.³⁶

The black-market operated by the boys implies a collusion from soldiers/overseers, or prisoners from Port Arthur who supplied the settlement with water. Operation of the black-market also reveals the hierarchy within, that of the 'bravest' boys.

The alcoholic Superintendent Montgomery was pensioned off in 1835. Without a suitable replacement, Booth's friend Lt William McKnight became superintendent from 8 September 1835 until 1 January 1837. A trained surveyor, John Mitchell, succeeded McKnight, becoming the site's longest serving superintendent, administering until 1848.³⁷ Mitchell was not formally appointed until September 1840, and had no experience in juvenile institutions.³⁸

Livestock belonging to the administrators was the goal of some. Walter Paisley was 'found with a fowl in his possession recently killed, the property of the Superintendent.'³⁹ More

³⁰CON 31/26, AOT.

³¹As a military-style institution, guarded by a military piquet, the term AWOL was not only apt but used to describe the 'escape' of boys from Pt Puer.

³²At this stage whether the boys received a caning or were flogged with a type of cat o' nine tails is uncertain. It is also unclear whether this was always done in front of the assembled inmates as at Port Arthur. Pretyman quotes Rev Manton who describes a public 'flagellation' where a boy who hit another boy with a club, was 'brought before the whole of his companions and received punishment upon the bare posterior....' Pretyman, E. R. *Some Notes on the Penal Settlement at Port Arthur Tasmania, Hobart, c 1966*, p 14.

³³CSO 22/75/1648, AOT.

³⁴His age is listed as 14 aboard the hulk in 1833, yet 18 on arrival in VDL.

³⁵MM 33/2, AOT.

³⁶CON 39/2, AOT..

³⁷Bennett, S. and Bennett, B. *Biographical Register of Tasmanian Parliament 1851-1960*. Canberra, 1980, p118.

³⁸ Mitchell, married in October 1839 and raised a family at Point Puer. Two of his children are buried on the Isle of The Dead. Lord, R. *The Isle of the Dead, Port Arthur, Hobart, 1990*, p79.

He settled on Tasmania's East Coast and became a Member of Parliament. Bennett & Bennett, *ibid*, p118.

When Mitchell left Point Puer in 1848 to move to his Lisdillon property, he took with him a former inmate, Thomas Gray, whom Mitchell always referred to as 'my boy Gray', even when Gray was an adult. Gray married an Irish girl, Sarah Knight. Von Steiglitz, K. *Pioneers of the East Coast from 1642, Hobart, nd c 1960*, p 90.

³⁹CON 31/35, AOT.

sinister was Thomas Kelly's 'Maliciously ill-treating a goat, the property of the Catechist, the same having died - 'probably' (sic) - from injuries sustained.' (Acquitted but reprimanded.)⁴⁰

Homes of administrators were also fair game:

12 May 1835. John Keefe, John Pollard, George Terry. 'Absent from Divine Service without authority, the Catechist's house having been broken into.'⁴¹

22 September 1835. Robert Cavanagh, John Charlton. 'In Lt McKnight's yard under suspicious circumstances.' (This was less than two weeks after McKnight commenced in the position as Superintendent.)⁴²

23 September 1835. Simeon Brown. 'Being in Lt McKnight's yard under suspicious circumstances. Reprimanded.'⁴³

22 November 1838, John Wright. 'Strong suspicion of pilfering from Mr Hepburn's quarters.' (i. e. the catechist.) 3 days Solitary Confinement (SC) on Bread & Water (B&W).⁴⁴

Tobacco and pipes were commonly used. William Brailsford (a 4ft 9in, 17 year old from Nottingham transported for 7 years for 'stealing a silk handkerchief')⁴⁵ was charged on four occasions over 18 months with having a pipe or 'privately endeavouring to make a pipe.'⁴⁶ Sometimes boys combined high risks as part of an inherent pecking order. Nathaniel Harding was charged on 18 October 1834 with 'stealing a quantity of tobacco the property of Mr Armstrong (catechist) at Pt Puer.' (21 days SC on B&W.)⁴⁷

The ultimate cheek was William Cummins, a 5ft 2in 16 year old 'Labourer's Boy' from Notts Town whose first Pt Puer offence was 'Having a pipe and tobacco in his possession improperly and smoking near the Superintendent's Quarters.' (4 days SC on B&W).⁴⁸

Food offered the greatest test of cooperation between the boys and adult convicts. Whether this is collusion or as a result of stand-over tactics is difficult to ascertain. For example, James Fisher was charged with 'Supplying his fellow prisoners with provisions from the cook-house.' (10 days SC on B&W).⁴⁹ Daniel Mollyneux gave part of his rations away.⁵⁰ Nathaniel Harding's first offence on 15 September 1834 was 'Giving provisions to a prisoner belonging to the Establishment at Port Arthur, ' perhaps an act designed to impress.⁵¹

Possession and secretion of food was central to the sub-culture on Pt Puer. Rations were regularly stolen by the boys, but they also made use of game, catching fish and crayfish.⁵²

⁴⁰CON 31/26, AOT.

⁴¹CON 31/26, CON 31/35, CON 31/43, AOT.

⁴²CON 31/7, AOT.

⁴³CON 31/5, AOT.

⁴⁴CON 31/47, AOT.

⁴⁵MM 33/2, CON 31/5, AOT.

⁴⁶CON 31/5, AOT.

⁴⁷CON 31/21, AOT.

⁴⁸MM 33/2, CON 31/7, AOT.

⁴⁹CON 31/14, AOT.

⁵⁰CON 31/31, AOT.

⁵¹CON 31/21, AOT.

⁵²Crayfish, local name for the salt water rock lobster.

There are no references to fish as part of the diet. However Montgomery reported 'When fish are plentiful in the bay I have a boat out for the purpose of catching fish to make soup for them, and their salt meat I have so steeped, that it is comparatively fresh.'^{53 54}

Boys were caught secreting food in and taking food out of the barracks. John Hargreaves, was charged with 'attempting to secret pudding part of his rations of the mess.' (48 hrs SC on B&W)⁵⁵

Booth and Lt Governor Arthur's stated intention of training the boys was taken seriously. Montgomery, the inaugural superintendent of Pt Puer was a well-meaning soldier from the 63rd Regiment who lived at the Point with his wife. In December 1834 he wrote optimistically:

...I sit down to give you a brief sketch of Pt Puer, the school of reform for those who are young in years but old in iniquity. It is an institution which cannot be viewed without melancholy emotions mingled with feelings of delight, by all the persons who are interested in the welfare of society, and of the rising generation to behold 161 Juvenile delinquents (the greater portion who have been steeped in crime) here trained to habits of industry and usefulness.....

Happy would it have been for any of these unfortunate creatures, had England adopted such measures as this institution affords for reclaiming these unhappy youths....

The routine of the boys began at 5.30 in the morning

when they rise..... roll up their bedding, wash and attend prayers, which are said by the catechist, Mr Armstrong, after which they are mustered in a military order in front of the barracks, and marched off to agricultural employment.

At 8.15 the bell rang for breakfast.

they again assemble in military order for in inspection, that I may ascertain whether each Boy has washed himself.... and so in like manner for every meal, both before and after grace is said.

They repair to their different trade at half past 9, dine at 1, to work again at 2 and continue until 5 when the bell is again rung for supper. School commences at 6 and continues till 8, after which prayers are said....

During April 1834, Booth wanted to have some of the boys taught tailoring, but was unable due to a lack of cloth.⁵⁶ By December, boys from additional ships increased the juvenile population.

⁵³Memorial, *ibid*.

⁵⁴Montgomery also reported that 'we have two acres of land in cultivation, cropped with potatoes and cabbages, but am not certain how the crop will turn out, about 30 more acres are also cleared, ready for breaking up. A well has also been sunk on the spot, 50 foot deep through solid rock; 'tis 19 feet below the surface of the sea, and will afford more than sufficient water for this Establishment. (Montgomery, *ibid*)

⁵⁵CON 31/21, AOT.

⁵⁶*ibid*, 21/4/34

The boys were assigned to trades:

carpenters	26
shoemakers	27
sawyers	24
tailors	23
nailors	20
labourers	<u>41</u>
TOTAL	161 ⁵⁷

According to Montgomery, 'each Boy has the liberty of choosing out of these a trade which he prefers, and I can assure you that many of them have made considerable proficiency in them.'

The regimented management of the boys included a hair-cut once a month,

in the military style, clean shirt twice a week and bath in the sea every day, weather permitting; their gait and salute is also military....

In short, everything is the same as a Military School.

Montgomery's claimed success for the new juvenile prison contrasts with the outbreak of scurvy reported during the first 12 months.

The gradual deterioration of relationships at Pt Puer from 1835 contrasts with Montgomery's claims that by December 1834, the boys had 25 days without offences, only to have a rapid increase on his absence. This statement is correct, as indicated by the chronology of Pt Puer offences developed by the authors.

I am both feared and loved by them, and so rejoiced were they at my return home that they all assembled upon the rocks and gave me three hearty cheers on my entering the bay in the boat.⁵⁸

Montgomery's claim appears true; there are no cases of boy's raiding his house, but a number for his replacement, Lt McKnight.

The break-down was caused by the unplanned arrival of more new boys from Britain. The initial success of Pt Puer was relayed to the Home Office, and in May 1837 the first dedicated boat-load of boys arrived direct aboard the *Francis Charlotte*. The consequences of these arrivals are yet to be examined.

The main places of activity became centres for confrontation - the barracks (where the boys slept, messed and were schooled), workshops, chapel, muster ground, and the sea where they bathed

The barracks was the centre for the penal station. But was it a dormitory or a home? Thomas Parker, a 5ft tall 18 year old labourer's boy from Spitalfields who was transported for stealing a ham, had only one offence against his name - having a pipe in the barracks.⁵⁹

⁵⁷AJCP, Reel m822, 1813-1926, miscellaneous letters, AOT.

⁵⁸ibid.

⁵⁹CON 18/11, CON 31/35, AOT.

On the 26 November 1834, four boys - John Cockerell, Joseph Hibbert, Thomas Kelly and John Smith - were charged with 'being out of bed and kindling a fire in (their) barracks room after hours.'⁶⁰ Each received 10 days solitary confinement on bread and water. Cockerell was also charged with 'conveying rations from the barrack room.' Other boys were found with bread concealed in their mattresses. There was not necessarily honour among thieves; William Stanfield, (a 5ft 5ins 18 year old from London),⁶¹ was charged with 'stealing some bread being part of his few prisoner's rations.'

At night, the barracks was also a place of pranks - and fear. James Smith was charged with 'attempting to get out of the barracks... with supposed evil intent.'⁶² In January 1837, Walter Randall, aged 18 from Lambeth,⁶³ was charged with 'Maliciously striking another boy and misconduct at night in the barracks and making use of improper language during muster.' (5 days SC on B&W). Six months later his offence was, 'Using violence to a sub-constable and confessing to have thrown a half brick by night (which) struck one of the overseers.' (10 days SC on B & W)⁶⁴

Two levels of work practices existed in the workshops where the boys practised their trades. While they produced articles for the Convict Department, they also personally benefited by making articles for themselves and for trading. ⁶⁵ John Keefe was given 3 days in solitary confinement for 'passing over the wall from the workshop.'⁶⁶ William Mecombe, a 17 year old 'Boy' from London⁶⁷ was charged with 'privately working in the carpenter's shop and having a quantity of lead' in January 1837, and six months later caused a 'disturbance in the workshop.' Another disturbance - possibly a distraction to avoid detection - was followed by second charge of privately working.⁶⁸ Daniel Mollyneux had an 'awl and waxed hemp thread improperly in his possession.'⁶⁹ Charles Holmes was 'Working for a fellow prisoner in the shoemaker's shop,' but was only reprimanded.⁷⁰ Jasper Wood had leather and wax improperly.⁷¹ William Webb used 'improper language in the shoemakers shop.'⁷²

Privately-made waistcoats were common; Walter Randall, 'Having waistcoats in his possession not issued to him.'⁷³ Benjamin Stanton, 'Having a waistcoat and clothing

⁶⁰CON 31/7, CON 31/21, CON 31/26, CON 31/40, AOT.

⁶¹MM 33/2, CON 31/40, AOT.

⁶²CON 31/40, AOT.

⁶³MM 33/2, AOT.

⁶⁴CON 31/37, AOT.

⁶⁵ Allan Hawkins, a former apprentice tinsmith with Charles Davis Ltd, Hobart, related how in the 1930's 'you always had a piece of work (called a 'foreigner')- a copper can or billy - of your own under the bench, which you worked on whenever the foreman was away.' (pers comm 1990)

⁶⁶CON 31/26, AOT.

⁶⁷CON 18/11, AOT.

⁶⁸CON 31/31, AOT.

⁶⁹CON 31/31, AOT.

⁷⁰CON 31/21, AOT.

⁷¹CON 31/47, AOT.

⁷²CON 31/47, AOT.

⁷³CON 31/37, AOT.

improperly in his possession.'⁷⁴ Thomas Kelly, 'Private made waistcoats concealed in his berth.' (i.e. at the barracks.)⁷⁵

Knives were found on five boys at different times, as was a file, possibly from the nailors shop.

Stolen or privately made goods were part of the illegal currency of the Point. Another means of exchanging goods was gambling, a frequent occurrence. Gambling served as entertainment, status symbol and means of obtaining illegal luxuries including tobacco and additional food.

Buttons may have acted as the 'coins' of the black-market, as many boys were charged with either gambling or being in possession of buttons or both. Thomas Palmer was accused of 'Having buttons and gambling contrary to orders,'⁷⁶ William Bowles was charged with, 'Having buttons improperly in his possession and being suspected of gambling, and improper conduct to an overseer. (5 days SC on B&W)'⁷⁷ The value placed on the buttons by the boys is indicated by Benjamin Stanton who was found to have them in his possession, but 'obstinately resisted being searched.'⁷⁸

Buttons and marbles were a common feature of 19th century working-class games, sometimes together and often involving gambling. The games played at Pt Puer probably resembled those learnt in Britain's large cities.

Around 1850 Henry Mayhew interviewed a sixteen year old London costermonger who as a child had played at 'buttons and marbles.'⁷⁹ The Opies refer to a variety of games played by boys (rather than girls), involving placing buttons in a row, and knocking them out of line with another button. The same game, using marbles, was sometimes known in Britain as 'plum-pudding.'⁸⁰ The game of 'Buttons' involved drawing a circle eighteen inches across and pitching the buttons from six to eight feet away, with the aim of landing them in the circle. The first to do so won all buttons already tossed.⁸¹ Another related game called 'Bang-Ups' involved throwing buttons (or marbles) against a wall. Hand-spans were used to measure the distances between the buttons, with the winner being the closest.⁸²

What did the boys do with the buttons? The Opies suggest a more human and boyish motive:

The primary aims of such games to boys... is that they are a means of making a fortune; that is a fortune in nuts, counters... buttons, or other near worthless objects does not matter. Small humans are just acquisitive as large humans....

⁷⁴CON 31/40, AOT.

⁷⁵CON 31/26, AOT.

⁷⁶CON 31/35, AOT.

⁷⁷CON 31/5, AOT.

⁷⁸CON 31/40 AOT. On another occasion he had a shingle hammer, and later a pair of boots.

⁷⁹Mayhew, Henry: London Labour and the London Poor, Vol 1, London, 1861, (reprinted New York), p39.

⁸⁰Opie, Iona and Peter: Children's Games with Things, Oxford, 1997, p. 110.

⁸¹ibid, p 117. The game was similar to 'Pitch and Toss' or 'Chuckie.'

⁸²ibid, p 118.

According to Mayhew, the young costermongers were obsessed by gambling.⁸³ Such a tradition continued at Pt Puer. Charles Hopkins was persistent, gambling in school, (also having a towel in his possession), and was under 'Strong suspicion of gambling and further talking in his cell.'⁸⁴ (He was a pipe and tobacco smoker as well.) William Mecombe was found to be 'Gambling contrary to orders.'⁸⁵ Nathaniel Harding was something of an alchemist, being in possession of the real coin, but was charged with 'Having a farthing ...evidently for the purpose of converting the same to a sovereign.'⁸⁶

However an 1835 arrival, William Creswell (1929 per *Aurora*) confirms the link between buttons and coins, as he was charged in August 1836 with 'Strong suspicion of gambling with buttons.'⁸⁷

Leadership in an all-male station could be gained by various means. Apart from theft, testing the administration in public places such as the muster ground was symbolic. The greatest opportunity for challenge was at the time of trial of offences, usually attended by Booth or Lempriere as well as the station Superintendent. Boys occasionally resorted to open defiance, or more commonly, ridiculing the system.

After John Pollard was charged with violent conduct toward the overseer of shoemakers, he laughed at the Commandant. (12 lashes ONB, 4 days SC.)⁸⁸ William Webb, a 4ft 6ins 16 year old 'Errand Boy'⁸⁹ from Brighton refused to work after receiving a caution from the Commandant; after 8 offences in two years - mainly for insolence; he died in April 1836.⁹⁰

Sentencing to a period in the cells led to other challenges to the system. In February 1835 John Evans was accused of 'Singing profane songs in the cells and making use of the most profane language when in the cell.' (4 days SC on B&W.)⁹¹ Charles Hopkins and Nathaniel Harding were given the same sentence for similar offences in 1835.⁹²

The second offence of the irrepressible and effervescent Walter Paisley on 14 July 1835 was 'Amusing the boys in the cells last Sunday by reciting an obscene story.' Three months later he was charged with 'Singing and talking in the cells when confined thereto....for previous misconduct and making use of most improper observations to his overseers.' (15 lashes ONB)⁹³

During 1835-7, the most adventurous boys resorted to a favourite retreat - 'The Rocks' of Pt Puer. The first charged with the offence were John Charlton and James Fisher who were absent from their gang, and 'on the rocks with a fire.'⁹⁴ Francis Wiltshire's first offence was

⁸³ibid, p 16.

⁸⁴CON 31/21, AOT.

⁸⁵CON 31/31, AOT.

⁸⁶CON 31/21, AOT.

⁸⁷CON 31/7 AOT.

⁸⁸CON 31/35, AOT.

⁸⁹CON 18/11, AOT.

⁹⁰CON 31/47, AOT.

⁹¹CON 31/11, AOT.

⁹²CON 31/21, AOT.

⁹³CON 31/35, AOT.

⁹⁴CON 31/7 & CON 31/14, AOT.

'fishing on the rocks.'⁹⁵ During 1837 Walter Paisley was reported twice for 'fishing on the rocks',⁹⁶ while Samuel Greensmith was charged with 'having a crayfish in his possession.'⁹⁷ William Bowles was 'Secreting Bread on the rocks'⁹⁸ while Benjamin Lees was absent from his gang 'on the rocks' the same year.⁹⁹

The importance of the rocks as a retreat was noticed by 1837 visitor James Ross, who described how 'his attention was caught by the boys climbing among the rocks and hiding or disappearing from our sight like land crabs in the West Indies.'¹⁰⁰

The arrival of Wesleyan clergy as catechists formalised the moral reform intended at the Point. But church became a place to sleep for Robert Poultney, William Cummins and Thomas Briggs,¹⁰¹ and indecent conduct during prayers for William Webb, (12 lashes). Webb also was convicted for 'Singing in the cells on the Sabbath.'¹⁰²

Point Puer had two strands of religious instruction, occasional visits and sermons from Port Arthur's Wesleyan clergymen, and a catechist based at the Point who also ran the school which had a strong religious and quasi educational role. Unlike the elitist Anglican clergy, the Wesleyans were the pioneer preachers of their day who, along with the Quakers, extended a compassionate but often bigoted hand to prisoners at penal stations.¹⁰³ They dominated the religious life at Port Arthur from 1830 until 1842 when ousted in a 'coup' by the Church of England who realised the Wesleyans (Methodists) were achieving more converts as a result of their frontier-style ministry.¹⁰⁴

The Rev. Butters replaced Port Arthur's founding Wesleyan missionary Rev. Manton in October 1834.¹⁰⁵ Manton preached for the last time to 'the poor boys' at Pt Puer.¹⁰⁶ Butters remained until January 1836 when Rev. Simpson arrived.¹⁰⁷ With him was a full-time catechist for Pt Puer, William Freeman.¹⁰⁸ He replaced George Armstrong, an Irish catechist then at the Point.

⁹⁵CON 31/47, AOT.

⁹⁶CON 31/35, AOT.

⁹⁷CON 31/16, AOT.

⁹⁸CON 31/5, AOT.

⁹⁹CON 31/28, AOT.

¹⁰⁰Ross in Elliston's Hobart Town Almanack Annual for 1837 p. 91 , quoted in Hooper, p40.

¹⁰¹CON 31/35, CON 31/7, CON 31/5, AOT.

¹⁰²CON 31/47, AOT.

¹⁰³".... (of) the liability of Anglican clergy to visit the prisons and similar institutions, the Church of England was in some doubt.' Robson., L. A History of Tasmania, Vol 1, OUP, 1983, p 353

¹⁰⁴The first chaplain's house at Port Arthur was built for Manton (since destroyed), the second, and still partly extant, for the dogmatic Anglican Mr (sic) Durham who arrived in 1843. The clash reflected a wider split between Bishop Nixon who challenged the civil authority of Lt Gov Eardley Wilmot to appointments at government institutions. see Robson *ibid*, p 402 ff.

¹⁰⁵Heard, *op cit.*, p 184. Booth dined with Butters whom he referred to as a 'very good specimen.' *ibid*, p 191.

¹⁰⁶Manton who had also been stationed at Macquarie Harbour's Sarah Island penal station. Pretymann, R. D. A Chronicle of Methodism in Van Diemen's Land 1820-1840, Hobart 1970, p 91

¹⁰⁷ Heard, *ibid*, p 195. The Simpsons were fond of the Commandant, naming their child Edward Booth. p 36-7.

¹⁰⁸*ibid*, p 195, and n333.

In June 1837 the Wesleyan missionary Rev. William Simpson was the first to be based as a resident chaplain at Point Puer.¹⁰⁹ His house, like those of other senior staff, becoming a target for raiding by some of the boys.

The Wesleyans were to have a long-term impact on Tasmanian society, including former Pt Puer boys.¹¹⁰ The origin of their missionaries from within the ranks of tradesmen is a possible explanation for their success; William Butters for example was a trained shoemaker.¹¹¹

Combined with pretended religious conversion, 'The Rocks' were used by the boys to escape the strictures of the station. Several of the boys 'adopted' literally the sermons of the evangelical Rev. Butters, claiming to see visions, singing and 'worshipping' among the rocks, and manipulating the system.¹¹² Known as the 'religious boys', Lempriere noticed that the conversion seemed to 'border on fanaticism.'

A number of the boys separated themselves from their comrades, professed a godly sorrow for their sins and evinced every symptom of repentance. Some of these boys, we are happy to say, persevered in the religious career, but at one time, much doubt of the sincerity of the religious boys, as they were called, was entertained. They employed their leisure hours in prayer among the rocks and caves at the back of Pt Puer, and in so loud a tone as showed an anxiety to be heard on earth as well as in heaven. Some even had visions..... Many of them have since, unfortunately, given proof that the suspicion as to their sincerity was but all too well founded.¹¹³

The effect was also noticed by Jane Franklin on a visit with the Lt Governor in 1837. She suspected some 'cant among the boys who call themselves religious'. The Rev. Butters, 'produced an extraordinary effect on some of the boys, bordering even upon or tending toward fanaticism.'¹¹⁴

Rather than being controlled by the system, the boys were manipulating it to their own ends. Jane Franklin was approached by an impudent John Pollard, one of the first sixty eight. His boldness in 1837 may also indicate the dominance of the first intake boys over later arrivals. She recorded:

One very clever and impudent little boy was spokesman for several much taller than himself, and intimated they were better just now than they would be because the governor was here. Now they would have pudding. He was very cunning and persevering. His name was Pollard. Another small boy, but who said he was 15, James Collison,¹¹⁵ of remarkable countenance, rather interesting and sensible. He addressed himself to me as wishing for a bible which hearing he was a good boy, I promised him.

¹⁰⁹ibid, p 36.

¹¹⁰When Hobart's new Wesleyan Chapel in Melville Street was opened in January 1838, Reverends Manton and Butters officiated, with Lt Gov Franklin present. Pretyman, op cit., p105.

¹¹¹Pretyman op cit., p91.

¹¹²Their conversion as convenience, moulding the system to their own needs, parallels that of Thomas Day, the black servant of Rev. Manton at Macquarie Harbour, but with less subtlety. see Ian Duffield, ??.

¹¹³Lempriere, T. J., *The Penal Stations of early VDL*, Royal Society facsimile, 1954, p 96.

¹¹⁴(Franklin diary, NS 279/1/1, AOT.

¹¹⁵James Collison 1902 per *Norfolk*, CON 31/7, AOT.

Then he brought a paper from his pocket with the names of seven more boys who wished for a similar favour, all the class of religious boys.....amongst them was the boy name of Groves¹¹⁶....

Pollard (who is identified as an *Isabella* boy) and Collison played the occasion for all it was worth.

Came to the name Pollard, on which Capt. Booth said (he) did not think he was good, thought him a hypocrite ... at his conduct just now. Collison said that a considerable change had taken place since the Commandant had said he should be flogged, which Capt Booth said proved nothing in his favour.

Collison replied... he thought he was reformed, yet could not say whether he was spiritually so.

Jane Franklin was wary.

The looks and language of this boy was remarkable, but I did not feel quite sure of his sincerity. ¹¹⁷

Games played by the boys are rarely referred to. William Chatterley (1932 per *Aurora*) who arrived in late 1835 was charged with 'Being in the yard to which he did not belong and playing at marbles.'¹¹⁸

Bathing was a form of compulsory hygiene. William Mecombe was accused of 'Secreting himself in the government gardens to avoid bathing,'¹¹⁹ while Nathaniel Harding was 'absent while going to bathe and fighting.' (3 days SC), and on another occasion, 'bathing without a proper person in charge of him.' (2 days SC). ¹²⁰ This was Booth's cautious response to two drownings at the Point.

The drowning of Edward Burnham (per *Aurora*) revealed bravery and cooperative spirit among the boys in a crisis.¹²¹ Four of them tried to rescue Burnham who became entangled in seaweed. Booth praised their conduct. One boy's life was put in imminent danger by the poor boy in his last struggles seizing him.¹²²

The strongest examples of cooperative rebellion occurred on the muster ground and in the cells. From 1835 onward, a series of increasingly violent riots increased in number and severity, revealing the inherent weakness of the prison.

On the 10 August 1835 Robert Cavanagh, James Smith and Benjamin Stanton were charged with 'Riotous and improper conduct in the cells.' (12 lashes ONB)

¹¹⁶1089, Richard Groves, per *Mangles*, described as 'a very good boy on board,' aged 14. CON 14/4, AOT. He was at Pt Puer from 22 September 1835 to 26 April 1839 and had no entries on his conduct record during this time. CON 31/16, AOT.

¹¹⁷MacFie, PH 'Fruits of an Evil System; Some Notable Failures' from Pt Puer Juvenile Prison; an unpublished paper given at Australian History Teachers Conference, Port Arthur, 1989. (The paper was followed by an excursion to Pt Puer.)

¹¹⁸CON 31/7, AOT.

¹¹⁹CON 31/31, AOT.

¹²⁰CON 31/21, AOT.

¹²¹CON 31/5, AOT. He was one of three brothers transported for sheep-stealing, but the only one sent to Point Puer

¹²²Booth Journal, p 269 n 382.

A series of offences including insolence and absence preceded more rebellious behaviour. On 28 September 1835 four boys - Joseph De Marsa¹²³, Thomas Boys, James Fisher, James Smith, Charles Wiltshire and Morris Howling¹²⁴ were collectively charged with 'Most improper and riotous conduct on Friday, Saturday and Sunday last when confined to the cells for previous misconduct, particularly on Sunday.' Over the next six months the same boys appear with various misdemeanours.

On 19 February 1836 Holmes and Paisley were charged with 'Most riotous and disorderly conduct in the cells while under sentence of solitary confinement' Paisley further with 'most disrespectful language respecting the Commandant and Superintendent.' (24 lashes ONB).¹²⁵ On 1 December 1836 a dispute occurred on the muster ground, apparently led by Paisley, 'when he was confined there, (plus) 'Insolence to the overseer, wilfully damaging his government book and irreverent conduct during prayers.' (5 days SC B&W). John Forsyth, a 4ft 6ins 'Boy' from Edinburgh, was a party to the affair, charged with 'Determined misconduct on the muster ground when confined thereto.'¹²⁶ (12 stripes ONB)

As is common in all-male institution, fighting among the boys was endemic. William Jeffrey was charged with 'fighting in the wash-house' in July 1834.¹²⁷ In 1835 Thomas Kelly, was convicted three times for fighting offences:¹²⁸

* fighting in his hut.

* quarrelling in the hut and cutting Alfred Miles (1252 per *William Metcalf*) with a knife in endeavouring to wrest it from him.

* striking a fellow prisoner with a hammer.

On 8 November 1836, three boys - McCourt¹²⁹, Palmer¹³⁰ and George Terry¹³¹ - were involved in a fight. Walter Randall, aged 18, was charged with 'Fighting at the breakfast meal.'¹³² His rival was Walter Paisley.

Some fights appear one sided bullying as the following incidents indicate.

William Stanfield was charged with:

Maliciously striking a kicking a fellow boy on the eye.¹³³

John Evans with:

¹²³de Marsa arrived in VDL on the *Isabella* but was sent to Pt Puer later in 1834 after offending when an assigned prisoner.

¹²⁴CON 31/5, CON 31/14, CON 31/40, CON 31/47, and CON 31/21, AOT.

¹²⁵CON 31/21, CON 31/35, AOT.

¹²⁶MM 32/2, CON 31/14, AOT.

¹²⁷CON 31/26, AOT.

¹²⁸CON 31/26 AOT.

¹²⁹CON 31/7, AOT.

¹³⁰CON 31/35, AOT.

¹³¹Terry arrived in VDL per *John 2* but was sent to Pt Puer after offending when on assignment as a government messenger. CON 31/43, AOT.

¹³²CON 31/37, AOT.

¹³³CON 31/40, AOT.

Wantonly striking a fellow boy.¹³⁴

William Brandz:

Ill-using a fellow boy.¹³⁵

William Paisley:

Striking a fellow boy with a spade and cutting his eye.¹³⁶

and a cruel William Boyes:

Continually upbraiding a boy with a natural defect.¹³⁷

But by far the strongest physical retaliation was meted out to boys who - often with good intentions - informed or 'dobbed' on their fellows. Some of the fights were serious. Nathaniel Harding's face was 'Disgracefully disfigured by fighting.'¹³⁸ Boys were reluctant to tell tales, as Lempriere noticed. Benjamin Lees received 5 days SC for 'Abusing R Lang a fellow prisoner for giving information of other boys intent to get out of the barracks last night.'¹³⁹

Robert Cavanagh 'Striking and abusing Charles Holmes a fellow prisoner for having previously given evidence as to the misconduct of other boys.' (20 lashes ONB.)¹⁴⁰ Walter Paisley for 'Striking a fellow boy immediately after being tried, being then in charge of an overseer.' (Reprimanded.)¹⁴¹

Running away or being AWOL only begins to be recorded a year after the opening of Pt Puer. To be successful, the escapee had to dodge the piquet patrolling the military guard line across the Point. George Gilham, an 18 year old 5ft 1 1/2 ins Labourer from Sheffield was the first to run, and his first offence.¹⁴² The entry reveals that the conduct register is only a reflection of a last resort, rather than carrying entries for each 'offence.' Gilham was:

Frequently absent without leave, particularly on Monday morning 23 inst, and not returning until brought back by one of the military on the forenoon of the following day. (24 lashes ONB.)¹⁴³

Another who escaped as a first (recorded) offence over 15 months after arrival was Robert Cavanagh, 'absent until brought back by escort.'¹⁴⁴

Others to run were James Fisher and Edward Gardener who were charged in 25 April 1835 with 'Absenting (themselves) from the Establishment at Pt Puer for 36 hours.' (14 days SC).¹⁴⁵ William Mecombe was '.... beyond the boundaries.'¹⁴⁶ Robert Wheeler got the furthest

¹³⁴CON 31/11, AOT.

¹³⁵CON 31/5, AOT.

¹³⁶CON 31/35, AOT.

¹³⁷CON 31/5, AOT.

¹³⁸CON 31/21, AOT.

¹³⁹CON 31/28, AOT.

¹⁴⁰CON 31/7, AOT.

¹⁴¹CON 31/35, AOT.

¹⁴²MM 33/2, AOT.

¹⁴³CON 31/16, AOT.

¹⁴⁴CON 31/7, AOT.

¹⁴⁵CON 31/14, & CON 31/16, AOT.

¹⁴⁶CON 31/31, AOT.

'Absenting himself (overnight) until apprehended at Norfolk Bay this morning.' (20 lashes ONB.)¹⁴⁷

The sexual behaviour and language of the boys is reported with 19th century reticence and ambiguity. William Jeffrey on his first offence was charged with 'Wantonly exposing his person in the presence of fellow prisoners.' (15 lashes ONB.)¹⁴⁸ John Keefe made a 'gross and indecent expression to an overseer.' ('5 days SC on B&W and to be transported to Port Arthur.')¹⁴⁹ In September 1837 Booth was alerted to the existence of 'horrid crimes' i.e. sexual/homosexual practices, at Pt Puer.¹⁵⁰

From 1835 numbers at Pt Puer increased dramatically. By 1838 there were 473 boys.¹⁵¹ With a buoyant market, boys were in demand, and an unknown number were assigned. 'Graduate' boys were sent to the King's (later Queen's) Orphanage at New Town Farm, north of Hobart, to await assignment. As the depression of the late 1830's occurred, numbers at the Point swelled to over 700, but without a corresponding demand for labour.

These years at Pt Puer saw an increased rate of offences. The early failure of the Pt Puer experiment is revealed in the despair creeping into Booth's journal, by Lempriere's history, and the journal of visiting Frenchman La Place in 1839. In February 1838 Booth wrote he was 'sick at heart with the number of boys he was obliged to punish.

Would we had some persons to work the system, with firmness and temper and patience to witness the results of perseverance.... this is a trying situation...."¹⁵²

The records of the first sixty eight reveal the gradual failure, as tougher penalties were resorted to. On 7 August 1837 Robert Wheeler was accused with 'making away with his slop clothing' and sentenced to '3 weeks No 2 Chain Gang.'¹⁵³ This is the first reference seen so far to Pt Puer boys being put into irons.

Being placed in a chain gang was particularly aimed at boys who absconded in late 1837 and 1838, and for reasons as yet unclear - those found with thread in their possession.¹⁵⁴

George Terry's record reveals those Pt Puer lads sentenced to chain gang treatment were transferred for punishment to Port Arthur, but returned later to the Point.

14 July 1837. Having tobacco improperly in his possession. (3 weeks No 1 Chain Gang, Pt Arthur.

¹⁴⁷CON 31/47, AOT.

¹⁴⁸CON 31/26, AOT.

¹⁴⁹CON 31/26, AOT.

¹⁵⁰Heard (ed.) Booth Journal, op cit., 19 October 1836. Heard notes somewhat squeamishly, 'Booth kept a close watch for this at Pt Puer, and it did occur, but not on the scale which was reported.' p 268 n. 365. Heard omits an index reference to the subject.

See also Booth-Forster response of 1837 in Hooper, Appendix X.

¹⁵¹ Hooper p 158.

¹⁵²Booth, Journal ed. Heard, p 222

¹⁵³CON 31/47, AOT.

¹⁵⁴The thread was possibly used for fishing, and offering a 'tool' enabling boys to survive when on the run.

29 September 1838. Absent from his place of work. (One month No 1 Chain Gang.)¹⁵⁵

Daniel Mollyneux

11.12. 1837. Caught at 'the head of nearby Opossum Bay.' (One month in No 1 Chain Gang.)¹⁵⁶

William Cummins, now aged 19,

11 September 1837 Absent from his place of work. (10 days in irons)¹⁵⁷

George Gilham,

20 February 1838. Absent from his gang without authority. (6 weeks No 3 Chain Gang.)

26 March 1838. Absent from his gang without authority and making use of improper language. (3 weeks No 3 Chain Gang.)¹⁵⁸

Robert Wheeler was twice sentenced to three weeks in No 3 Chain Gang for 'Having thread improperly in his possession.' Repeated defiance by Wheeler involved him being put in chains, then additional punishment on the same day, suggesting a break-down in management.

Robert Wheeler:

3 Sept 1838. Refusing to obey the orders of an assistant sub-constable. 3 weeks No 1 Chain Gang,

Same day:

Insolence and obstinacy. 25 stripes ONB.

Persevering obstinacy on the above charge. 36 stripes ONB.

Still persevering obstinacy on the above charges. 39 stripes ONB.¹⁵⁹

William Bowles appears to have been a ring-leader in the increasingly rebellious action of the boys. On 22 December 1837 Bowles was charged with 'Positively refusing to bathe when ordered in consequence of which example insubordinate spirit was manifested by the whole of the boys.' (20 stripes ONB.)¹⁶⁰ On 30 April 1838, Bowles, Harding, Mollyneux Mollyneux,, and Terry were charged with 'Gross misconduct, stones being thrown in his return from school whereby a government lamp was broken.' (25 stripes ONB.)¹⁶¹ Further research indicates the 'vandalism' may have been part of a wider act of rebellion or riot involving boys from other ships; Richard Cooper (1907 per *Norfolk*) was also charged with this offence on the same day.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵CON 31/43, AOT.

¹⁵⁶CON 31/31, AOT.

¹⁵⁷CON 31/7, AOT.

¹⁵⁸CON 31/16, AOT.

¹⁵⁹CON 31/47, AOT. By January 1839 Wheeler: was assigned to the Public Works, Hobart.

¹⁶⁰CON 31/5, AOT.

¹⁶¹CON 31/7, AOT.

¹⁶²CON 31/7 AOT.

The complete break-down in relations between the administrators and the dominant first intake boys is shown by behaviour in the school. On 20 February 1838, Brandz, Hopkins and Paisley were involved in 'Riotous and disorderly conduct in school.'¹⁶³ In April 1838 Walter Paisley was convicted of 'Striking the schoolmaster, and other offences in school.' (25 stripes ONB.)¹⁶⁴

Is the rebelliousness of the young lads to be seen as work-place 'resistance' to authority? The rebelliousness of boys is somehow beautifully cheeky in taking the rise out of the system, whether by cooking crayfish on the rocks or stealing food from an officer's house. Assigned women also took a similar independent approach.¹⁶⁵ But there is also a dark side to prison sub-culture which saw the weak preyed upon by the bully, a side that the 'resistance' thesis does not take into account. In the end, rebels are always dependent on an authority which defines their behaviour.

A weakness is also inherent in concentrating solely on the behaviour of prisoners within penal institutions - the 'unfree'. This restricts an understanding of the impact of inmates lives on the wider post prison society where they were 'free' but possibly stigmatised. Were those who instead of resisting, 'acquiesced' and learnt a trade and became part of the colonial economy co-operating with the 'System?' While some rebelled and became recidivists, most boys seem to have rebelled and conformed by learning a skill.

But much of the boys' behaviour reflects the strength of the human spirit which refuses to bend despite coercion, but still wishes a worthwhile share of life's advantages. In particular there was a refusal to accept the restrictions of the British class system.

Gradually the sixty eight boys were sent to assignment. Those with skills appear to have been readily assigned.¹⁶⁶ By 1839 the last lad of the first intake had left Pt Puer.

What became of the first sixty eight boys? Eight died at the Point and are presumably buried on the Isle of the Dead. The remainder melted into the Australian mainstream with only a minority appearing to have remained in Tasmania. Seven boys 'failed' to commit offences at the Point, but later records reveal a varying list of misdemeanours. The conduct record is not a guide to subsequent behaviour and success.

The rise in genealogy has produced a profile on the later life of some of the former inmates. Readily apparent from initial research is the link between Methodism, and also shoe-making among former inmates, the former link first noted by the historian, the late Dr Lloyd Robson, himself a Point Puer descendant.¹⁶⁷

Walter Paisley, whose extensive conduct record had been referred to, became a shoe-maker and boat-builder, despite spending an additional four years at Port Arthur. He received his

¹⁶³CON 31/5, AOT.

¹⁶⁴CON 31/35, AOT.

¹⁶⁵Reid, Kirsty *Convict Women and Workplace Resistance*, in Duffield and Bradley, (ed.) *Representing Convicts*, London, 1997, p 118.

¹⁶⁶Maxwell-Stewart, Hamish *Life at Macquarie Harbour*, in Duffield and Bradley, (ed.) *ibid*, p 147.

¹⁶⁷When emancipists emigrated to the mainland colonies, the Methodist congregation suffered substantial losses. Robson, L. *op cit.*, p 412.

Conditional Pardon in 1847. A dinghy built by him is preserved at Hobart's Maritime Museum.

John Wright, the London Labourer's Boy married and settled at Longford where he became a builder and member of local council.¹⁶⁸

John Hargreaves married in Launceston in 1844, where he worked as a shoemaker. He was a staunch member of the Paterson Street Methodist Church, Launceston, where his nine children were all christened. John became a property owner, only to lose heavily in the crash of 1890. Four of his six adult sons became shoemakers.¹⁶⁹

Henry Tatler, the 14 year old Farmer's Boy transported for 14 years for 'stealing a silk handkerchief' and originally described as 'Bad', committed no offences at Pt Puer, married and died in 1846 as Henry Tatlow. (His descendants live in Sydney.)¹⁷⁰

Benjamin Stanton moved to Geelong where he married, then moved to a gold field near Ballarat where he worked as a shoemaker. (In March 1838 he had been charged with 'Making a pair of boots contrary to orders.') His son, Benjamin jnr was a railway guard and ran a hotel at Morwell, Victoria.¹⁷¹

Lambeth lad Walter Randall married in Launceston in the Church of Scotland, and moved to Victoria where he was listed as a shoemaker with 8 children.¹⁷²

Even in death, the Pt Puer connection was kept. John Hargraves¹⁷³ is buried in the Wesleyan plot at Hobart's Cornelian Bay cemetery, next to George Axtell, another *John 2* boy, indicating an unknown number of boys carried the influence of the Wesleyan missions into their adult life. ¹⁷⁴ They were probably influenced by Samuel Burrows, the Overseer of Shoemakers at Port Arthur who became a stalwart in Hobart's Methodist community. His son Samuel Hurst Burrows, was baptised in the Wesleyan Church, Melville St., Hobart¹⁷⁵ and became an active church member. He operated a long-lived boot and shoe store in Elizabeth Street, Hobart.¹⁷⁶

What of the Point's 'mechanical, religious and scholastic training' regarded by Booth as the purpose of Pt Puer? The few descendants' files indicate a mixed result. All his adult life, despite financial acumen, John Hargraves still signed with a cross, as did Henry Tatler on his marriage certificate. But as was seen, many shoemakers and at least one boat-builder came from 'The Point', although many others have been claimed.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁸Pers comm.

¹⁶⁹Pers comm.

¹⁷⁰Pers comm.

¹⁷¹Pers comm.

¹⁷²Pers comm.

¹⁷³John's name was by now abbreviated to this spelling from Hargreaves, one of a number of variants. His case is typical of the variety of spelling of proper names, from Britain to arrival and death. Spellings used in this paper refer to those in the boys' conduct records.

¹⁷⁴Pers comm.

¹⁷⁵Burrows Correspondence File, AOT.

¹⁷⁶Cyclopaedia of Tasmania, Vol 1, p 349. More recently a well-known shoe and sports store in Hobart, 'Burrows and Meek'.

¹⁷⁷Nigel Hargraves Archives, 1998.

Why did the Pt Puer experience 'empower' some former inmates who moved into the wider colonial society, yet leave others weak and vulnerable, ending their days at Norfolk Island or Port Arthur? How did the former Pt Puer boys fit into the new colonial economy? Intensive follow-up research is now being undertaken to assess the full impact of Pt Puer on its inmates, and consequently on Australian society.¹⁷⁸ However an initial scrutiny of the boys surviving records tells both a unique and yet, from the hindsight of the late 20th century, an all too familiar story.

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¹⁷⁸By the authors; other research is also being followed independently.

Index

- Aboriginal families2
 Absent Without Leave.....6
 alcohol.....6
 port.....4
 Allen, William.....3
 Armstrong, George7, 8, 13
 Arthur, Lt. Gov. George4, 5, 8
 assignment4, 18, 20
 Axtell, George.....21
 B&W *See* Bread & Water
 Ballarat.....21
 bathing.....9, 15, 19
 beef5
 bibles14
 black-market5, 6, 11
 blankets.....4
 boat-builders.....20, 21
 Booth, Charles O'Hara..4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 15,
 18, 21
 Bowles, William.....3, 11, 13, 19
 Boyes, William.....17
 Boys, Thomas.....16
 Brailsford, William.....7
 Brandz, William.....5, 17, 20
 bread10, 13
 Bread and Water.....6, 7
 Briggs, Thomas3, 5, 6, 13
 British child migrants2
 Brown, Simeon7
 builders.....21
 Burnham, Edward.....15
 Burrows, Samuel21
 Butters, Rev. William.....13, 14
 buttons11, 12
 cabbages8
 carpenters9
 catechist's house5, 7
 catechists.....5, 7, 8, 13
 Cavanagh, Robert.....7, 15, 17
 chain gangs18, 19
 chaplain's house13
 Charlton, John.....7, 12
 Chatterley, William.....15
 clothing.....9, 10, 18
 Cockerell, John10
 Collison, James14, 15
 commandants4
 Cooper, Richard19
 corporal punishment6
 crayfish7, 13, 20
 Creswell, William.....12
 Cummins, William.....7, 13, 19
 daily schedule.....8
 De Marsa, Joseph16
 diet6, 8
 dobbers *See* informers
 dobbing.....17
 drownings15
 Durham, Rev Edward13
 escapees12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19
 Evans, John12, 16
 fighting15, 16, 17
 fish.....7
 fish soup8
 Fisher, James7, 12, 16, 17
 fishing13, 18
 food7, 11, 20
 Forster, Matthew4, 18
 Forsyth, John.....16
 fowls.....6
 Franklin, Lady Jane (Sir John)14, 15
 Franklin, Lt. Gov. Sir John14
 Freeman, William.....13
 fresh meat.....5
 gambling11, 12
 games.....11
 Gardener, Edward3, 17
 gardens5
 Geelong21
 Gilham, George17, 19
 goats.....7
 Gray, Sarah (Mrs Thomas).....6
 Gray, Thomas6
 Greensmith, Samuel13

Groves, Richard.....	15	McKnight, William	6, 7
hair-cuts.....	9	McLachlan, Robyn	2
Hall, William.....	3	Mecombe, William.....	10, 12, 15, 17
hammocks	4, 5	mess hall.....	5
Harding, Nathaniel.....	3, 5, 7, 12, 15, 17, 19	Miles, Alfred	16
Hargraves, Nigel	2, 4, 21	military	
Hargreaves, John.....	2, 3, 8, 21	63rd Regiment	8
Hawkins, Allan.....	10	Mitchell, Catherine (Mrs John).....	6
Hibbert, Joseph.....	10	Mitchell, John.....	6
Hobart Prisoners Barracks	2	Mollyneux, Daniel	7, 10, 19
Holmes, Charles	10, 16, 17	Montgomery, ? (Mrs Supt. John)	8
homosexual practices	18	Montgomery, Supt. John.....	6, 8, 9
Hooper, Fred.....	2, 13	nailors	9, 11
Hopkins, Charles.....	12, 20	New Town	18
horrid crimes.....	<i>See</i> homosexual practices	Nixon, Bishop Francis	13
Howling, V.....	16	Norfolk Bay.....	18
Hughes, Robert.....	2	Norfolk Island	22
improper language.....	10, 19	officers' houses	5
informers	5	Opossum Bay.....	19
insolence	5, 12, 16, 19	Paisley, Francis.....	3
insubordination	5, 6, 19	Paisley, Walter.....	3, 5, 6, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20
intoxication.....	4	Paisley, William.....	17
Isle of the Dead.....	6, 20	Palmer, Thomas.....	11, 16
Jackson, George	<i>See</i> Briggs, Thomas	Parker, Thomas	9
Jeffrey, William.....	16, 18	Parkhurst.....	2
jetty.....	5	pipes (smoking).....	7, 9, 12
Keefe, John	7, 10, 18	Player, Thomas.....	4
Kelly, Thomas.....	5, 7, 10, 11, 16	Point Puer.....	2, 6
King's Orphanage	<i>See</i> Queen's Orphanage	Pollard, John	7, 12, 14, 15
Knight, Sarah	<i>See</i> Gray, Sarah (Mrs Thomas)	pork.....	5
La Place, ?	18	Port Arthur Penal Station	2
labourers.....	9	potatoes	5, 8
Lang, R.....	17	Poultney, Robert.....	13
lashes on the breech.....	6	prayers.....	8, 13, 16
Launceston	2, 21	profane language	12
Lees, Benjamin.....	13, 17	Pt Puer Lads Database.....	2
Lempriere, Thomas James	12, 14, 17, 18	pudding.....	8, 14
Lisdillon.....	6	Queen's Orphanage	18
Longford.....	21	Randall, Walter.....	10, 16, 21
Macquarie Harbour	2, 13, 14, 20	Reading, David.....	3
Manton, Rev John Allen.....	6, 13, 14	religion	
marbles	11, 15	Anglican	13
Martin, Peter	3, 5	Church of England.....	13
McCourt, ?	16	Church of Scotland	21
McKnight, John.....	9	Methodist	2, 20, 21
		Quakers	13

Wesleyans.....	13, 14, 21	Smith, John.....	10
religious boys.....	14	Solitary Confinement	7
religious services	7	Stanfield, William	10, 16
Robson, Lloyd.....	2, 20	Stanton, Benjamin	10, 11, 15, 21
Ross, James.....	13	Stanton, Benjamin jnr	21
rugs.....	4	stealing food	5, 6, 7
salt meat.....	8	superintendents.....	6
Sarah Island penal station.....	13	Superintendent's Quarters.....	7
saw-pits.....	5	tailors	9
sawyers	2, 9	Tams.....	5
SC.....	<i>See Solitary Confinement</i>	Tarrell, Benjamin.....	3
school	1, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13, 19, 20	Tasman Peninsula.....	4
school room.....	5	Tatler, Henry.....	21
schoolmaster	5	Tatlow, Henry	<i>See Tatler, Henry</i>
sexual behaviour	18	Taylor, Alfred	3
ships		Terry, George.....	7, 16, 18, 19
<i>Aurora</i>	12, 15	The Rocks	12, 14, 20
<i>Euralyus</i> (hulk).....	4	tinsmiths.....	10
<i>Francis Charlotte</i>	9	tobacco.....	5, 7, 11, 12, 18
<i>Isabella</i>	2, 3, 4, 15, 16	turnips	5
<i>John 2</i>	2, 3, 4, 16, 21	violence.....	10, 12
<i>Mangles</i>	15	water supply	6
<i>Norfolk</i>	14, 19	Webb, William.....	10, 12, 13
<i>Tamar</i>	5	West, John	2
<i>William Metcalf</i>	16	Wheeler, Robert.....	3, 17, 18, 19
shoemakers	9, 10, 12, 14, 20, 21	Wilmot, Lt Gov. Eardley	13
Simpson, Edward, Booth	13	Wiltshire, Charles	16
Simpson, John.....	3	Wiltshire, Francis	12
Simpson, Rev. William	13, 14	workshops.....	5, 10
singing	12, 13, 14	Wright, John.....	7, 21
Smith, James.....	10, 15, 16		