# PART 2

# DESCRIPTION

The 11 sites that constitute the 'property' are spread across Australia, from Fremantle in the west to Kingston and Arthur's Vale in the east, a distance of 5,500 kilometres, and from Old Great North Road in the north to Port Arthur in the south, a distance of 1,500 kilometres. Australia's rich convict history is well represented by approximately 3,000 remaining sites distributed across several States and Territories. The assessment to establish the most representative sites drew on a wide body of research to locate a complete representation of all the significant elements which together express all the elements of outstanding universal value. The sites span several climatic zones (from Mediterranean in the west to temperate in the south and sub-tropical in the mid-north), cover four time zones and are connected by a network of maritime routes throughout the Indian, Southern and Pacific oceans. Each of the sites represent key elements of the forced migration of convicts and is associated with global ideas and practices relating to the punishment and reform of the criminal elements of society during the modern era.

# 2.A DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

## Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area (KAVHA) Norfolk Island (1788–1814 and 1824–55)

The site is on Norfolk Island, an outposted penal station of New South Wales (NSW) over two periods, the second as a place of punishment for re-offending convicts. Some female convicts were sent there in its earlier years but the overwhelming number of convicts were male. KAVHA comprises more than 40 buildings, groups of buildings, substantial ruins and archaeological remains set within 225 hectares of relatively undisturbed land. All structures were constructed by convicts from limestone quarried on the island or with local timber. The site encompasses an exceptional landscape that has survived largely unchanged since the convict era. KAVHA demonstrates the use of penal transportation to expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence, punish criminals, deter crime in Britain and rehabilitate criminals. The site is also associated with global developments in the punishment of crime during the 19th century including Commandant Maconochie's 'mark system'.

The layout of the site reflects the strategic spatial placement of buildings that separated colonial authorities from convicts. This demonstrated both the real and symbolic power of authorities to scrutinise and control the convict population. A complex of military and administrative buildings is elevated on the rise along Quality Row. These include military compounds, offices and cottages for civil and military personnel and a Commissariat Store. There is a clear view from these buildings down to the convict precinct on the foreshore. The pre-1850s Georgian style buildings (some partly reconstructed) survive in a streetscape setting. The Old Military Barracks includes barracks, officers' quarters, privy and guard room surrounded by a compound perimeter wall with observation towers. The larger New Military Barracks, built to accommodate the increasing number of soldiers, also includes barracks, officers' quarters and archaeological remains of the military hospital. Government House is strategically located with a commanding view over both the military/administrative complex and the convict precinct. It was the residence for commandants during the convict period and has been restored to its 1830s condition.

The convict precinct lies along the sea front which was under the eye of the authorities on the hill. It comprises two Prisoner Compounds and industrial structures (including ruins and archaeological sites) where convicts were accommodated, worked, incarcerated and sometimes executed. One compound includes the Protestant Chapel and footings of the Prisoners' Barracks, Sentry Post, Guard Houses and the Roman Catholic Chapel enclosed by a perimeter wall with a gate archway. Adjacent to this is the second compound comprising the New Gaol surrounded by a perimeter wall. The platform, layout and ruins of the five pentagonal wings remain. A group of structures on the foreshore was where most of the industrial activities were undertaken by convicts to produce goods required by the penal colony. Key buildings include the Landing Pier, Pier Store, Royal Engineer's Office and Stables, Settlement Guard House, Police Office, Constable's Quarters, Crankmill, Blacksmiths' Compound, Double Boatshed, the Salt House, Lime Kilns and the archaeological site of the Lumber Yard, Mess Yard and Quarries. There are also extensive convict-built roads, water channels and bridges and nine underground silos to store grain for the colony. A cemetery for convicts and free people includes many graves and headstones of convicts. Arthur's Vale is an extensive valley which was largely used for gardening and agriculture by convicts. It retains the convict dam and vestiges of agricultural buildings, barns, small cottages, gardens and cropping patterns from the convict era. Today the site operates as an historic, administrative and recreational site with several museums and government buildings.

**1835 painting of the penal settlement of Norfolk Island showing agricultural work by convicts.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia. T Seller, Settlement at Norfolk Island, pic-an6570405.

**Administrative and military settlement along Quality Row overlooking the Prisoners' Compounds and Pier Precinct along the waterfront.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** KAVHA Management Board.

**The Commissariat Store and New Military Barracks in foreground with Convict Barracks and Prisoners' Compound with New Gaol in background.**

**From left to right; Prison Compound, Royal Engineer's Office and Stables, Double Boatshed and Crankmill.**

**Constable's Quarters.**

# Old Government House and Domain Parramatta NSW (1788–1856)

The site on the Parramatta River (20 kilometres from Sydney Cove) was an important place used by governors who administered the colony of NSW during the convict era. It demonstrates the forced migration of convicts to rehabilitate criminals and integrate them into the penal colony. The site also illustrates the success of the NSW penal colony and is associated with the large-scale introduction of transportation by the major European powers in the modern era.

The site is also an extensive landscape comprising five buildings and extensive archaeological remains. Key buildings include Old Government House, Garrison Building (Officers' Quarters), Female Convict Servant's Quarters and archaeological remains of the Redoubt (Military Post), roads and convict allotments and huts set in over 37 hectares of relatively undisturbed parkland (the Domain). The footings of the 1788 residence for the first Governor at Parramatta are visible.[1] Old Government House (1790–1856) is a two-storey rendered brick building in Georgian style. A Classical timber portico of c.1816 is attributed to convict architect Francis Greenway. The layout of the house and elements of the land reflect patterns of the penal colony's administration under 12 governors, as well as lives of the convicts who worked for them. The drawing and dining rooms symbolise the important 'command centre' role that Old Government House played during the convict era.[2] The drawing room was where governors made decisions about key aspects of convicts' lives and kept convict records. Governor Macquarie often conducted penal colony business in the drawing room including making decisions about convicts and ex-convicts. The dining room was where Macquarie entertained ex-convicts to demonstrate his commitment to his emancipation policies and to provide an example to colonists. Old Government House has been restored to represent the Macquarie period and includes a collection of original furniture.[3] The Garrison Building and Female Convict Servants Quarters, located behind the house, are single-storey brick buildings in Old Colonial Georgian style. The Redoubt archaeological site lies in a defensive position in front of Old Government House overlooking the archaeological remains of convict roads, convict allotments and huts. Other features from the convict era include the single-storey rendered brick Governor's Dairy (containing remnants of an emancipist's cottage) and Governor Brisbane's convict-built Bath House.

The surrounding parkland comprises archaeological sites of Governor Brisbane's Observatory, the Lumberyard and the Crescent where convicts laboured at agricultural and industrial work. Today, Old Government House is a museum and public park. A large collection of documentary records survive in public archives.[4]

**The Governor's Dairy built by ex-convict George Salter on land granted in 1796. The building was later extended by Governor Macquarie.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** David Wallace ©.

**c.1798 image of 1793 Old Government House on hill showing row of convict huts and allotments (left) and punishment stocks (foreground, right).**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales Q99/C.

**Old Government House with portico attributed to convict architect Francis Greenway.**

**Main entrance to Old Government House leading to two principal rooms, the drawing room and dining room. The entrance is part of Governor Macquarie's 1816 extensions.**

**A view of Government House at Parramatta in 1805 before Governor Macquarie's extensions.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. PXD388v.3 no3b.

# Hyde Park Barracks Sydney NSW (1819–48)

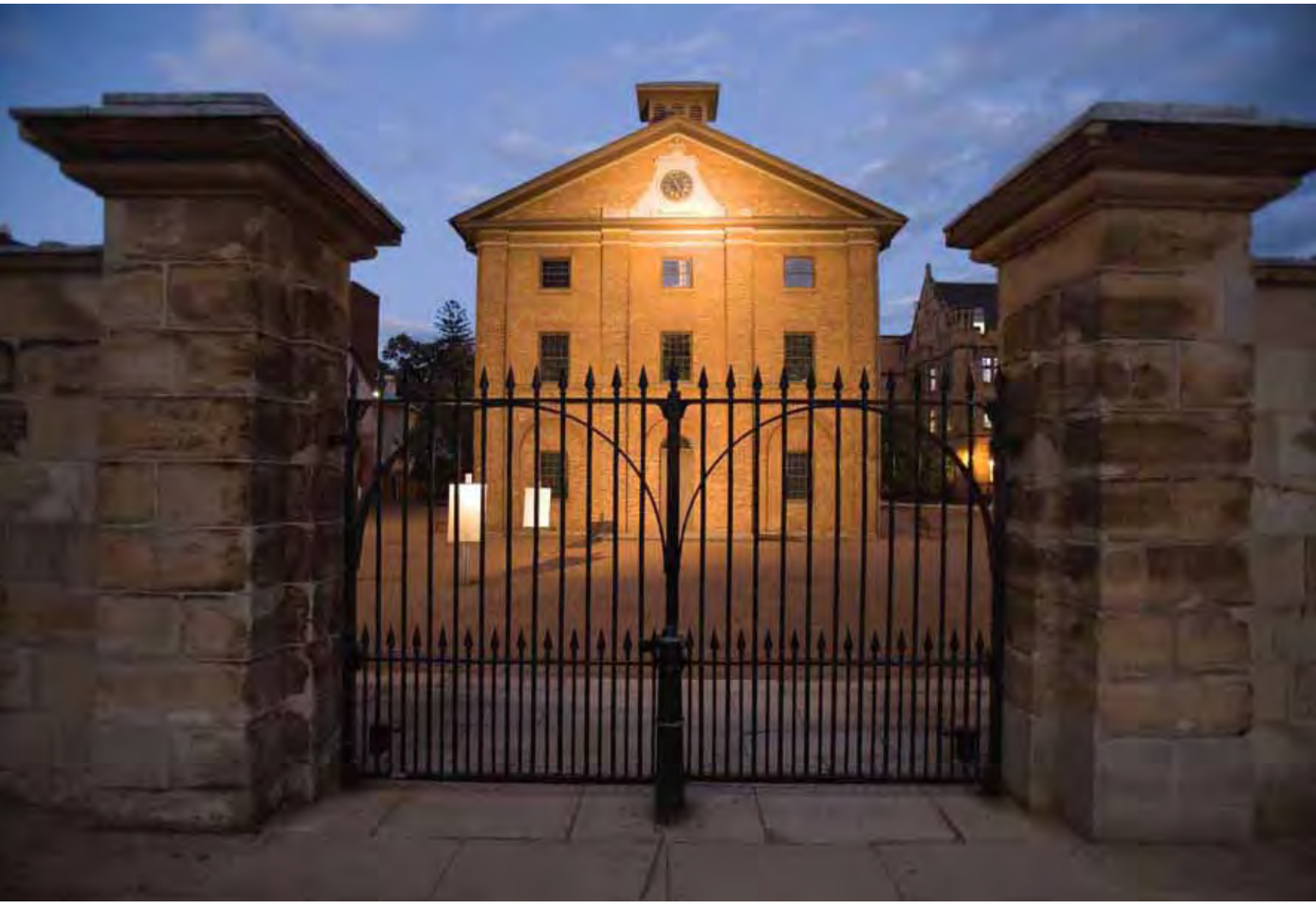
The site in the business district of Sydney was initially built to provide accommodation for male convicts who worked outside the barracks during the day. It later became a place of confinement for male secondary offenders. Hyde Park Barracks is an example of the use of the transportation to rehabilitate and integrate convicts into the penal colony, particularly during the era of Governor Macquarie. The site illustrates the success of the NSW penal colony and is associated with the large scale introduction of transportation by the major European powers in the modern era.

The site comprises eight convict buildings and a significant collection of convict artefacts and records. The convict barracks was designed to accommodate up to 600 convicts but at times held around 1,400. The site comprises the main barracks building and seven associated buildings within a stone perimeter wall. The barracks was designed by convict architect Francis Greenway during Governor Macquarie's era. It is a three-storey brick Georgian style building with a timber-shingled gabled roof. A pediment on the front of the building has an inscription commemorating Macquarie's role in its construction. A large central clock was an important feature of the barracks symbolising rigid regimes to manage and control convicts. Convicts who did not adhere to the strict time-bound routines of the barracks such as compulsory attendance at musters or religious services could be flogged or denied rations.

Each floor of the barracks has a central corridor and a cross corridor that lead to six large dormitories and six smaller rooms where convicts were housed. One of the rooms has been restored showing the layout of canvas hammocks strung from wooden rails. The barracks is enclosed by a three metre high stone perimeter wall and the entrance is flanked by the Clerk's and Constable's Lodges. Five buildings form the northern perimeter wall. These buildings were used as accommodation for new arrivals (also used as a magistrate's Bench 1829-30), Quarters and Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts, cells for refractory convicts, a Store and Bakehouse. The interiors of these buildings have been modified for use as administration buildings and a café. An open gravelled area surrounds the barracks. Parts of this area were used for musters and searching convicts returning from work. Hyde Park Barracks operates as a museum today and houses a vast collection of archives and artefacts including convict tools, convict clothing, correspondence, regulations, parliamentary papers and photos and drawings.[5]

**Watercolour painted by convict artist Joseph Lycett looking towards Hyde Park Barracks.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.



**Entrance to Hyde Park Barracks showing main gate and the barracks building.**


**Clock with Governor Macquarie inscription on pediment.**

Western Facade, Hyde Park Barracks Museum
© Jaime Plaza

**The hallway leading to dormitories where convicts were held at night.**

**Reconstruction of canvas hammocks where up to 60 male convicts slept in one of the 12 dormitories.**

# Brickendon–Woolmers Estates Tasmania (1820–50s)

Brickendon and Woolmers are two neighbouring estates on the Macquarie River in northern Tasmania (known as 'Van Diemen's Land' during the convict era) where convicts were assigned to 'private masters' to undertake agricultural work. The site is representative of the use of penal transportation to expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence and to rehabilitate criminals and integrate them into a distant penal colony. It is also associated with global developments in the punishment of crime in the 19th century including Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's 'open air panopticon'. The two estates have been managed and worked by descendants of a single family for over six generations. Each estate comprises a homestead, buildings, farming structures and fields built and worked by convicts from the early 1820s until the late 1850s. The suite of structures represents the living and working conditions of assigned convicts and the vast majority remain in their original form.

Brickendon Estate is a farming landscape comprising 20 timber or brick buildings set in 420 hectares of farming land with convict-built roadways. Brickendon Homestead is a two-storey painted brick Old Colonial Georgian country house in a garden setting with stables and cottages for the coachman and gardener. Brickendon Homestead was the residence of the 'private master' and his family who had male and female convicts assigned to them for the duration of the convicts' sentences. Female convict servants lived in one wing of the homestead and worked mainly as domestic servants. An extensive set of pre-1850s convict-built farm structures where male convicts worked lies one kilometre from the homestead. These structures include: the Pillar Granary; two Suffolk Barns; Cart Shed; Smoke House; Poultry Shed; Brick Granary; Woolshed; Stables; Blacksmith's Shop; and Cook House and archaeological remains of the Convict Single Men's Quarters, Carpentry Shop, Stables, Hay Shed and the Overseer's Cottage.

Other farming structures include a Farm Cottage/Dairy, the Original Homestead, Outhouse and underground drainage systems. A small elegant Chapel located prominently at the centre of the farm was for the sole use of convicts. All of the early 1800s field systems that were worked by convicts survive along with around 30 kilometres of hawthorn hedge 'fences' planted by convicts.[6] Many crops (such as barley and wheat) have been grown continually on the estate since the convict era and the landscape has altered little since that time. There is also a large collection of farming equipment and tools, diaries, photos, paintings, maps and drawings from the convict era. Brickendon Estate is still owned and worked by the Archer family.

Woolmers Estate, also owned by the Archer family until 1994 and now owned by a private trust, comprises more than 18 buildings and structures in a rural setting of 13 hectares. Woolmers Homestead, a large two-storey building with a flagged veranda, was the home of the 'private master'. The homestead was extended in 1843 with a two-storey Italianate addition and remodelled kitchen and service wing. Female convicts lived in the attic above the residence and worked in the home and the nearby Kitchen (also the Servant's Quarters), Provisions Store and Bakers Cottages all of which retain their original form. Male convicts worked away from the main homestead in the fields, Farm Stables, Cider House, Woolshed, Blacksmith's Shop, Coach House and Stables and Pump House. Convict era Workers' Cottages, Coachman's Cottage and Shed and Coach House and Stables are also on the estate. The archaeological site of the Male Convict Barracks is believed to be located towards the bottom of the hill. A Chapel (now an apple packing shed), centrally located on the estate, was for the sole use of convicts. A vast collection of artefacts and written materials has survived from the convict era and remain in the homestead.

Convict-built Smokehouse (left), Chapel (middle) and original 1820 Homestead (right) at Brickendon Estate.

**1830s map of Brickendon Estate.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Richard and Louise Archer.

1822 Blacksmith's Shop, Woolmers Estate.

1831–41 Blacksmith's Shop, Brickendon Estate.

1830s–40s painting showing Woolmers Estate where convicts shaped the agricultural landscape under the assignment system.

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Richard and Louise Archer.

Historical photograph showing church for the reformation of convicts.

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Richard and Louise Archer.

Below: 1819 convict-built Woolmers Homestead where private 'masters' lived. Female convicts lived upstairs in this building.

# Darlington Probation Station Maria Island, Tasmania (1825–32; 1842–50)

The site on Maria Island off Tasmania's east coast was initially a convict station and later became a probation station for male convicts. Darlington is representative of the use of penal transportation to rehabilitate criminals and integrate them into the penal colony. It is also associated with global developments in the punishment of crime in the modern era, including the shift away from corporal punishment to psychological punishment. The site comprises 14 convict buildings and substantial ruins in a layout that reflects the key features of the probation system in VDL.

The bushland setting of 361 hectares has survived relatively unchanged since the convict era. Most of the buildings are Old Colonial Georgian style and are simple and functional with plain, whitewashed brick walls and very little decoration. Unlike most penal stations, the accommodation for the civil and military officers was in close proximity to the convict compound where convicts lived and worked, reinforcing the focus on surveillance and rehabilitation. Officers' accommodation included quarters for the Assistant Superintendent, Senior Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent. The Mess Hall (also used as the school room and Roman Catholic chapel), the Protestant Chapel, Clergyman's Quarters and Visiting Magistrate's Quarters are centrally positioned within the compound. The entrance to the convict compound is strategically surrounded by some of these buildings, serving as a constant reminder to convicts that adherence to regulation, religious instruction and schooling were the keys to reform. The architecture and the relationship between the buildings reflect the operation of the classification system including the different living and working conditions of the three classes of convicts. Surviving buildings and archaeological remains that housed or punished convicts include: the remains of the Separate Apartments (for the worst behaved, third class convicts); the Convict Barracks (for second and first class convicts); and the ruins of the Solitary Cells (for the short-term punishment of convicts from any class). Smith O'Brien's Quarters provided separate housing for the small number of political prisoners and was situated next to the Officers' Cottage. The Bakehouse/Clothing Store and Cookhouse/Bread Store complete the convict compound which formed a perimeter around the muster ground.

Remaining buildings which demonstrate the varied labour of convicts include the Convict Barn, Miller's Cottage and Mill ruins and the substantial ruins of the Oast House/Hop Kilns, Lime Kilns, Brickfields and Grain Mill, which were situated away from the main station. The two-storey Commissariat Store is located close to the jetty for the easy transfer of stores from boats and the ruins and archaeological remains of the Hospital, Surgeon's Quarters and Religious Instructor's Quarters lie behind it. A cemetery on the hillside with the graves and headstones of colonial authorities and their families faces out to sea. Convicts were buried away from the station near the Brickfields but no grave markers have survived.[7] A collection of artefacts that detail the lives, conditions and experiences of convicts is housed in some of the buildings. Today, Darlington operates as a recreational and historical site within the Maria Island National Park.

**The layout of the probation station focused on close surveillance and the rehabilitation of convicts through a strict regime of hard labour, religious instruction and education.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Tasmaniana Library, State Library of Tasmania. Settlement on Maria Island.

**Commissariat Store 1825, located close to the jetty for easy transfer of supplies for the convict station.**

**Aerial view of Darlington today showing convict village in island setting.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Tasmaniana Library, State Library of Tasmania.

**Darlington today has maintained the key features of the probation system in VDL.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania. Robert Neill, unsigned and undated.

**Convicts were classified according to their behaviour. First and second class convicts slept in six large dormitories in the Convict Barracks.**

# Old Great North Road NSW (1828–35)

The site near Wiseman's Ferry is a 7.5 kilometre portion of the Great North Road (250 kilometres long) constructed by male convicts. The road landscape incorporates a 2.5 kilometre section of Devine's Hill and a five kilometre road called Finch's Line (abandoned before completion) in a natural bushland setting undisturbed since the convict era. Old Great North Road is an example of the use of penal transportation: for British empire buildings; to punish criminals and deter crime in Britain; and to rehabilitate criminals for integration into the distant penal colony. The site also illustrates the success of the NSW penal colony and is associated with the large-scale introduction of transportation by the major European powers in the modern era.

The Great North Road was part of a network of 'Great Roads' that was designed to mirror the Great Roads of England. The layout of the site reflects the operation of convict road gangs to punish re-offending convicts and revive the fear of transportation while expanding and linking settlements at the same time. Thousands of sandstone blocks of various sizes were quarried by hand from cliffs. They were then shaped, dressed and assembled to form massive retaining walls, spillways, gutters, culverts, buttresses and intricate drainage systems, most of which remain. Off-cuts and rubble were used to form the road itself. Along the road, quarry sites remain showing triangular shaped marks from hand-drilling and individual sandstone blocks show pick marks. Remains and ruins of the convict built Devine's Hill stockade and a stone hut built beside the road are visible. These provided the temporary housing for convicts at night, as the road progressed. A rock cut drinking basin, Powder Cave, mile markers and an abandoned store of sandstone blocks also remain. There are numerous examples of convict graffiti including a portrait, initials and various words cut into the rock surfaces. Today, Old Great North Road is a recreational and historic site within a national park.

**Old Great North Road is a rare intact example of early colonial road engineering undertaken by convict labour.**

**Old Great North Road's original setting has a strong sense of place and character from the convict days.**

**Convicts quarried thousands of sandstone blocks from cliffs to form massive retaining walls.**

**1833 watercolour. Convict road building gangs aimed to inflict harsher punishment for convicts as well as expand the colony into new frontiers.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia. C Rodius, Convicts building road over the Blue Mountains, NSW 1833, pic-an6332110.

**The convicts of the No. 25 Road Party gang marked their presence in the rock wall. Graffiti were often used as a form of resistance against penal servitude, and sometimes as a mark of pride in their work.**

# Cascades Female Factory Hobart, Tasmania (1828–56)

The site in Hobart comprises three of the original five compounds (yards) of Cascades Female Factory which accommodated, punished and aimed to reform female convicts. Cascades is an example of the use of penal transportation to: expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence; to punish criminals and deter crime in Britain; and reform female convicts. The site is also associated with the rise of segregated prisons for female criminals during the 19th century. The factory was in an isolated location, separated and hidden from the main colony at the bottom of a cold valley. The original infrastructure of the factory made it almost totally self-sufficient. It included a hospital, nursery, laundries, cook houses, offices, administrators' apartments, separate convict apartments, solitary cells, assorted workshops, stores and a church. The yards were successively developed as the population of female convicts increased.

The layout of the site reflects the different treatment and conditions of between three and six classes of convicts. Yard 1 originally comprised seven inner yards separating different classes of female convicts (see Part 3.A), the Chapel, Hospital, Nursery, Constable's and Overseer's Apartments (second floor) and 12 solitary punishment cells. Yard 3 comprised offices and two apartment blocks with 28 separate apartments on each of the two levels. The Separate Apartments were built following the introduction of the probation system and were considered a crucial part of the institutional discipline and reform of female convicts. Yard 4 was specifically for the care of convicts' babies and children from 1850 onwards and comprised a two-storey building to house 88 women and 150 children.[8] The yard was divided by an inner wall. The cottages occupied by the Matron and Sub-matron of the nursery were situated in the outer part of the yard.

Today, the site comprises three adjoining yards (Yards 1, 3 and 4), the Matron's Cottage (Yard 4) and substantial ruins of a perimeter wall. Each yard is approximately 60 metres long and around 42 metres wide. The height of the perimeter wall varies throughout each yard with a maximum height of 5.5 metres. The Matron's Cottage is a single-storey brick residence with its original four rooms. There are also extensive surface and sub-surface archaeological remains of convict era buildings and structures. The Cascades Female Factory Archaeological Collection comprises over 2,000 artefacts, some of which are on display in the Matron's Cottage. Today, Cascades operates as an historic site and small museum and gallery.

**Archaeological excavations revealed the separate apartments where female convicts were kept.**

**The original five yards with the Nursery and Matron's Cottage in the foreground.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, NS1013-45.

Massive 5.5 metre perimeter walls surrounding Yard 1 where female convicts lived and worked.

One of the perimeter walls separating the yards, showing the location at the bottom of a valley, with Mt Wellington in the background.

Matron's Cottage from which the Matron overlooked and monitored every activity of the women and their babies.

# Port Arthur Historic Site Tasmania (1830–77)

The site on the south side of the Tasman Peninsula was a timber-getting station for a very short period before becoming a penal station for the punishment of male secondary offenders. Port Arthur is an example of the use of penal transportation to: expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence; punish criminals and deter crime in Britain; and reform criminals. The site is also associated with global developments in the punishment of crime during the 19th century including Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's 'open air panopticon', a special prison for male juvenile convicts, and the 'separate system'.

Port Arthur comprises more than 30 convict-built structures and substantial ruins in a picturesque and relatively undisturbed landscape of 136 hectares. The extensive suite of structures and their layout reflect the importance of the penal station, its self-sufficiency and the evolution of penal practices over several decades. The civil and military buildings form two groups at either end of the station. Elevated above the convict precinct are the Church, Parsonage and houses for the Visiting Magistrate and Roman Catholic Chaplain reflecting the pivotal role of religion. The houses of the Junior Medical Officer, Accountant and Government Cottage are also located in this area. At the other end of the penal station are the Commandant's House, Officers' Quarters, Guard Tower, Watchmen's Quarters and ruins of the Senior Military Officer's Quarters, Law Courts and the Military Barracks.

Convicts were housed in the Prisoner Barracks (archaeological site), the Separate Prison and the Penitentiary. The crucifix shaped and cut sandstone Separate Prison comprises 50 cells arranged in three corridors, two punishment cells ('dumb cells') and 12 exercise yards that radiate to the periphery of the prison. Within the Separate Prison is the Chapel where individual standing berths ensured convicts could only see the Chaplain. The Separate Prison was the place where refractory convicts were subjected to new forms of psychological control. The four-storey Penitentiary accommodated 484 convicts; 136 in separate cells and 348 in two tiers of sleeping berths in dormitories. Also in this area are the Asylum and Farm Overseer's Cottage and ruins of the Paupers' Mess and Hospital. A political prisoner was housed at Smith O'Brien's Cottage.[9] Point Puer boys' prison, situated on a narrow peninsula opposite the main station, includes several standing ruins and numerous archaeological features.

Many other elements of the site reflect the operation of the penal station as a major industrial complex. The productive yet harsh industrial activities of convicts are evidenced in the Dockyard, Master Shipwright's House, Clerk of Works' House, Lime Kiln and Dairy. There are also archaeological remains of workshops, sawpits, a quarry and stone yards and of Government Farm where convicts undertook agriculture to sustain the station. The Isle of the Dead contains the convict era cemetery where around 1,000 convicts, military and civil staff and their families are buried.[10] Over 80 headstones remain, some designed and created by convicts. Convict and free people's graves are separated reflecting a symbolic hierarchy. Port Arthur has a large collection of artefacts, documents, photos and other materials relating to the convict era.[11] The site now operates as a museum and historic site.


**1838 historical plan for the boys establishment at Point Puer.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, CS05-36

**Aerial view of Port Arthur today.**

**Below: Isle of the Dead contains around 1,000 graves of convicts and free people.**

The Port Arthur Historic Site showing the Penitentiary, Watchmen's Quarters, Law Courts and Hospital.

1836 Guard Tower.

Historical photograph of the four-storey Penitentiary.

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, NS1013/1602

# Coal Mines Historic Site Tasmania (1833–48)

The site on the north side of the Tasman Peninsula was a coal mine for refractory male convicts. The Coal Mines is representative of the use of penal transportation to expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence and to punish criminals and deter crime in Britain. The site is also associated with the abolition of transportation and the rise of domestic penitentiaries in Britain.

It comprises over 25 substantial building ruins as well as remains of coal mining activities in an undisturbed bushland setting of around 214 hectares. The key remaining features of the mining operation include four areas of surface workings/shafts, associated coal stockpiles, coal dumps/ mullock heaps, machinery footings, quarries, trial shafts, brick kilns and adjoining clay pits, lime kilns and tanning pits. Several underground solitary punishment cells remain in one of the coal shafts but are no longer visible or accessible. Two quarries show pick marks where convicts mined and extracted the stone by hand and a number of dressed stone blocks quarried for buildings lie abandoned. The alignments of many of the roads and tramways powered by convicts to transport the coal remain between the main settlement, the coal mine sites and coal jetties. There are also remains of the original Coal Wharf and sites of three coal jetties.

The layout of the main convict station shows the separation of buildings used by military and civil officers from areas where convicts were housed, confined and worked. The ruins of the Superintendent's House, Military Barracks and Senior Military Officer's House overlook the main convict station. The Prisoner Barracks ruin was originally two large stone buildings that housed up to 170 convicts within a fenced compound.[12] Underneath the barracks remain 16 solitary punishment cells made of sandstone blocks which created a dark, sound proof and poorly ventilated environment. There are also archaeological remains of over 100 Separate Apartment cells built to segregate convicts at night. Another 36 alternating Solitary Punishment Cells were built below the Separate Apartments; 18 of these remain. The Officers' Quarters and the Assistant Superintendent's House were located within the convict precinct to provide surveillance. The site also includes houses for the Surgeon, Coxswain, Commissariat Officer and Catechist. The Chapel (which also functioned as a school house) is prominently situated in the heart of the main station. Remains of the Bakehouse, Workshops, and the Engineer's Store are also visible. Archaeological remains of the Commissariat Store and Jetty are located on the waters edge for ease of loading and unloading stores. Archaeological remains of a Semaphore Station are visible on the hill behind the Main Settlement. The Coal Mines now operates as an historic site.

**Opening of the main coal shaft where convicts laboured in stifling underground conditions.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority.

**c.1843 map showing the layout of the main convict settlement.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, 30/4575.

**Remains of Prisoner Barracks and Chapel overlooking the water where coal was loaded onto boats.** **Reproduced courtesy of:** Tourism Tasmania © Joe Shemesh.

**The main settlement showing the Prisoner Barracks, Chapel and Engineer's Store.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, NS 1200/5.

**Three of 16 Solitary Punishment Cells underneath the Prisoner Barracks.**

**Aerial view of the main settlement.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Tourism Tasmania © Joe Shemesh

# Cockatoo Island Convict Site NSW (1839–69)

The site was a penal station for re-offending male convicts established on an island in Sydney Harbour within easy reach of Sydney town. Cockatoo Island typifies the use of penal transportation to expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence and to punish criminals and deter crime in Britain. The site is also associated with the abolition of transportation and the rise of domestic penitentiaries in Britain.

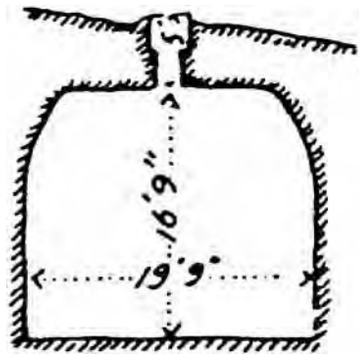
It comprises 13 convict-built structures in an island setting located on a raised sandstone plateau surrounded by quarried cliffs dropping to a levelled surrounding area. The buildings are made from sandstone blocks quarried by convicts on the island. The layout of the station shows the segregation of military and administrative functions from areas where convicts worked and were housed. The Superintendent's Residence is on the elevated part of the plateau above the Prisoner Barracks and convict work areas. On the lower side of the plateau, the Prisoner Barracks and Hospital form three sides of an open courtyard. The barracks, initially built to accommodate no more than 328 men, actually housed up to 500 men. The convict Mess Hall and the Kitchen run along the fourth side of the courtyard. The Mess Hall was also used as a school and chapel. The Prisoner Barracks area is surrounded by the Military Guard House, two Free Overseers' Quarters, Military Officers' Quarters and the Guard House Kitchen. The Military Guard House was used to police convicts and also to protect the colony at Sydney Cove. The cut-out corner remains of an underground isolation cell for the punishment of recalcitrant convicts are located on the cliff face. On the water's edge is Fitzroy Dock, an excavated sandstone dry dock. It is 114 metres in length with sides lined and stepped with convict-cut sandstone masonry blocks. The nearby Engineers' and Blacksmiths' Shop was built by convicts to support the dock. A series of underground bottle shaped sandstone silos averaging 5.7 metres deep and 6 metres wide were hand cut by convicts out of solid rock. Today, Cockatoo Island is an historic site.

**Cockatoo Island pre 1870 showing a ship in Fitzroy Dock.**
**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

**Mess Hall and Kitchen, also used as a school and chapel for convicts.**

**Remains of an underground isolation cell.**
**Reproduced courtesy of:** A Jacob for Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Military Guardhouse retaining original gun racks.




Plan of an underground silo from the convict era, measuring 5.7 metres by 6 metres.

**Reproduced courtesy of:** J S Kerr. (1984: 43).

Sandstone grain silo hand cut by convicts, exposed on the edge of the cliff.

**Reproduced courtesy of:** A Jacob for Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

# Fremantle Prison WA (1852–86)

The site was a convict barracks and prison for male convicts. Fremantle Prison is representative of the use of penal transportation to expand Britain's geo-political spheres of influence and to punish criminals and deter crime in Britain. The site is also associated with the abolition of transportation and the rise of domestic penitentiaries in Britain.

Fremantle Prison comprises 16 intact convict-built structures surrounded by a 6 metre high limestone perimeter wall. Eight of the buildings are located within the perimeter wall and eight just outside. Nearly all buildings are constructed from locally quarried limestone. The design of the prison was modelled on the modified panopticon design of Pentonville in Britain and has features that reflect the penal principles of the 'Separate System'. The Main Cell Block is 145 metres long and four-storeys high. It held 570 men: 240 in dormitory rooms (known as 'Association Rooms') and 330 in separate cells of 2.1 metres by 1.2 metres. Illicit artwork by a convict sentenced to transportation for forgery has survived in one of the cells. The Church of England Chapel is situated in a prominent position in the projecting wing in the centre of the façade. It retains murals and stencilled internal wall patterns painted by convicts. The Roman Catholic Chapel in contrast is located in a former association ward designed for communal accommodation for convicts. Behind the main block is a single-storey Refractory Cell Block consisting of 12 punishment cells and six 'dark cells' with no light. Seven separate exercise yards located along the eastern elevation of the Main Cell Block surround these cells. The Hospital is located at the north-east corner of the prison compound. Two workshops within an enclosing wall occupying the south-east corner were the place where convicts trained in various trades and skills. The Gatehouse complex surrounds the entrance to the prison. It comprises the Military Guardhouse, Warder's Guardhouse and Gatehouse Courtyard. Adjoining the western perimeter wall on the outside of the prison compound are the Convict Warder's Guardroom, stables and several two-storey residences built to accommodate the Gatekeeper, Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Chaplain (first and second residence) and Surgeon. Several buildings house the artefacts and artistic records of the convicts who were incarcerated there. The site now operates as a museum and historic site.

**Interior of one wing showing elements of Pentonville design with front facing cells along galleried walkways.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Fremantle Prison Collection.

**Main Cell Block of Fremantle Prison in 1859 showing convicts and a guard.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia, H Wray, Convict prison, Fremantle, W. Australia pic-an5758270.


Fortified Gatehouse entrance to the prison.

Main Cell Block of Fremantle Prison today.

# CONVICT BIOGRAPHIES

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

## William 'Billy' Blue (c.1767–1834)

'Billy' Blue was a chocolate-maker convicted of stealing raw sugar and sentenced to seven years transportation. After over four years in convict hulks in England, he was transported to NSW. In 1805 Blue married an English-born convict; they had six children. He worked as a waterman and collected and sold oysters and other items. He found favour with both government officials and the public, to whom he endeared himself with his whimsical style and banter. Blue was appointed harbour watchman and constable by Governor Macquarie in 1811. These titles enabled him to acquire a new home overlooking Sydney Harbour, which became a local landmark known as 'Billy Blue's Cottage'. In 1817 Blue was granted a farm of 80 acres (32.4 hectares), at the southernmost tip of the north shore of Port Jackson which became known as Billy Blue's Point. As a landowner on the north side of the harbour, he saw the potential for operating a boat service to the site and quickly built up a fleet of ferries. Macquarie light-heartedly dubbed him 'Commodore'; Blue became known as 'The Old Commodore'. In 1818 Blue was charged with theft but refused to plead guilty. As a result he lost his position as harbour watchman and constable and was imprisoned for a year. In 1823 Blue petitioned the governor to be granted 'in his old age the peaceable enjoyment of his premises and ferry'. The governor found in his favour, authorising him to 'have the Use and Occupation of his ferry'. By 1833 he and his family were reported as keeping a ferry-boat and cultivating vegetables and fruit for the Sydney market. Several streets in North Sydney are named after Blue and the site of his northern ferry terminus remains known as Blues Point today. [13]

## Ann Wilton (Drayson) (1819–68)

In 1843 live-in housemaid Ann Drayson was convicted of stealing £100 and several yards of ribbon from her employer. She was sentenced to transportation for ten years and spent six months in Millbank experimental prison in London before arriving in VDL. Drayson was sent to Cascades Female Factory before being assigned as a servant. She gave birth to a daughter at Cascades in 1846. The child may have died or was possibly adopted out and given another name. With five years still to serve, Drayson married John Wilton, a free settler, labourer and a widower with two children. They had met while working as servants and had eight children. In 1858 the family rented a house and Ann died in 1868 aged 49. John, now 56, married for a third time to an 18 year old and had two more children, fathering 12 in total.[14]

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Government Printing Office collection, State Library of New South Wales.

## Francis Greenway (1777–1837)

Greenway was an architect in private practice in Bristol when in 1812 he was found guilty of forging a document. He was sentenced to death, later changed to transportation for 14 years. He arrived in Sydney in 1814 and was shortly followed by his wife and three children. Greenway was allowed much freedom due to his much sought after skills. He opened a private practice immediately after his arrival. Greenway was given a ticket-of-leave and during 1815 he occasionally advised the government on its public works. His first work for the government was the design of a lighthouse in 1817. Governor Macquarie was so pleased with it that he granted Greenway a conditional pardon. Greenway continued to design buildings including Hyde Park Barracks, a new government house, several churches and a large female factory at Parramatta. Macquarie opened the barracks with great ceremony and a special feast for convicts, using the occasion to grant Greenway an absolute pardon. [15]

## Walter Paisley (c.1813–unknown)

Paisley was 13 years old when he was convicted for breaking into a house. His brother and four friends lowered him through a window but when the burglary went wrong, they ran off, abandoning him. He was sentenced to seven years transportation and was sent to the juvenile establishment at Point Puer, Port Arthur. Over the next five years, 44 charges were entered against his name in the convict records. Many of these charges resulted in sentences to solitary confinement. On average he spent two and a half days of every month at Point Puer locked up in the dark on a diet of bread and water. When some of his friends were sentenced to solitary confinement Paisley amused them by sitting outside their cells and reciting stories. For this he was locked up for a week. When in solitary confinement he refused to be quiet, singing, blaspheming and shouting obscenities. As time went on Paisley's conduct became increasingly rebellious. He destroyed his work in the carpenter's shop, struck another boy with a spade, punched the schoolmaster and threatened others with a stolen lancet. After being caught with a chicken from the Superintendent's garden, he attacked one of the boys who had provided evidence against him. Despite his conduct, Paisley acquired carpentry skills while at Point Puer. A wooden boat handcrafted by Paisley remains. He was released from Point Puer in 1838 shortly before his sentence expired. The following year he was arrested for burglary and was sentenced to life imprisonment, the first four years to Port Arthur where, as a 'bad character', he was to be strictly watched. He was charged on another six occasions mostly for misconduct and disobedience of orders. He was discharged to the Colonial Hospital in Hobart in April 1844 and thereafter sent to a nearby invalid station. [16]

## Mary Reibey (Haydock) (1777–1855)

Mary Haydock, aged 13, arrived in Sydney from England in 1792 having been convicted of horse-stealing and sentenced to seven years transportation. She served her sentence assigned as a nursemaid and in 1794 Haydock married Thomas Reibey, a landholder and merchant. After his death in 1811 she was left with seven children and complete control of numerous businesses. Mary became a prosperous businesswoman in her own right with interests in trading vessels and property. Gradually retiring from active business, Mary began to take an active interest in the church, education and charity. In 1825, she was appointed one of the governors of the Free Grammar School. Mary died in 1855, a wealthy and respected member of colonial society. Her three sons followed their parents' lead and established mercantile and shipping ventures in Tasmania, and her grandson was archdeacon of Launceston and Premier of Tasmania. Mary's face now appears on the Australian $20 note. [17]

## Joseph Lucas Horrocks (c.1805–65)

Horrocks was convicted of forgery in London in 1851 and sentenced to transportation for 14 years. He arrived at Fremantle Prison in 1852 where he gained experience as a medical practitioner. Horrocks had no formal medical training other than skills acquired while working as a sick berth attendant in the Royal Navy. However, the scarcity of medical officers led him to apply for the post of medical attendant. His duties were to attend the medical needs of officers, 'ticket-of-leave men' and sick Aboriginals. Horrocks gained a reputation for generosity to the poor in supplying prescribed drugs at low costs and was soon widely known as 'Doc'. In 1853 Horrocks was granted a 'ticket-of-leave' and set up a business as a storekeeper and postmaster. In 1856 he was given a conditional pardon. He was granted 100 acres of land and was instrumental in the development of the local copper mine. In the first ten years the mine produced ore worth £40,000. Horrocks had stone-walled cottages built to accommodate the miners at low rentals and employed several building tradesmen, three cooks, an engineer, a blacksmith and a bootmaker in addition to 30 miners. He experimented with agriculture, cultivating crops such as tobacco, hops, fruit and wheat. Horrocks encouraged his tenants to grow their own vegetables, believing that the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables was a prime factor in the high incidence of scurvy. Horrocks' reputation was such that many men travelled to him to seek work. Although mining jobs were limited, Horrocks started a sustenance scheme for the unemployed to collect stones and build walls leading towards the village. He went on to further improve the lives of his tenants by lobbying for improved conditions for convicts, initiating the development of a schoolhouse and WA's first inter-denominational church. He also began agitating for a railway and organised the construction of a local road, employing men and supplying tools at his own cost. The small settlement of Horrocks is named after him. [18]

**Convicts smoothed pennies and engraved on them notes to loved ones at home, often conveying their distress. This one shows a bird with a chain around its neck.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Jane Townshend, Powerhouse Museum.


**Convicts John Boyle O'Reilly, James Wilson and Thomas Hassett c.1867. Taken from Mountjoy Prison, Dublin.**
**Reproduced courtesy of:** Kevin Cusack, USA.

## Fenian convicts at Fremantle Prison

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (known as the Fenian movement) was a secret society that flourished during the 1860s. Its prime objective was to overthrow the British rule in Ireland. In 1866 John Boyle O'Reilly was found guilty of assisting soldiers to join the movement. His death sentence was commuted to transportation for 20 years. He sailed with 280 convicts, 62 of them 'Fenians', to Fremantle in January 1868. Their arrival signalled the end of transportation to Australia. O'Reilly escaped on an American whaling boat in 1869 and became a respected citizen and editor of a newspaper in America. Over the years sufficient funds were raised from Irish people, both in America and Australia, to finance a daring plan to free the 'Fenians' who remained imprisoned at Fremantle. They bought a cargo ship, refitted it as a whaler named *Catalpa* and registered as a whaling company. Agents successfully posed as businessmen to gain people's confidence. They arranged contact with the eight remaining Fenian prisoners at Fremantle Prison and planned the escape. Two men missed out on the escape because they were confined for insubordination. The remaining six left their work parties and two horse drawn buggies were arranged to take them to the beach where the whaleboat was waiting. The police later tracked down the ship and requested to be let on board to check for escapees. The ship's master claimed they were in international waters under the American flag, and challenged the police Superintendent to create a diplomatic incident if he dared. The police reluctantly let the *Catalpa,* with the escapees on board, sail away. In August 1876 the *Catalpa* arrived triumphantly in New York, carrying the 'Fenian' escapees. Their arrival sparked celebrations in the United States and Ireland. [19]

# 2.B HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

## Penal transportation

The transportation of criminal offenders to penal colonies dates back to the early 17th century and occurred in many parts of the world until the abolition of transportation to French Guiana and the Andaman Islands in 1938. Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Russia and Argentina transported criminals to penal colonies across the globe (see Part 3.A). The primary motivating influences for the rise and spread of the transportation system included: geo-political ambitions which were advanced by using convicts to build or expand colonies across the globe; the punishment of an increasing population of criminal offenders to deter crime in the home state; and the reform of the criminal elements of society.

Deterrence was one of the major factors leading to the introduction of transportation to Australia.[20] The preamble to Britain's *Transportation Act 1718* made it clear that transportation was to be a severe punishment and deterrent to crime.[21] Following the cessation of transportation to America (1775), Britain had to find a new way to deal with her large population of criminals.[22] The government was pressured to resume transportation to a new destination or to establish a new national penitentiary system.[23] For some, transportation was an ideal system that would rid the country of hardened offenders, detach them from malign influences and instil the habit of work.[24] Others, such as penal reformer Jeremy Bentham, condemned transportation and advocated new model prisons across Britain (see criterion vi and Appendix D). Nevertheless, in 1787 Britain resumed transportation and established a new colony of New South Wales (NSW). During the late 18th /early 19th centuries, 'Botany Bay' was often used to refer to the whole of NSW, and as a pejorative metaphor for the convict system. The reformation of criminals and geo-political pressures were also important driving forces (see Part 3.A).

British transportation to Australia was the world's first conscious attempt to build a new society on the labour of convicted prisoners.[25] Around 166,000 men, women and children were transported to Australia over 80 years between 1787 and 1868.[26] Most convicts were transported from Britain but several thousand were also shipped from Canada, America, Bermuda and other British colonies.[27] This massive movement of people involved 806 ships and thousands of people to manage the convicts.[28] Australia was a vast continent inhabited by Aboriginal peoples with their own cultural, social and economic traditions and practices. It was a land with no vestiges of European civilisation, with no economic or physical infrastructure. The new colonies were at the other side of the globe, a huge distance not only from the home country but from any other European settlement. The operation of establishing the new penal colonies was a major undertaking by the British government. The scale and nature of this forced migration of convicts was an unprecedented experiment in history, then and since.[29] The convict population was diverse comprising men, women and children. In total 25,000 (almost 16 per cent) were women and thousands were children aged between nine and 18. The remainder were largely ordinary British men overwhelmingly from the working class (including a small number of political prisoners) who brought a great range of skills to the colony (see Appendix B).

**'Portrait of a convict' showing convict uniform.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania. Portrait of a convict, Peter Fraser.

**Table 2.1: Main convict colonies 1788–1868**

| COLONY | TRANSPORTATION PERIOD | NUMBER OF CONVICTS RECEIVED |
|---|---|---|
| NSW | 1788–1840 | 80,000 |
| Norfolk Island [a] | 1788–1814<br>1825–1855 | 1,000–2,000 at any one time |
| VDL [b] (Tasmania) | 1803–1853 | 75,000 |
| WA | 1850–1868 | 10,000 |

[a] Part of NSW between 1788 and 1844 and administered by VDL from 1844 until 1855.

[b] Part of NSW from 1788 until 1824.

The convict system continued to function in each of the colonies for several decades after the official abolition of transportation. Afterwards, many convicts continued to be sent to Australia under the 'exile system' after serving part of their sentence in British prisons. Many penal stations and female factories (including Cockatoo Island, Port Arthur, Fremantle Prison and Cascades) continued to operate as part of the transitional machinery for convicts serving out their sentences after the end of transportation.

## Convict systems in Australia

From the start of transportation until its abolition, debate raged in Britain and the Australian colonies over whether the primary objective was harsh punishment to deter crime in Britain or the reformation of criminals.[30] The differing and sometimes competing objectives resulted in an uneasy coexistence of systems designed to inflict severe punishment and efforts to generate reform. A diverse suite of systems and schemes evolved in the penal colonies and varied over different times and places. These included the assignment system, the gang system, penal stations, female factories, the probation system, the penal bureaucracy, and systems of entitlements and privileges. Under these regimes convicts could face pain, isolation and suffering as well as opportunities through education, trade, religious instruction and privileges to build new lives after completing their sentence.[31] Well-behaved convicts could serve out their sentence with relatively good treatment which could include gaining trade experience and better conditions, working as an overseer of other convicts or obtaining a pardon with a land grant. Convicts found guilty of misdemeanours, or through bad luck, could experience severe treatment and conditions and end up in a road gang or a penitentiary (see Appendix B).

The majority of convicts experienced numerous convict systems at different places around the colonies. A convict could be assigned to a free settler, re-offend and be sentenced to a convict road gang, be transferred to a probation station or re-offend again and be sent to a penal station. Convicts were regularly transferred, demoted, promoted and re-assigned and travelled within and between the colonies during their sentence. Individually and collectively, the *Australian Convict Sites* demonstrate the range of convicts' experiences under the various systems of control, punishment and reform.[32]

**Convict William 'Billy' Blue became a notable landowner after completing his sentence.** **See page 40.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

**The contrasting colours of the convict uniform, with the trousers showing broad arrows, worn by secondary offenders in VDL between 1822 and 1855.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Convict uniform and two caps, NLA pic-an6393471-11.

*"In some of the uninhabited parts of these provinces there are numbers of the venomous reptiles we call rattle-snakes: felons-convict from the beginning of the world...some thousands [of snakes] might be collected annually and transported to Britain. There I would propose to have them carefully distributed in St. James Park, in the Spring Gardens and other places of pleasure about London; in the gardens of all the nobility and gentry throughout the nation; but particularly in the gardens of the prime ministers, the lords of trade, and members of Parliament, for to them we are most particularly obliged."*

**Influential abolitionist and founding father of the United States of America Benjamin Franklin, 1751, using witty language on how the American colonies should repay Britain for 'dumping' criminals on their soil.[33]**

## Aboriginal population and convicts[34]

The establishment of penal settlements as part of the broader process of British colonisation of the continent had a significant impact on the Aboriginal population. Australia was a vast continent inhabited and settled solely by Aboriginal people for over 45,000 years. They developed their own cultural, social and economic traditions and practices, and shaped the landscape in ways unseen by Europeans. The setting up and expansion of penal colonies led to large-scale disruption, outbreak of diseases, conflict and resistance. This resulted in the alienation and death of large numbers of Aboriginal people and their communities including impact on their culture, land and resources. Throughout the convict period, interactions and relationships occurred between convicts and Aboriginal people that were both constructive and destructive.

Convicts were used to build infrastructure and buildings in the towns and were at the forefront as pioneers building roads and opening up the outer regions of the colonies for free settlers. These activities had a major impact on the Aboriginal population. Convicts also played an important role in protecting private property of free settlers, the military and colonial authorities against attacks from local Aboriginal people. In the early years of settlement, there was resistance from Aboriginal communities and individuals, and attacks against them by the military and convicts. From the early 1820s, there was a rapid expansion of free settlement and farming. Land clearing and building activities had a major impact on Aboriginal communities' livelihood and traditional way of life. Attacks escalated on both sides, resulting in many deaths. At the same time, Aboriginal people had an important influence on British colonisers and convicts. Aboriginal people transmitted their language and knowledge about the land and its resources. They helped locate sources of food and water and this was critical, particularly during times of scarcity.

Aboriginal people were used as trackers to capture escaped convicts and were rewarded by colonial authorities. A number of convicts attacked Aboriginal people without official sanction by the colonial authorities. Several convicts were charged and sentenced or executed for these attacks. Convicts were also officially ordered to participate in expeditions to attack Aboriginal people or to round them up and move them to other lands. Aboriginal people attacked convicts to defend themselves or as reprisals for encroachment on their lands, property, or women. Some convicts were accused of stealing Aboriginal women. There are also accounts of positive interactions between convicts and Aboriginal people including: escaped convicts living in Aboriginal communities or being helped by Aboriginal people; and Aboriginal people meeting road gangs and seeking to 'trade' their goods. There were also accounts of consensual relationships between convicts and Aboriginal women.[35] Colonial authorities greatly feared these relationships as they were seen to threaten the moral fabric and well-being of the new society. Also, venereal disease introduced by European settlement became widespread and led to many deaths. Enlightenment ideals influenced several governors' treatment of Aboriginal people. Governor Macquarie invited Aboriginal people to ceremonial feasts near Old Government House at Parramatta and established the Native Institution to educate them in European ways.

**1826 painting showing the 'annual feast' with Governor Darling, local Aboriginal people and convicts. Convict-built St John's Church (middle) and Old Government House (in the distance, right).**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia, A Earle, The annual meeting of the native tribes at Parramatta, New South Wales, the Governor meeting them, NLA pic-an2820681.

**1836 painting showing Hyde Park Barracks behind the perimeter wall in Sydney Town.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia, R Russell, Prisoners' Barracks, Hyde Park, pic-an5924561

## New South Wales penal colony (1788–1840)

The first penal colony in Australia was established at Sydney Cove in NSW in 1788 and an outpost was established at Norfolk Island shortly afterwards. Initially, there was little formal management of convicts and most found their own accommodation. Starvation threatened the colony, but convict farming under Governor Phillip's direction at Parramatta and Norfolk Island ensured the new colony's survival. Convicts were put to work on public works including agricultural activities, road-building, churches and convict structures. Following the end of the Napoleonic wars in Europe in 1815 transportation to NSW increased dramatically. Many male and female convicts were assigned to free 'masters' to work for the duration of their sentence or were assigned to public works for colonial authorities. Assignment was the major experience of convicts transported to NSW. From 1819 onwards, large barracks were built to bring male convicts under greater control. From the early 1800s female factories were established to manage and control female convicts. Gradually, penal stations were set up along the eastern seaboard of the continent.

From 1819 to 1821 a British inquiry, headed by Commissioner Bigge (the Bigge Inquiry), investigated the penal colony and its administration. Part of Bigge's task was to determine ways of making transportation a more effective deterrent to potential British offenders and to recommend ways of segregating convicts from the free population. Bigge's report had a considerable impact leading to the establishment of distant penal stations, increasing the severity of punishment and tightening the surveillance of convicts.[36] Secondary punishment became more extreme and Norfolk Island was re-established as a penal station in 1825 as the ultimate deterrent for convicts with little hope of redemption. Re-offending convicts could find themselves labouring in a chain gang such as on the Great North Road, confined in a penal station or executed. Well-behaved or fortunate convicts could be assigned to a kind master, learn skills or a trade and eventually earn a pardon. In 1837 a British parliamentary inquiry, the Molesworth Committee, concluded that transportation was expensive, brutalising and akin to slavery.[37] Transportation to NSW was abolished in 1840, by which time the colony had received around 80,000 transported convicts. Thousands of convicts continued to serve out their sentences for several decades in NSW. Cockatoo Island, amongst others, continued as a place of convict punishment until 1869.

**Convicts writing letters home. Cockatoo Island, March 1st 1849.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales

## Van Diemen's Land penal colony (1803–53)

In 1803 Britain established a penal colony in VDL as an extension of the NSW colony. An important factor in this decision was the need to thwart French colonial ambition in the area. As in NSW, the majority of convicts were initially under minimal restraint and laboured during the day, mostly on public infrastructure. Between 1817 and 1824 most convicts went into private assignment and some were retained by the colonial authorities for public works. Following the Bigge Inquiry, penal stations were established for recalcitrant convicts. Redemption and reformation were consistent objectives throughout penal colonies in VDL. However the degree to which they were practised varied dramatically. Initially, the vast majority of female convicts were assigned to free settlers. From the early 1820s a system of female factories was established across the colony to manage and control female convicts. From 1840 all convicts from Britain were transported to VDL. The probation system was introduced to replace the assignment system and became the main experience for male convicts in VDL from that time. The gradual reformation of convicts through hard labour, segregation, religious instruction and progressive freedom was the aim of the new system. The limited success of the probation system and the alleged high incidence of homosexuality contributed to the abolition of transportation in 1853. Around 75,000 convicts were transported to VDL and many thousands continued to serve out their sentences for several decades following abolition (see Part 2.B).

## Western Australia penal colony (1850–68)

WA was established as a free colony in 1829 without convicts. The colony struggled for 20 years with an acute labour shortage and slow economic progress. The transportation of male convicts to WA was introduced in 1850 to save the failing colony. Convicts provided a dramatic boost to the population which increased by 400 per cent over the next 18 years.[38] The youngest convict transported to WA was 13 years old. Fremantle Prison was built to house convicts who worked outside the prison during the day on public infrastructure. Convicts constructed roads, bridges, jetties and many public buildings. They were also hired out to free settlers to work in agriculture and mining in regional areas.[39] A small number of British convicts and their warders (around one shipload) originally transported to Bermuda were sent to WA in 1862–63 following closure of Bermuda Convict Establishment and in response to free settlers' demand for labour in WA. Convicts made a significant and lasting contribution to the economic and physical growth of WA, establishing it as a viable and productive colony. Transportation to WA ceased in 1868 officially marking the abolition of British transportation to Australia. The convict system remained in operation in WA until 1886 when the British government formally handed over Fremantle Prison to the colonial administration. Approximately 10,000 male convicts were transported to the colony. Convicts continued to serve out their sentences at Fremantle Prison until 1906.

**Photograph of convict working party returning to Fremantle Prison in 1870.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Fremantle Prison Collection.

**Convicts rest while being watched by a military guard. Early 1800s.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania

## Assignment system (early to mid 1800s)

Assignment was the dominant experience of male and female convicts from the early years of the penal colonies in NSW and VDL until 1840.[40] Convicts formed the vast majority of the labour force in these colonies throughout this period. The assignment system initially operated informally and evolved into a highly formalised system with legal frameworks and administrative institutions from the late 1820s onwards.[41] It aimed to: secure the social control of the convict population; provide cheap labour for public infrastructure and for free settlers; and build skills and economic self-sufficiency for convicts following their

**1835 drawing. A young artist looking for work enjoys the wit of the convict servants in their hut.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** R Glover, A young artist after labour, NLA pic-an4623117.

emancipation. Later, the dispersal of convicts away from 'evil associations' with other convicts and towns was also an important objective.[42] Cheap and secure convict labour was in high demand due to the shortage of free labourers and skilled artisans in the colonies. Private masters were a critical component in the transportation system, responsible for turning convicts into industrious workers and well-behaved individuals. They had to provide: accommodation, food and suitable work; foster moral reformation through religious instruction and be a good role model. With good conduct, convicts could progress through stages to attain a ticket-of-leave or a conditional or absolute pardon.[43] Many convicts were treated compassionately, enjoyed better conditions than free workers in Britain, and gained skills that provided opportunities once released.[44] Unsatisfactory convicts were returned to the authorities and replaced by others.[45] Convicts could be punished for misconduct or criminal activities which could send them backwards to hard labour, imprisonment or execution.[46] Ill-treatment by their masters could result in their reassignment to other settlers.[47] Some masters were harsh, abusive or violent and female convicts were often subjected to sexual abuse. Assigned female convicts who fell pregnant were often returned to female factories for punishment, regardless of the circumstances.

The Molesworth Committee denounced the assignment system claiming it operated like a lottery, leaving the fate of convicts to the character and temperament of individual masters. Some faced a harsh and degrading servitude at the hands of brutal masters while others fared well under compassionate masters. The assignment system was phased out across NSW and VDL, having operated as a vehicle for both the punishment and reformation of convicts through industry and labour for 30 to 52 years. The *Australian Convict Sites* that best represent the assignment system are Brickendon–Woolmers and Cascades. Old Government House and Hyde Park Barracks also reflect the assignment system.

## Convict gangs (1822 onwards)

The system of convict gangs used in NSW, VDL and WA had the important dual functions of organising convict labour on public works and punishing convicts. Convict gangs were used increasingly after the mid 1820s for re-offending male convicts, following the Bigge Inquiry's recommendation for harsher punishments. Convict gangs, especially road building gangs, were seen as an effective way of reviving the fear of transportation and of deterring crime in Britain. The main types of gangs were road gangs, timber getting gangs, lime burning gangs and public works gangs. Some convicts were sentenced to work in irons in the gangs. Working conditions were physically demanding and the treatment of convicts was often brutal. Little effort was made to reform convicts in the gang system, the focus being on hard labour in harsh conditions. Despite this, redemption through religious instruction was still attempted, though to a much lesser extent than in other systems. Approximately 20–30 per cent of all male convicts worked in a road gang at some time during their sentence.[48] The convict gang system contributed significantly to the development of infrastructure, expansion into frontier regions and the economic and social integration of the colonies. The *Australian Convict Sites* that best illustrate the convict gang system are Old Great North Road and Hyde Park Barracks. Other sites that represent the gang system to a lesser extent are Port Arthur, Coal Mines, KAVHA and Fremantle Prison.

**'Hobart Town Chain Gang' c.1831 showing chained convict gangs carrying tools for hard labour under supervision of soldiers.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

## Penal stations and prisons (1788 onwards)

A small minority of convicts transported to Australia were incarcerated in a penal station or prison. Male convicts who re-offended on the voyage or in the colonies could be sentenced to a penal station or prison. Re-offending female convicts could be placed in a female factory but these were multi-functional institutions and not just prisons. Penal stations were established across the Australian colonies.[49] The purpose of penal stations was to segregate re-offending convicts from society, using their labour to develop physical infrastructure (including buildings to confine them) and in agriculture for the benefit of the colony. Penal stations were often relatively self-sufficient with their own bakehouse, kitchen and gardens. Separate prisons, apartments or cells were also constructed within penal stations. In addition, some convict buildings that initially operated as barracks evolved into prisons for secondary punishment. An estimated 20–30 per cent of convicts underwent secondary punishment in a penal station or prison at some time during their sentence. Convicts experienced varying treatment and conditions including the 'separate system' and various forms of hard labour. All prisons instilled religious and moral instruction as part of the routine. Many penal stations functioned as important industrial complexes with convicts providing the skill and manual labour for outlying areas away from the penal station. Several prisons within penal stations were modified versions of Pentonville prison and used the 'separate system' (see criterion vi). The *Australian Convict Sites* that are the most notable examples of penal stations and prisons are Port Arthur, KAVHA and Fremantle Prison. The Coal Mines and Cockatoo Island are other examples of penal stations.

## Female factories (1804 onwards)

Special systems for managing female convicts were a critical part of the penal system in Australia. Convict women were an invaluable resource as a feminising force, as future mothers and a safeguard against perceived social dangers to the colonies such as homosexuality.[50] They also provided a valuable economic resource through domestic service and textile production. At the same time, the female convict population was seen to be a potential threat to the survival of the colonies primarily due to 'unfeminine' behaviour such as sexual promiscuity and drunkenness.[51] The convict era coincided with the Age of Enlightenment and Britain wanted to create a colony that was a good reflection on the reputation of an enlightened British empire. Throughout the convict era, colonial authorities devoted enormous time and energy to managing female convicts and fostering 'proper' feminine behaviour. The appropriate treatment of female convicts figured prominently in all the major British commissioned investigations including the Select Committee on Transportation (1812), the Bigge Inquiry (1819–21) and the Molesworth Committee (1837–38).[52] A system of nine female factories operated in NSW and VDL between 1804 and 1854 to manage, punish and reform female convicts. Female factories were multi-functional

**Cascades Female Factory 1828–50**

**Yard 1**

**Separate yards for crime class, assignment class, first class, hospital yard and early nursery yard for mothers and infants.**

**Yard 3**

**Solitary Apartments Block.**

**Yard 4**

**Nursery Apartments, Matron's Cottage and Cookhouse/Washhouse.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Lucy Frost and Christopher Downes.

**Photograph showing female ex-convicts in 1890.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, 30-6993.

institutions that operated as a prison, place of punishment, labour hiring depot, nursery, lying-in hospital for pregnant female convicts, workplace and temporary housing for female convicts until they were 'married' or assigned as domestic servants to free settlers or colonial officers.[53]

The vast majority of the female convict population, some as young as 13, spent time in one or more of these factories. Convict women were compelled to undertake various 'feminine' duties such as spinning, weaving, rope making, sewing, producing textiles and laundering. Children of convict women born in the factories were raised there until the age of three when they were sent to orphan schools. Elizabeth Fry, a prominent British advocate of penal reform, played a role in the evolution of female factories in Australia.[54] Importantly, the factories also provided some degree of protection, maternity assistance and refuge for female convicts. The first rudimentary classification system to categorise convicts was introduced at Parramatta Female Factory (1821). Female convicts confined to the factories were also the first in Australia to experience solitary confinement (mid 1820s).[55] Women were subjected to intensive surveillance and often harsh conditions at the factories including overcrowding, unhygienic conditions and early weaning of babies that contributed to high infant mortality rates. [56] Riots occurred at several factories and an Inquiry into Female Convict Discipline in VDL was established in 1842. [57] Several coronial inquiries were also held to investigate the conditions at female factories, particularly the high incidence of infant mortality. The nominated site that illustrates the female factory system is Cascades.

## Probation system (1840–56)

The probation system operated from 1840 until 1856 in VDL, following the abolition of transportation to NSW and the assignment system. More than 80 probation stations were established for varying periods around VDL. The probation system attempted to implement the philosophies of the new penitentiary movement in Britain that advocated 'just punishment through certainty'.[58] Key features included separate confinement and a strict regime of hard labour, religious instruction and education. Convicts were classified according to the severity of their offences in order to separate individual convicts and restrict their contamination by hardened convicts. Male convicts in all classes were subjected to successive phases of punishment commencing with a period of confinement and labour in gangs, either in a penal colony for convicts sentenced to life, or in a probation station for convicts sentenced for seven to 14 years. The reformation of convicts through labour and religious instruction was an important objective of the system although adequate funding was not always available. Convicts who progressed satisfactorily through several stages of decreasing severity received a probation pass and could work for free settlers. Sustained good conduct could eventually lead to a ticket-of-leave or a pardon. The alleged failure of the system fuelled greater opposition to transportation and contributed to its demise in VDL.[59] The nominated site that demonstrates the probation system is Darlington Probation Station.

## System of surveillance (entire convict era)

A pervasive apparatus of surveillance was a critical element of Australia's convict system throughout the convict era. A penal bureaucracy evolved as a necessary and ingenious instrument for controlling the large convict population that significantly outnumbered the free population in this largely 'open air prison'. It comprised extensive record systems, surveillance networks and administrative procedures. On arrival, all facets of a convict's life were recorded including physical features, criminal history, age, place of birth, marital status, literacy, occupation and religion. Detailed recording and monitoring continued throughout the convict's sentence through muster lists, registers, passes, indent lists, court records of offences and punishments, and colonial departments, boards and committees that reported on the state of the colonies.[60] These record systems were used for surveillance, work allocation, classification, regulation, control, secondary punishment


**An example of Australia's detailed record system for convicts. See pages 40 for Walter Paisley's biography.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, CON31-35.

and officially approved privileges such as extra rations and land grants. Convicts also played a role in surveillance by acting as overseers of other convicts, record keepers and spies. The various bureaucratic mechanisms were effective in intimidating and humiliating convicts, impressing upon them their subject status in the penal colonies.[61] The system was almost as effective in containing the convict population as the walls of a prison.[62] Australia's convicts were one of the world's most documented people of the time.[63] Old Government House is an important symbolic representation of the systems of surveillance, as are the collections of records associated with each site, notably Port Arthur, Hyde Park Barracks, Fremantle Prison and Darlington.

**Certificate of Freedom. Thomas Siderson was sentenced to 14 years transportation in 1818. He received this certificate of freedom after serving the full term of his sentence.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

### System of entitlements and privileges (entire convict era)

A system of entitlements and privileges was a central feature of the penal colonies in Australia. A ticket-of-leave system, conditional pardons, absolute pardons, legal frameworks and various privileges aimed to rehabilitate and integrate convicts into the new colonies. The ticket-of-leave system, first introduced in NSW in 1801, permitted convicts to serve part of their sentence then live and work as free persons within a stipulated area until the remission or completion of their sentence. The system provided an incentive for convicts to be diligent and well-behaved, but also functioned as a threat as convicts could be recalled to bond labour for misdemeanours.[64] Tickets were sometimes allocated to convicts who undertook special functions, captured convict bushrangers and other offenders, or were able to support themselves. At other times, the system was strictly restricted to well-behaved convicts who showed clear signs of reform.[65] During the period of the probation system in VDL, convict pass holders had to progress through three levels before a ticket-of-leave could be obtained. The system of pardons enabled well-behaved convicts to be released before the completion of their sentences, often by many years. Convicts also had many important legal rights often not available to prisoners or convicts in other parts of the world.[66] Punishments could not be given to convicts without a court order and convicts had the right to make charges of harsh treatment by an overseer or private master.[67] Convicts had the right to petition the governor on all matters concerning their detention and release including permission to marry or for spouses and children to immigrate to the colonies.[68] The nominated site that best reflects this system of entitlements and rewards is Old Government House. Several other sites also demonstrate the system including Fremantle Prison.

## Individual site histories

### Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area Norfolk Island (1788–1814; 1824–55)

Norfolk Island operated as an out-posted penal station of NSW for two separate periods. The island featured prominently in Britain's decision to send the first fleet to NSW due to its reported abundant natural resources,

**'Norfolk Island – The Convict System' 1847. A group of convicts pull a cart while others labour on the road under close supervision.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia, Norfolk Island, the convict system, pic-an8934779.

particularly pine and flax. The first convict colony was closed as it was unable to become self-sufficient and the potential naval resources could not be realised.[69] In 1824, in response to the Bigge Inquiry, Norfolk Island was re-occupied to become a 'great hulk or penitentiary' that would provide secondary punishment with no hope of mitigation. The second penal colony was designed to revive the fear of transportation and deter crime in Britain and the colonies. Located far from the main colony, Commandants were able to exercise absolute rule with sweeping powers over the lives of the convict population, with the exception of execution. Hard labour was from sunrise to sunset and extra work for rations or money was prohibited. Agricultural work was undertaken by hand with hoes and spades. Labour saving technology such as animal and machine power was prohibited to deliberately increase the hardship of labour. Accommodation was very cramped and unsanitary and this, combined with a meagre diet, resulted in poor health which contributed to many convict deaths. The harshness and degradation of the treatment meted out to the convicts was intended to break them. Floggings were common for even trivial offences, sentences could be extended and despair was the constant companion of the incarcerated. The design of the New Gaol was influenced by Jeremy Bentham's panopticon prison plan and the 'separate system' at Pentonville Prison (Britain) and Eastern State Penitentiary (America). A period of radical penal reform occurred between 1840 and 1844 under Commandant Maconochie. He was given an opportunity to trial his innovative reform system following intense criticism of transportation and the plight of convicts on Norfolk Island during the late 1830s. Maconochie's reforms soon generated strong opposition in Britain and he was dismissed in 1844. Britain ordered the closure of the penal station in 1846 and most convicts transferred to VDL, with some sent to Cockatoo Island. Convicts continued to serve out their sentences at KAVHA until 1855 when the last convicts were removed to Hobart.

## Old Government House and Domain NSW (1788–1856)

The site at Parramatta was a residence and office for 12 prominent governors from Governor Phillip in 1788 until Governor Denison in 1856. The first and principal Government House was built in the heart of Sydney Cove in 1788. At Parramatta, a Government House was built in 1790, replacing the Governor's 1788 farmhouse. In 1799 this was substantially rebuilt. Many governors spent substantial periods of time at this residence and conducted colonial business there.[70]

Governors had unprecedented powers over the functioning of the colonies and made all the major decisions on the administration of the convict system. These included decisions on the assignment of individual convicts, formation of convict gangs, ticket-of-leave documents allowing convicts to work and earn money, the amount of rations given to convicts and granting pardons. An estimated 80–100 convicts lived and worked at Old Government House at any one time. Convicts built all the structures, served the governors, their families and official guests and established successful agricultural production. Old Government House operated as an important administrative hub for the colonies of NSW and VDL. From the beginning of the colony until the mid 19th century, many important decisions relating to all aspects of the governance, survival and expansion of the penal colony were made at this site. It also represents the critical role of vice-regal authority in the convict system.

Sydney Cove, the first penal settlement in Australia, suffered an acute food shortage in its early years. Convicts were brought to Parramatta to provide a labour force to work as servants, on land clearance, construction of buildings and food production which led to the establishment of agriculture in the area. This was not only critical to the survival of the penal colony but enabled the colony to

**Commissariat Store, KAVHA.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Tom Harley.

**Governor Macquarie received ex-convicts for official functions in the drawing room at Old Government House. He also made decisions about the lives of convicts in this room.**

achieve self-sufficiency and to be independent of food supplies from England. Old Government House underwent several changes that reflected both the evolving penal philosophies and the character of the governors who occupied it. The most significant changes occurred during Macquarie's governorship. From 1816, the house was significantly extended to give Governor Macquarie's family and staff enough room to reside and this enabled him to spend considerable time in the house conducting colonial business. The Domain was also enlarged and landscaped. Old Government House was gradually superseded by the new Government House on the shores of Sydney Harbour from 1845.[70]

## Hyde Park Barracks, NSW (1819–48)

Hyde Park Barracks operated from 1819 to 1848, initially as a place of accommodation for male convicts and later as a place of confinement for secondary offenders. In 1817 Macquarie ordered the construction of a barracks to control male convicts in the heart of the NSW colony. During his governorship, Macquarie pursued Enlightenment ideals including the deployment of convicts and ex-convicts on civic architecture for the advancement of the convict population and the penal colony.[71] Convict architect Francis Greenway designed the barracks and was in charge of its construction using convict labour. He was granted a pardon by Macquarie upon its completion in 1819. Hyde Park Barracks fostered discipline and a degree of self-sufficiency within a framework of regulation and routine. Convicts slept in dormitories in canvas hammocks. While boys as young as nine were confined to separate rooms some were subjected to sexual abuse as there was minimal surveillance in place at night. The barracks subjected convicts' lives to strict regimentation, discipline and reform. Convicts were placed in government work gangs, taken to work sites during the day and returned to the barracks in the evening. Some convicts worked on site in the Bakehouse and the nearby vegetable garden. Attendance at musters and church services was also compulsory. New arrivals were processed, graded and accommodated in a separate building along the perimeter wall. Cells to confine recalcitrant convicts were located in the corner pavilions and after 1833 convicts were flogged in an area behind the barracks building. After 1830 Hyde Park Barracks became a place of punishment for re-offending convicts, a depot for reassigning convicts and a court house for convict trials. Convicts were held at the barracks until 1848 when that function was transferred to Cockatoo Island. An estimated 40,000–50,000 convicts spent time at Hyde Park Barracks during its 29 years of operation[72].

**Hyde Park Barracks showing the external building, the area where convicts were mustered and the perimeter wall.**

## Brickendon–Woolmers Estates Tasmania (1820–50s)

Brickendon and Woolmers estates operated as large farming properties with assigned convict labour from the early 1820s until the 1850s. They were two of the larger estates in VDL and many convicts worked and lived there under the assignment system. The convicts were young (23 was the average age and the youngest was 13) and mostly skilled.[73] Convicts built all homestead, farming and agricultural buildings, extensive drainage systems and structures and were instrumental in the layout, design and expansion of

**Cider House (left) and Woolshed (right) at Woolmers Estate where convicts laboured under the assignment system.**

the farms. Convicts provided the labour and the skill necessary to establish and operate these prosperous agricultural estates. The brothers who ran the estates shared convict labour especially during harvest season. With a combined annual convict population of over 100 (around 80 male and 20 female), Brickendon and Woolmers estates formed the second largest pool of convict labour in private hands in VDL. Male convicts worked as blacksmiths, tanners, bricklayers and agricultural hands and were housed in barracks on the estates. Female convicts worked mainly as domestic servants although they occasionally worked alongside male convicts on the farms. Female convicts were housed in separate quarters in the main homesteads, while male convicts were accommodated in barracks on the farms. Convicts attended their own religious services in chapels reserved for their sole use, while the masters and their families travelled into town. Convicts acquired various skills and trades and some were employed at the estates as paid free workers upon completing their sentences.

## Darlington Probation Station Tasmania (1825–32; 1842–50)

A convict station operated at Darlington between 1825 and 1832 to relieve pressures on other penal settlements due to increasing numbers. A probation station reoccupied the site in 1842. Its isolated location on Maria Island off Tasmania's east coast made it an ideal choice as it was away from free settlements, boasted an abundance of natural resources that could be exploited through convict labour, and being on an island deterred escape. With over 400 acres worked for crops, agriculture was the primary activity of convicts who cultivated wheat, flax, hops and vegetables. Lime was also quarried and burnt on an industrial scale.[74] Under the probation system, convicts progressed through separate classes which determined their treatment and conditions including their labour, sleeping and eating arrangements and privileges. The lowest 'crime class', which included 'men specially ordered to be kept separate on account of unnatural propensities', engaged in gang labour and were housed in separate apartments[75]. Convicts in the second and first class were housed in large dormitories in the Convict Barracks and were engaged in lighter, more skilled labour. Convicts moved through the classes according to their behaviour, with unruly behaviour being met with demotion to a lower class, or time in solitary confinement. A strict regime of surveillance and routine was enforced. Convicts were mustered four times a day and work, meal, school and church hours were stringently enforced. Individual sleeping berths were constructed to prevent 'unnatural' acts and ensure orderliness at night. The barracks were well lit and regularly patrolled. A regime of moral redemption through education and religious instruction was a critical feature of the probation station. All convicts attended prayers twice a day and two divine services on Sundays. Also, most convicts attended school for two hours every day except Saturday.[76] Darlington was closed in 1850, following the cessation of the probation system in VDL.

**'[T]here were few stations that could lay claim to any approximation to the superior system observable in the Darlington Probation Station' Acting Governor LaTrobe 1846.** [77]

One of many culverts along Old Great North Road showing the skills of convict labour in road building.

## Old Great North Road, NSW (1828–35)

The entire Great North Road was built between 1826 and 1835 by around 720 convicts under secondary punishment. It was the product of an extensive public works program designed to usher in harsher punishment for convicts in line with the findings of the Bigge Inquiry. A new network of 'Great Roads' using convict labour was also designed to expand the colony into new frontiers away from the main town of Sydney. Governor Darling established the road gang system as an important instrument to 'revive the dread' of transportation.[78] Convicts sentenced for new offences were transported from around the colonies to the road gangs at Great North Road. They were mostly young males, some only 11 years old.[79] Convicts quarried huge sandstone blocks out of steep hillsides, blasted massive sandstone formations, cleared trees, carried and broke up rocks, and graded and constructed heavy masonry retaining walls, side drains and culverts. The conditions were harsh as they worked in gangs, some in leg irons or collars, labouring in extreme temperatures in a rugged, hostile and foreign environment for several months at a time. Convicts were housed in poorly ventilated and cramped temporary huts at stockade camps along the road. Food rations were insufficient to meet the needs of the hard labour of road building. Discipline was severe and overseers often ignored penal regulations due to isolation from the main colony, imposing harsh floggings without the required approvals.[80] Despite the overwhelming focus on harsh labour for punishment, the moral redemption of convicts through labour was still important. There were instances of an overseer or superintendent reading the Bible to convict workers. By the late 1830s the road route was replaced by steamboat travel and never functioned as the main road to the north.

## Cascades Female Factory, Tasmania (1828–56)

The site operated as a purpose-built facility for the incarceration, punishment and reform of female convicts from 1828 until 1856. A formal classification system operated at Cascades from the outset mainly with three classes. Upon arrival, girls and women were classified according to their behaviour into classes.[81] The third class (crime class) required punishment and were given a meagre diet and their clothes were labelled with a large yellow 'C'. The second class (probation class) received a better diet with only one sleeve bearing the letter 'C'. Female convicts in the first class (assignable class) wore unmarked clothing and could be assigned to a free settler. There were also a hospital class and nursery class for convicts with babies. Free settlers frequently returned females for misdemeanours including pregnancy, insolence, absence from work, absconding or drunkenness. Women in the factory worked at sewing clothes, carding and spinning yarn and providing substantial needlework and laundry services.[82] Cascades became a notable textile manufactory. The factory supplied yarn to many places across the colony including for use in the fulling (cloth processing) house at Darlington. The labour of female convicts was significant in offsetting the penal costs of the colony. Following the abolition of transportation to NSW, the number of women transported to VDL increased significantly.[83] Female convicts experienced massive overcrowding and unhealthy conditions including exposure to extreme cold and damp and substandard food, clothing and blankets.[84] By 1842 there were more than 500 women in the factory which was originally designed for less than 250 women. The infant mortality rate was high at the factory – estimated to be one in four by 1838 and a total of 900 babies – which was disproportionately high compared with the general population.[85] Women often faced severe conditions and punishment regimes designed mainly to inflict psychological harm and humiliation. Babies born to convict women in the factory were raised until the age of three when they were sent to the Queen's orphan school. Some women were confined in solitary working cells (from 1832) and in separate apartments (from 1842 following commencement

Perimeter wall dividing Yard 3 and Yard 4 at Cascades.

of the probation system). The treatment of women and their infants was the subject of numerous inquiries including the Inquiry into Female Convict Discipline (1842) and a magistrate's inquiry into the treatment of women at Cascades (1855). From 1856 until 1877, the factory became a prison for female convicts and colonial women prisoners.[86]

## Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania (1830–77)

Port Arthur commenced as a timber getting station in 1830 and operated as a penal station for secondary offenders between 1833 and 1877. Lieutenant-Governor Arthur envisaged Port Arthur as 'a place of terror' that combined hard labour and unremitting surveillance.[87] Convicts were employed in dangerous and arduous labour including timber felling and quarrying sandstone, with little chance of respite. The penal station became a successful industrial complex. Over the course of the first decade, 1,524,000 linear metres of timber was felled, carried and sawn by the convicts.[88] During the 1840s up to 56 convicts at one time worked a giant treadmill to power grindstones in the flour mill. Until 1848 convicts could receive vicious floggings inflicted in front of other convicts and officials. Solitary cells were attached to the Prisoner Barracks; here convicts were held for days on bread and water for infractions of the regulations. Approximately 3,500 boy convicts between the ages of nine and 18 were sent to Point Puer across the bay from Port Arthur between 1834 and 1849. The main aim was to rehabilitate boys through religious and moral training, teaching basic literacy and training for a trade. They were taught boat-building, carpentry, blacksmithing, stone masonry and agricultural skills. Many undertook labouring activities including jobs at and around Port Arthur. The boys often received punishments that were as severe as for adults such as reduced rations, beatings, incarceration in separate and solitary cells or hard labour like stone breaking or timber getting. Convict boys were removed to Port Arthur and other penal stations in 1849. After 1848 punishment strategies altered drastically at Port Arthur, as well as in the rest of VDL. Psychological manipulation was used instead of corporal punishment. From 1852 to 1877, recalcitrant convicts were confined at the Separate Prison. Silence was enforced 24 hours a day and one hour's exercise and religious service at the Chapel were the only respite from their cells. An increase in the number of convicts at the penal station led to the conversion of the granary and flour mill into a four-storey Penitentiary in 1854–57. Port Arthur closed in 1877, more than 24 years after transportation to VDL ceased.

**Port Arthur in 1838.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Archives Office of Tasmania, NS126-50.

**Port Arthur showing the Guard Tower, Officers' Quarters and Commandant's Office.** **Reproduced courtesy of:** Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority.

## Coal Mines Historic Site, Tasmania (1833–48)

The Coal Mines was established in 1833 as an important place of secondary punishment for recalcitrant convicts, using their labour to establish an industrial complex extracting valuable coal to meet the economic needs of VDL. Conditions were extremely harsh at the mining station and to be sent there was considered to be one of the worst possible punishments. This was actively publicised by colonial and British authorities to deter crime. Convicts were used in the mines, labouring in the near-dark stifling conditions at the coal face or carting coal from the workings. Coal was transported in baskets and emptied into small carts which ran on convict powered rails to a stockpile on the beach. Here coal was screened before being transported in wagons pushed by convicts along a jetty and pier where it was loaded for export. Convicts were also used to work the network of tram roads and jetty termini and to cut the timber for the workings.[89] After 1841, convicts worked under the probation system. Recalcitrant convicts were confined to solitary cells in darkness with little ventilation. Homosexuality was considered to be a major problem at the station. The poorly lit underground mines were believed to be 'sinkholes of vice and infamy'.[90] Rows of separate apartments and cells, and better lighting in the mines, were built to separate convicts at night, to stop such acts. Homosexuality was an important factor in the anti-transportation campaign and contributed to the closure of the station in 1848. Convicts were moved to Port Arthur and other stations.

**The main convict settlement showing the Prisoner Barracks and convict Chapel.**

**Hand driven wheels at the top of the shafts were used to bring the coal baskets up from the mines. Once at the top, the baskets were upturned into carts for transportation to the jetty.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Royal Society of Tasmania Collection, 'Mouth of the Coalmine Tasman's Peninsula' by artist Owen Stanley, 1841.

## Cockatoo Island Convict Site, NSW (1839–69)

Cockatoo Island was established in 1839 as a penal station for convicts sentenced to hard labour as secondary punishment. The island was isolated, easy to provision and secure, yet very close to the heart of the major population centre. It was the first time a place of secondary punishment had been located on the edge of a colonial capital close to a main settlement. Convicts undertook harsh labour, manually excavating solid sandstone and constructing all buildings and other structures around the island. This included building underground grain silos with the aim of storing grain which was in short supply for the colony. Convicts spent nights in overcrowded barracks with very little ventilation, and no protection from other convicts. However, religious instruction and education remained a strict part of the routine for convicts. Recalcitrant convicts were confined to underground solitary cells on the edge of sheer cliff faces. The cells, accessible only by a ladder through a trap door at ground level, were cold, damp and dark. This punishment was greatly feared.

**Cockatoo Island from the mainland in 1843.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** National Library of Australia, T Outhwaite, Cockatoo Island, pic-an7372826.

Convicts and colonial prisoners, many of whom were ex-convicts, continued to serve out their sentences in NSW at Cockatoo Island until 1869.[91] The availability of convict labour and a defensible location surrounded by deep water resulted in the strategic industrial and military decision that Cockatoo Island was to become a dry dock to service the Royal Navy, and an important trading centre – previously not possible in the Pacific. Cockatoo Island was a sheltered, easily accessible and impregnable location. The construction of a dry dock by prisoner labour within the harbour of Port Jackson was seen to be of great advantage to the colony.[92] Britain contributed to the cost of the dock on the condition that Royal Navy ships were given priority for its use.[93]

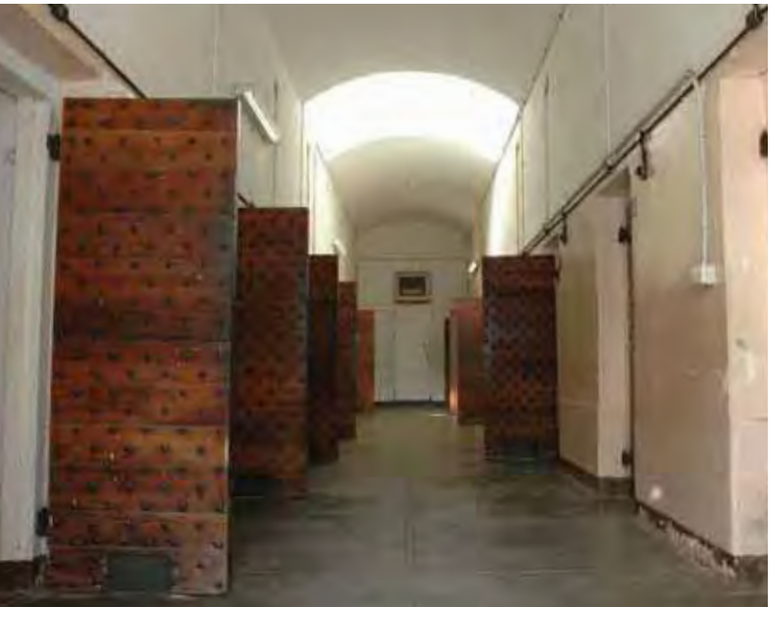
From 1847 onwards, over 1,400 convicts were transferred from Norfolk Island to undertake hard labour on this important infrastructure project, as well as other public works on the island. They were joined by the convicts of Hyde Park Barracks in 1849. Convicts cleared land and quarried the enormous area in preparation for the dry dock. The work took hundreds of convicts seven years of hard labour to accomplish. The dockyard was completed in 1857. The number of convicts declined significantly over the following years and the penal station closed in 1869.

**1842 Military Guard House and sandstone blocks quarried from the island by convicts.**

**An entrance to the Mess Hall, Cockatoo Island.**

## Fremantle Prison, WA (1852–86)

In 1827 a small group of convicts was initially sent with a military detachment to Albany, WA to establish a British presence and prevent French efforts to colonise the western part of Australia.[94] In 1829 a separate colony was established at Perth. In 1831 Albany was incorporated into the new colony and the convicts returned to NSW. The fledgling free colony struggled to survive for more than two decades and was on the brink of collapse. Following petitions to Britain from colonial authorities and pastoralists transportation to WA commenced in 1850. Construction of Fremantle Prison started in 1852 using convict labour. In 1855 convicts were transferred to the prison building which was finally completed in 1859. Convicts were housed in single cells or dormitory style rooms in the Main Cell Block and received adequate food and other provisions. The single cells were tiny, dark and damp but most convicts only spent nights in them as they worked outside the prison during the day. Convicts were used to develop colonial infrastructure such as roads, buildings and other public works, and were also hired to free settlers. Fremantle Prison was later used to incarcerate convicts who had re-offended. The single cells allowed each convict to be classified and treated individually. Conditions at Fremantle differed markedly from those at penal prisons in the other colonies in Australia. WA colonial authorities generally had a more enlightened outlook and introduced more humane systems of punishment and reform compared with places like Port Arthur and Norfolk Island. Nevertheless, colonial authorities established a strict prison regime with a strong emphasis on instilling habits of industry and religious instruction. An 1857 British inquiry found that 'a larger amount of wealth has been accumulated in a shorter space of time than perhaps in any other community of the same size in the world'.[95] A modified version of Maconochie's mark system was introduced at Fremantle in 1860–68.[96] Convicts went through a probationary stage, earned marks for good behaviour and became eligible for a ticket-of-leave. This system allowed convicts to work on their own account under closely supervised conditions. Well-behaved convicts were also rewarded by privileges that were available inside the prison including a library, a 'gymnasium', a prison choir and talks on special interests such as music. Punishments for unruly convicts included floggings or confinement in their cells, or in punishment cells in the Refractory Cell Block with no light and little air. Some convicts were sentenced to solitary confinement for periods of one to three months, but escapees were sometimes confined for six months. Transportation to WA ceased in 1868 and the prison was transferred to colonial authorities in 1886. Convicts continued to serve out their sentences at the prison until 1906.



**Solitary confinement cells in the Refractory Cell Block for unruly convicts.**

**Reproduced courtesy of:** Fremantle Prison Collection.

**330 separate cells were built with convict labour, each measuring 2.1 by 1.2 metres.**

# Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area, Norfolk Island

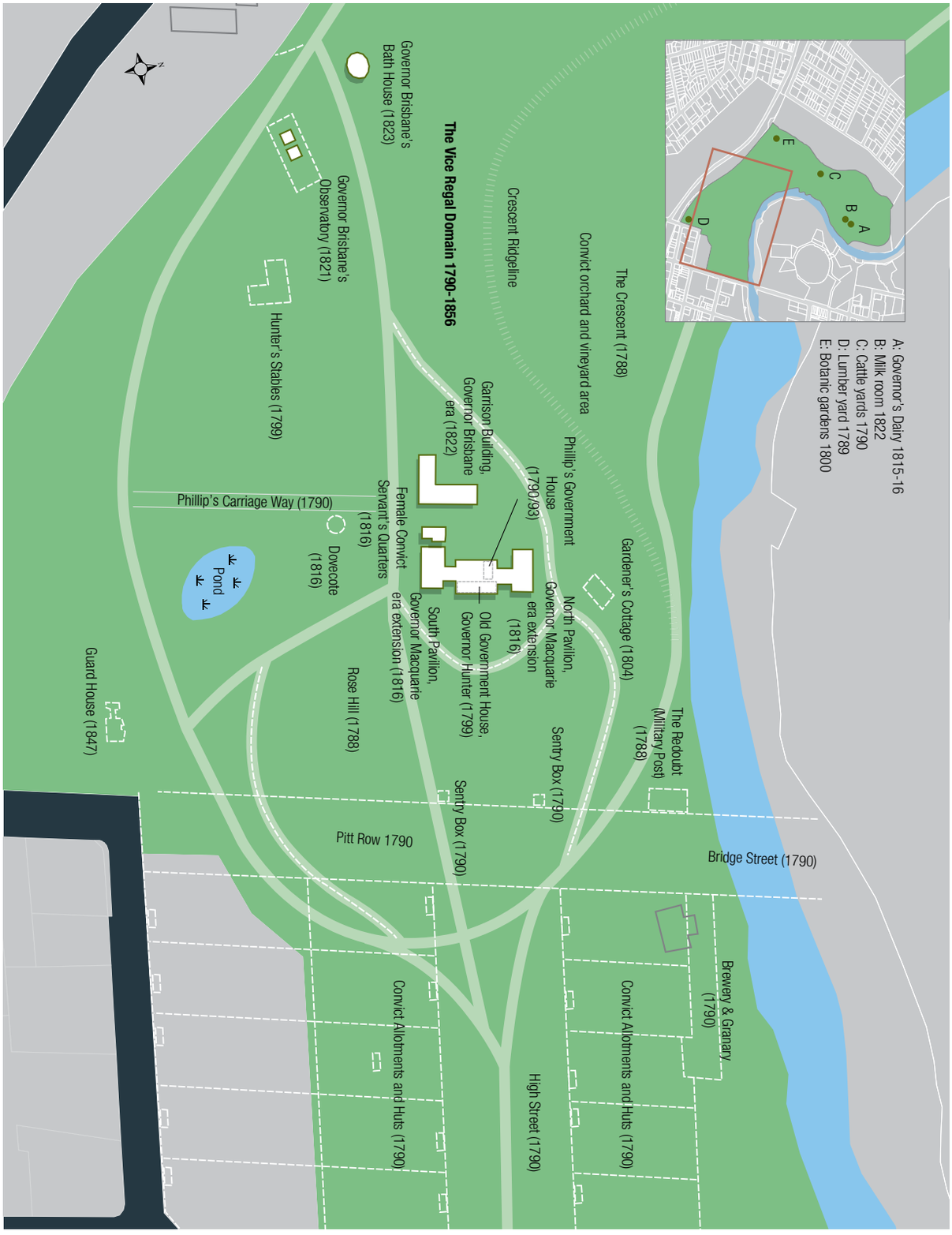
1. Government House (1829) Stables (1834), Barn (1840) and Granary (1840)
2. Stipendiary Magistrate's Quarters (1845)
3. Superintendents of Convict's Duplex (1844)
4. Civil Commandants Chief Clerk's Quarters (1843)
5. Commissariat Storekeeper's Quarters (1842)
6. Commissariat Clerk's Quarters (1843)
7. Protestant Clergyman's Quarters (1836)
8. Commissariat Officers Quarter's (1842)
9. Royal Engineers Quarters (1840)
10. Foreman of Works Quarters (1844)
11. Roman Catholic Clergyman's Quarters (1833)
12. Old Military Barracks (1830) includes barracks, officers quarters, privy and guard room
13. Flaghouse (1840)
14. Police Office (1826)
15. Officers Bath (Water Tank) (1835)
16. New Military Barracks (1836) includes barracks, officers quarters and military hospital
17. Commissariat Store (1835)
18. New Gaol (pentagonal prison) (1836-40), solitary confinement cell (1836)
19. Convict Barracks (1828) includes Protestant Chapel, (1840), Prisoners' Barracks, Sentry Post, Guard Houses and Roman Catholic Chapel
20. Lumber yard and Mess yard (1833)
21. Surgeons Quarters & kitchen (1827)
22. Civil Hospital (1829)
23. Pier Store (1825)
24. Settlement Guard House (1826)
25. Crankmill (1827-38)
26. Royal Engineers Office (1848) and stables (1850)
27. Police Office (1828-29)
28. Double Boatshed (1841)
29. Constable's Quarters (1850-53)
30. Blacksmiths' compound (1846)
31. Windmill base (1842-43)
32. Lime Kilns (1845)
33. Salt House (1847)
34. Underground grain silos (1839)
35. Cemetery (1825)
36. Murderers Mound (1846)
37. Protestant Chapel (1840)


- Nominated World Heritage area
- Convict structure
- Convict ruin
- Convict archaeological site
- Non-convict structure
- Compound Wall and Arched Gateways
- Contours
- Convict built Sea Wall

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 6,750

# Old Government House and Domain, Parramatta New South Wales




**Reproduced courtesy of:** David Wallace © (bottom two images)

Nominated World Heritage area

Convict structure

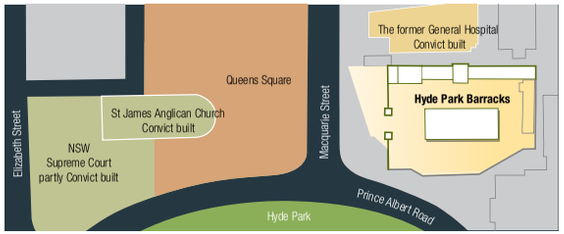
Convict archaeological site

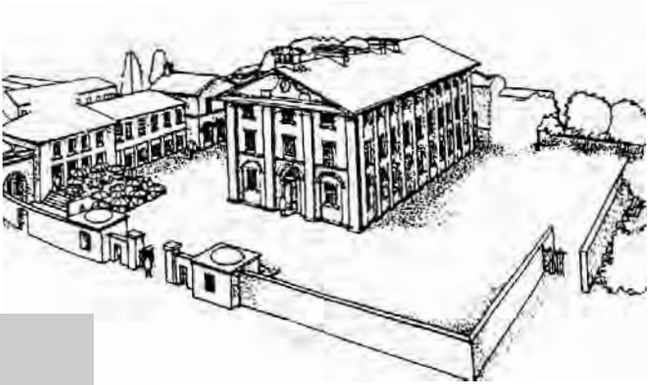
Non-convict structure

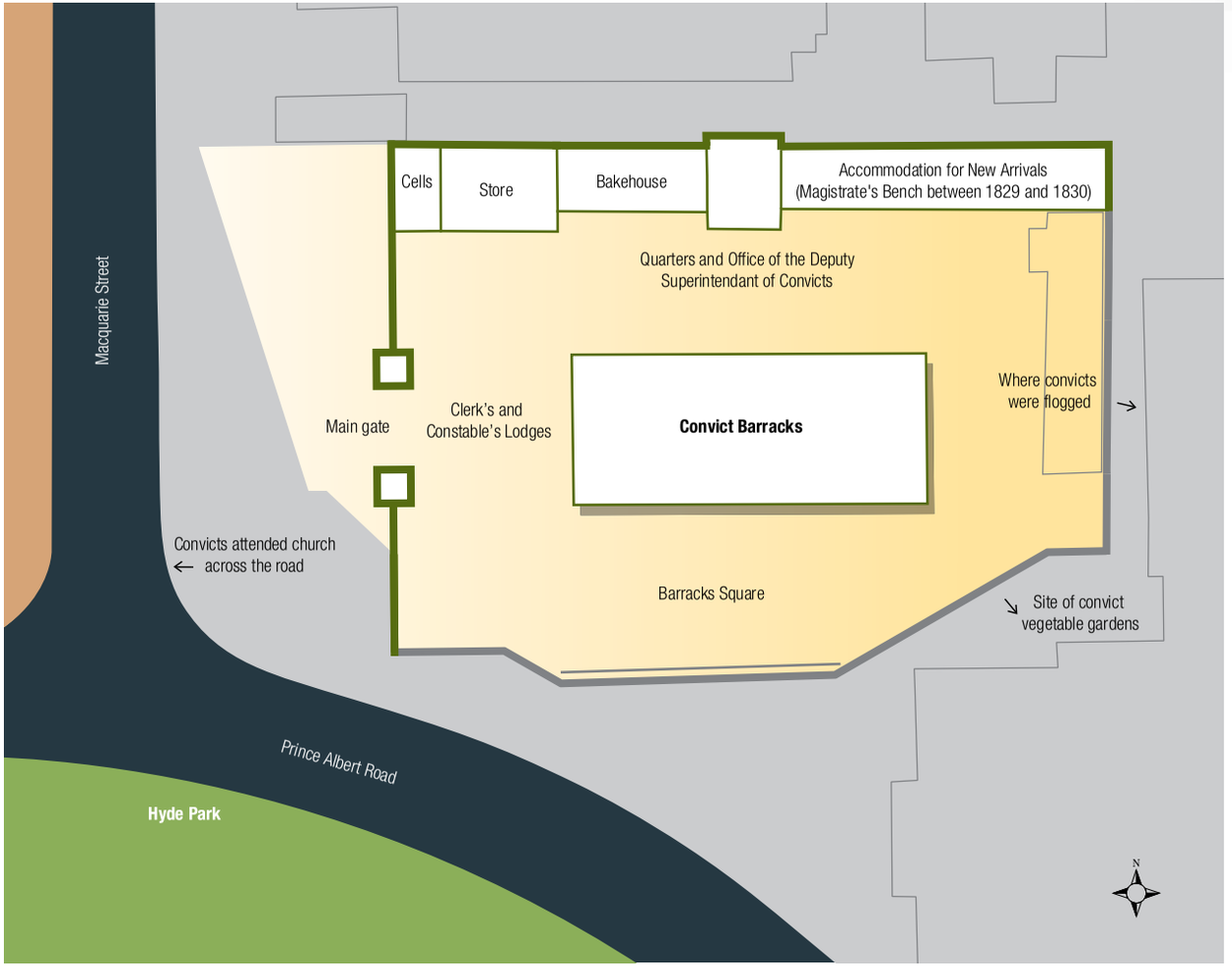
Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 2500

# Hyde Park Barracks, New South Wales






Nominated World Heritage area

Convict structure

Non-convict structure

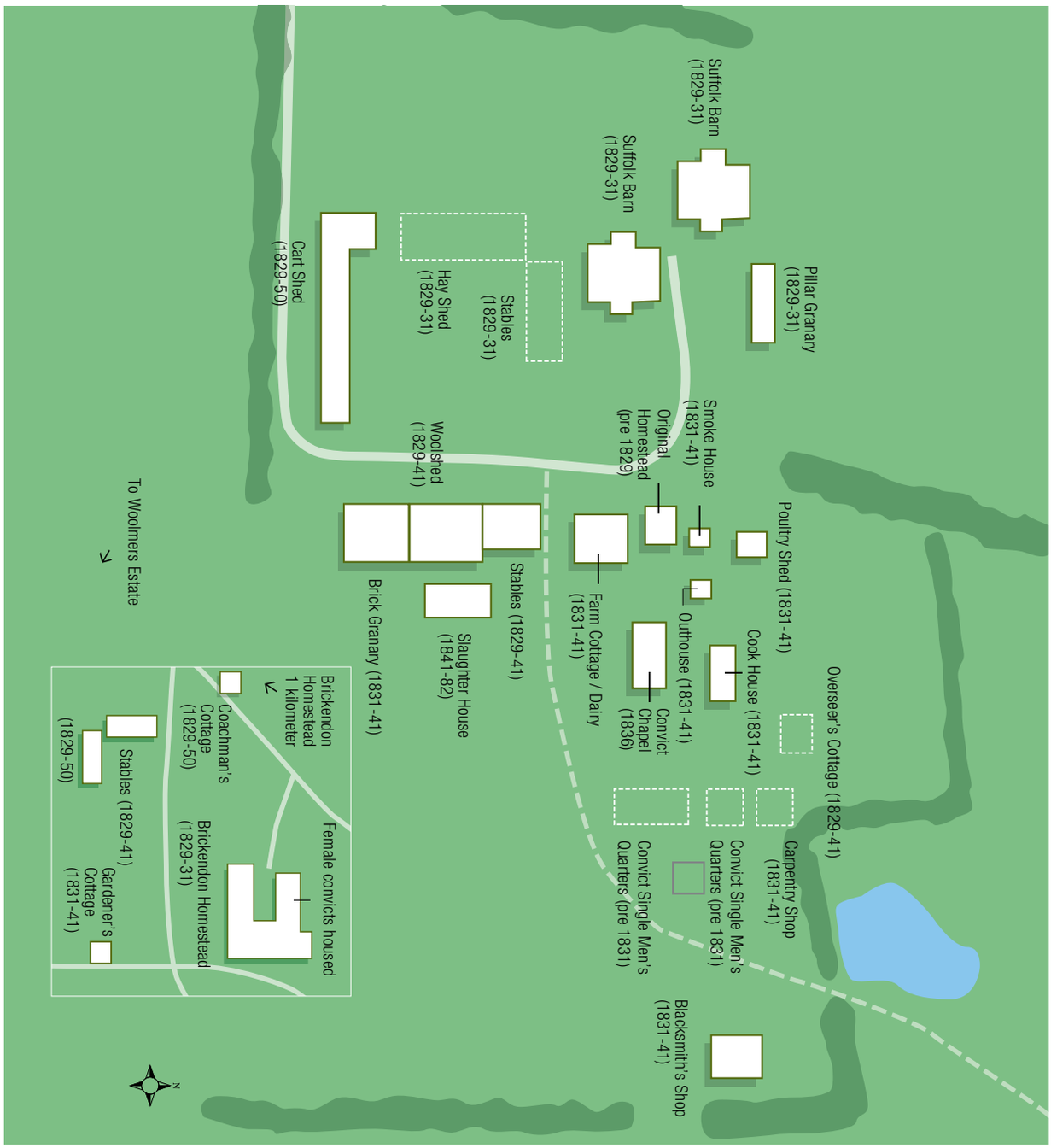
Perimeter wall

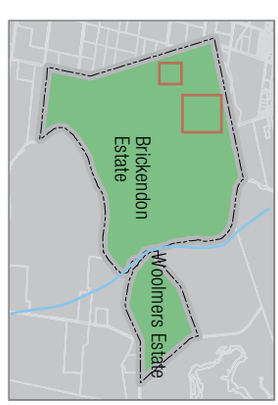
Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 750



# Brickendon Estate, Tasmania

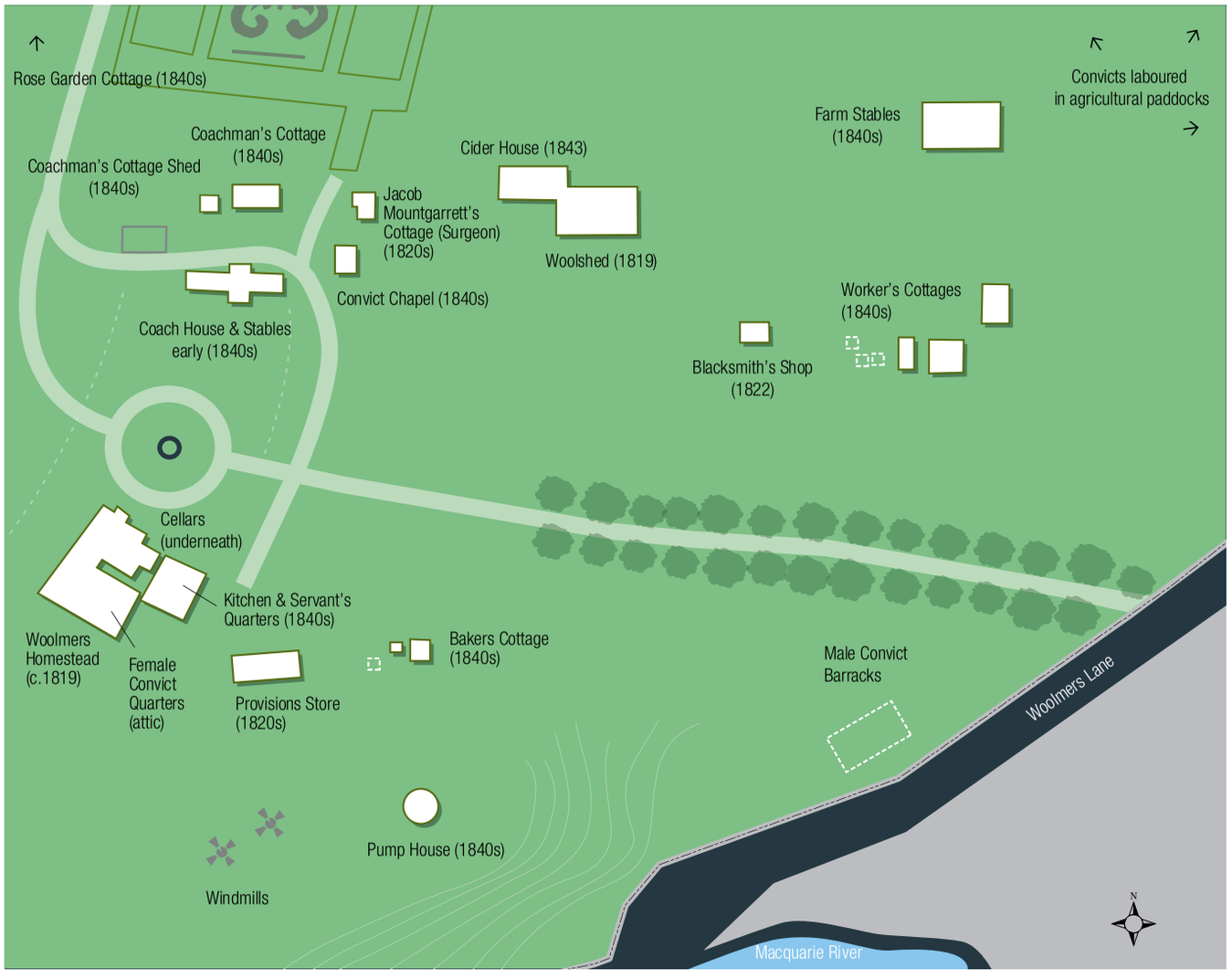


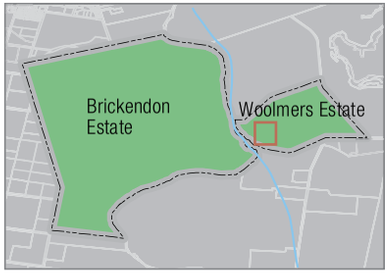




Nominated World Heritage area
Convict structure
Convict ruin
Convict archaeological site
Convict planted hedges
Non-convict structure
Tracks
Access Roads

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 2,225




Nominated World Heritage area

Convict structure

Convict archaeological site

Non-convict structure

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 1680

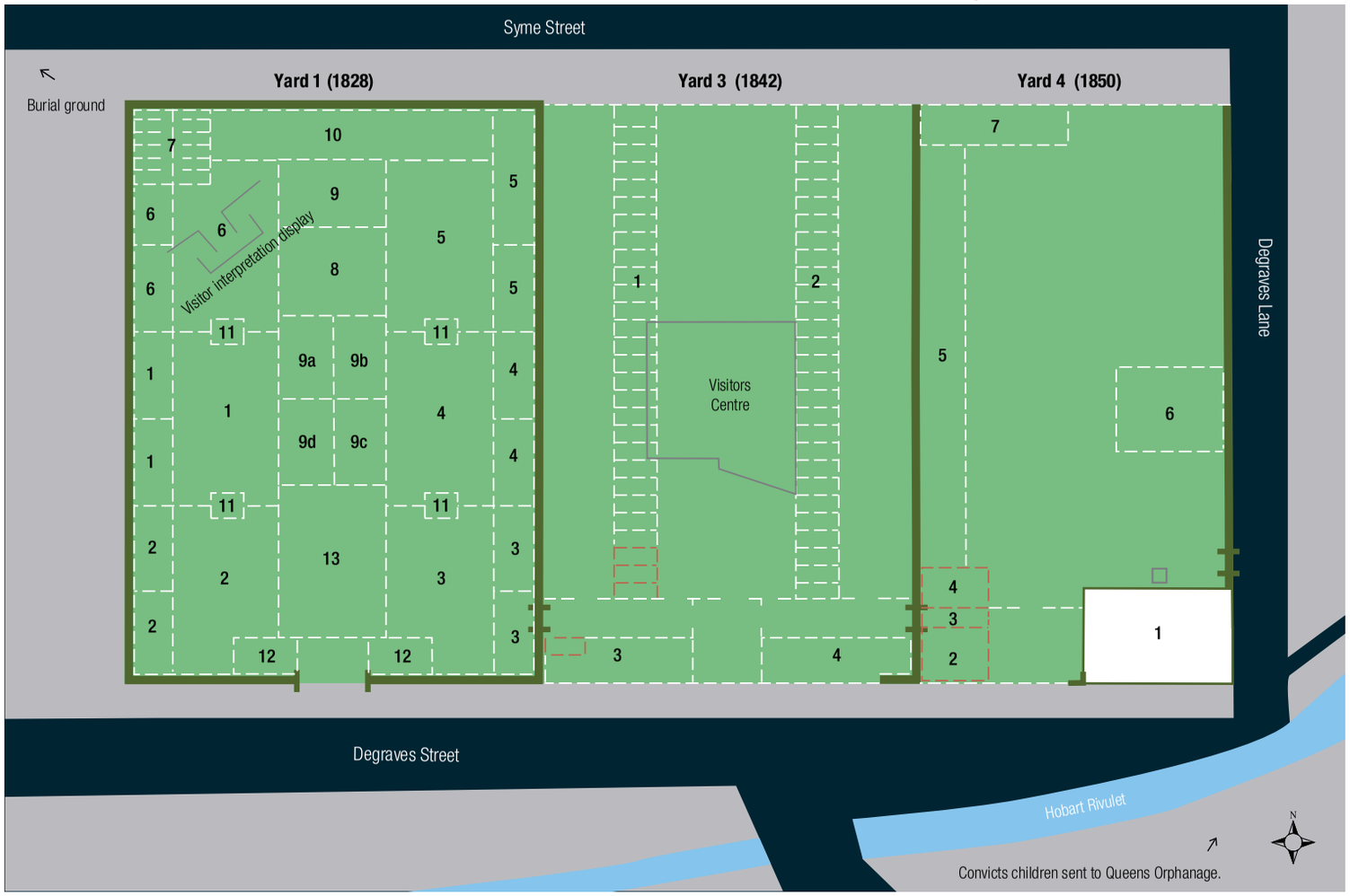
# Darlington Probation Station, Maria Island, Tasmania


Nominated World Heritage area
Convict structure
Convict ruin
Convict archaeological remains
Convict archaeological site
Non-convict structure
Roads
Non-convict remains

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use.
Some buildings now filldifferent functions.
Scale 1 : 3,000

Yard 1 Yard 3 Yard 4

Reproduced courtesy of: Lucy Frost and Christopher Downes




**Yard 1 (1828) – Period of construction and use**

1. Kitchen area
2. Nursery for mothers and infants Yard
3. Hospital Yard
4. First Class Yard
5. Assignables Class Yard
6. Crime Class Yard
7. Solitary punishment cells
8. Original Chapel
9. Second Chapel
   - 9a. Crime class sleeping room
   - 9b. Assignment class sleeping rooms
   - 9c. First class sleeping rooms
   - 9d. Cooks sleeping rooms
10. Work shops
11. Privies
12. Office's / Store room
13. Wood Yard

**Yard 3 (1842) – Period of construction and use**

1. Solitary Apartment blocks West
2. Solitary Apartment blocks East
3. Office / Apartment West
4. Offices / Apartments East

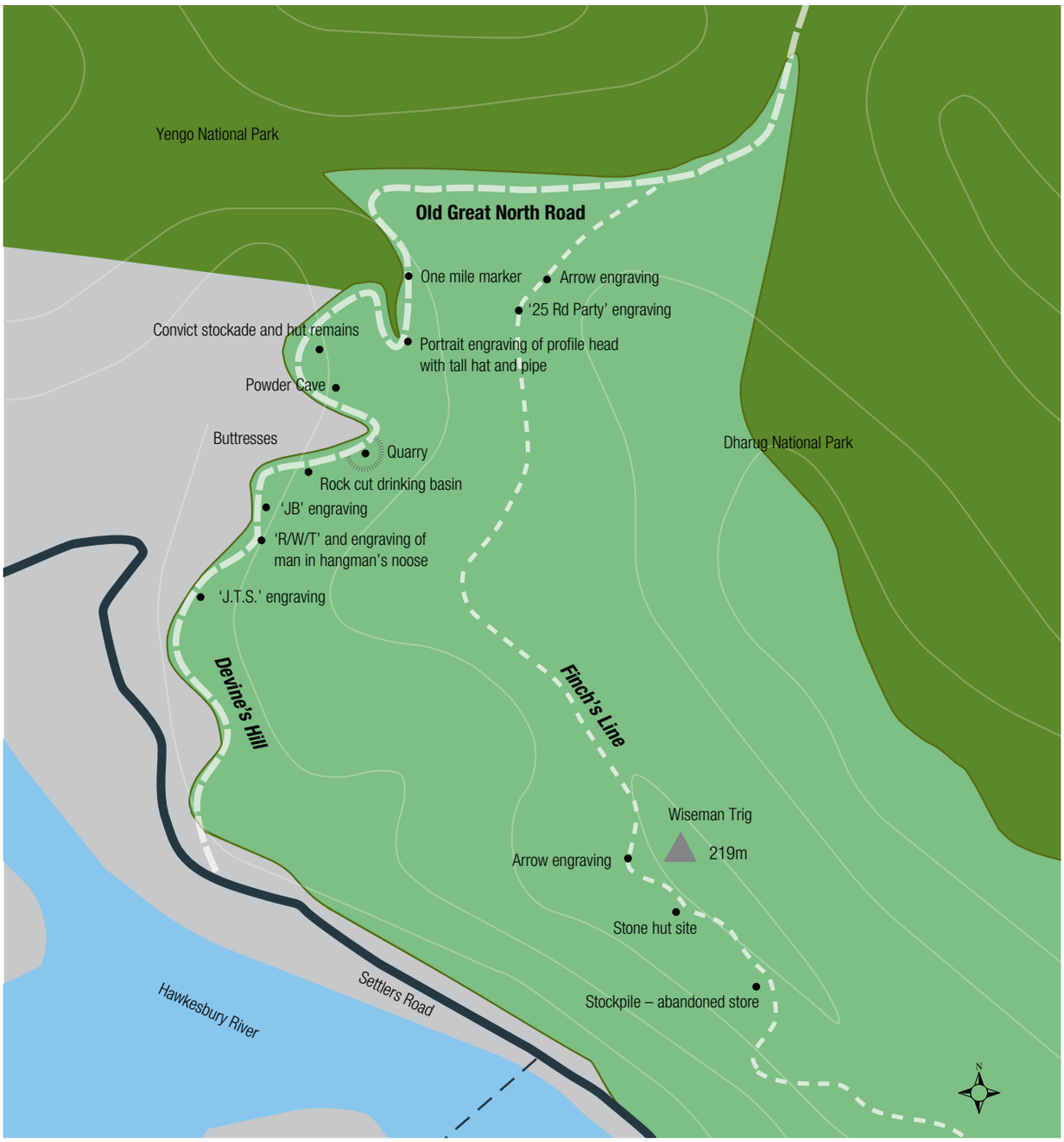
**Yard 4 (1850) – Period of construction and use**

1. Matron's Cottage
2. Submatrons Cottage
3. Covered walkway to Yard 3
4. Cookhouse / Washhouse
5. Nursery apartments for babies and women
6. Shelter Shed
7. Privies

- Nominated World Heritage area
- Convict structure
- Convict Perimeter wall
- Convict surface archaeological remains of key buildings
- Convict sub-surface archaeological remains of key buildings
- Non-convict structure

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use.
Some buildings now fill different functions.
Scale 1 : 650

# Old Great North Road, New South Wales





Nominated World Heritage area

National Park

Scale 1 : 15,000

1. Mile marker
2. Quarry
3. Hut site

**Port Arthur Legend**

1. Commandant's House (1833)
2. Senior Military Officer's Quarters (1833)
3. Guard Tower (1836)
4. Law Courts (1846)
5. Officer's Quarters (1844)
6. Military Barracks site
7. Smith O'Brien's Cottage (c.1850)
8. Hospital (1842)
9. Officers' Quarters sites (1834)
10. Commissariat Store site (1830)
11. Watchmen's Quarters (1857)
12. Penitentiary (1845) (Former granary)
13. Workshops site (1830)
14. Sawpits site (1856)
15. Prisoner Barracks site (1830)
16. Paupers Mess (1864)
17. Asylum (1868)
18. Separate Prison (1849)
19. Farm Overseer's Cottage and Dairy (1858)
20. Visiting Magistrate's House (1847)
21. Roman Catholic Chaplain's House (1844)
22. Junior Medical Officer's House (1848)
23. Accountant's House (1845)
24. Parsonage (1843)
25. Church (1837)
26. Government Cottage (1853)
27. Quarry and stone yards sites (1855)
28. Overseers' Quarters sites (1847)
29. Clerk of Work's House (1848-57)
30. Master Shipwright's House (1834)
31. Lime Kiln (1854)


**Point Puer Legend**

**Workshops area includes:**
Workshops
Barracks
Stonecutters Shop
Boat Builders Shop
Exempt room
Cookhouse
Bakehouse
Jetty site
Superintendant's House
Catechist's House
Sawpit
School/Chapel
Timber yard
Wharf
Stone lined pit
Ponds
Earthworks
Foundation trenches
Quarry

**Gaol area includes:**
Soldiers hut
Line of demarcation
Solitary cells
Separate Apartments
Keepers hut
Cell foundations
Gaol
Aqueduct
Well
Gaol Keepers House
Military Barracks
Separate Apartments
Southern Jetty

**Isle of the Dead includes:**
Headstones
Tidal benchmark

Nominated World Heritage area
Convict structure
Convict ruin
Convict archaeological remains
Convict archaeological site
Non-convict structure

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.
Scale 1 : 38,000

# Coal Mines Historic Site, Tasmania


1. Coal Jetty site (c.1837)
2. Surgeon's House (1838)
3. Coxswain's House (c.1842)
4. Assistant Superintendent House (c.1842)
5. Engineer's Store (c.1842)
6. Prisoner Barracks (c.1838)
7. Chapel (c.1838)
8. Officer's Quarters (c.1848)
9. Bakehouse and Workshops (c.1848)
10. Solitary Punishment Cells (c.1843)
11. Separate Apartments (c. 1845)
12. Hospital (c.1848)
13. Superintendent House (c.1843)
14. Military Barracks (c.1837)
15. Senior Military Officer's House (c.1837)
16. Military cemetery (c.1848)
17. Semaphore Station (1837)
18. Coal Wharf and Jetty (c.1833)
19. Lime Kiln and Jetty (c.1837)
20. Commissariat Officer's House (c.1842)
21. Catechist (c.1842)
22. Commissariat Store and Jetty (c.1842)
23. Coal Jetty c.1842)
24. Quarry (c.1837)
25. Unidentified Buildings (c.1848)

Nominated World Heritage area

Convict structure

Convict ruin

Convict archaeological remains

Coal workings and transport

Roads

Coal dumps / mullock heaps

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 5,500

# Cockatoo Island Convict Site, New South Wales


Nominated World Heritage area

Convict structure

Convict ruin

Convict archaeological site

Non-convict structure

Plateau

Buildings are labelled as their convict era use. Some buildings now fill different functions.

Scale 1 : 2,500

# Fremantle Prison, Western Australia