

CHAPTER 10

CONVICTS, BUSHRANGERS AND LARRIKINS



Lock on the receiving room door at Richmond Gaol, Tasmania, built in 1825. Photograph by Adriaan van der Weel, 1986.

AN IMPORTANT THEME in Australia's nineteenth-century social history is the place of its social malcontents: convicts, bushrangers and larrikins. Whether they were more sinned against than sinning is still being debated. This chapter provides a general overview of their history. The origins of Australian convicts are examined, as is their distribution throughout the colonies. The first bushrangers were also convicts, and convict connections were found in all subsequent major outbreaks of bushranging. The bushranger became a prominent figure in nineteenth-century Australian folklore. Contemporary observers saw the larrikinism in capital cities in the later part of the century as the urban counterpart of bushranging. The chapter concludes with a brief look at the larrikin phenomenon.

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Convicts in Australia

THE GRAPHS ON THIS page illustrate some of the major characteristics of the history of convicts in Australia between 1788 and 1868.

Convicts landed in Australia

This graph shows where convicts disembarked in Australia. It also shows how highly centralised the system was: although Van Diemen's Land had been established in 1803, convicts were not landed there regularly until after 1816. A similar procedure was repeated for Norfolk Island, which had been a convict colony intermittently since 1788.

Until 1815, the number of convicts transported to New South Wales was relatively small. Many who had been sentenced to transportation remained in Britain. Britain was at war with France and convict labour was required, particularly in the naval dockyards. With the end of the war in 1815, the number of convicts landed in Australia rose sharply. It continued to increase (except for a slight drop in the 1824–1827 period), reaching a peak in the 1830s. It declined during the 1840s and reached its lowest levels in the 1850s. The growth during the 1820s and 1830s reflected a sustained belief in transportation on the part of the British government and the need for cheap convict labour in the colonies. By the late 1830s, however, widespread opposition to transportation had developed in the colonies and Britain.

Until 1839, New South Wales was the major recipient of convicts. Small parties were landed at Port Phillip in 1802 and Van Diemen's Land in 1803 to forestall any possible French territorial claims. But until 1817 convicts bound for Van Diemen's Land were landed first in Sydney. The number of convicts sent to Van Diemen's Land rose during the 1820s and 1830s, generally being half the number landed in New South Wales. For thirteen years after the suspension of transportation to New South Wales in 1840, Van Diemen's Land received most convicts sent to Australia. Small numbers were landed at Norfolk Island and Geelong. Transportation to the eastern colonies was abolished in 1852, the last transport arriving in Van Diemen's Land in 1853.

In 1849, Western Australia had requested the British government to convert the colony into a penal settlement. The first convicts arrived in 1850, the last in 1868, although it was 1886 before the imperial convict establishment was disbanded and the remaining 200 convicts transferred to Western Australia's civil penal system.

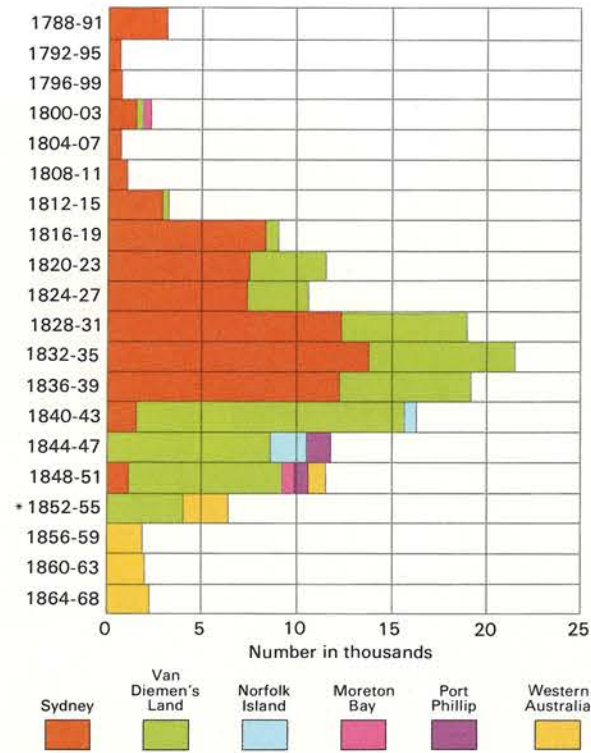
Close to 160 000 convicts were transported to Australia. Over 78 000 were sent to New South Wales, over 65 000 to Van Diemen's Land and almost 10 000 to Western Australia. The majority were habitual offenders; political prisoners were a tiny minority. The most common conviction was for crimes against property, and the most common occupations were agricultural work or labouring.

The proportion of women convicts transported to Australia varied between 1788 and 1851 when the transportation of women ended. That variation is shown in the graphs of women transported. The graphs also illustrate a major difference between transportation patterns in Britain and Ireland. Irish women consistently made up a higher proportion of convicts transported than British women.

The Irish

Overall, convicts transported from Ireland accounted for just over a quarter of the total number of convicts transported to Australia. The first ship to bring convicts directly from Ireland, the *Queen*, arrived in 1791. As the pies show, the proportion of convicts transported from Ireland fluctuated from decade to decade in response to political unrest, par-

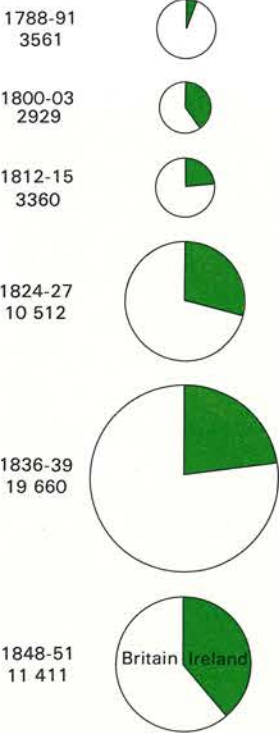
Convicts landed in Australia



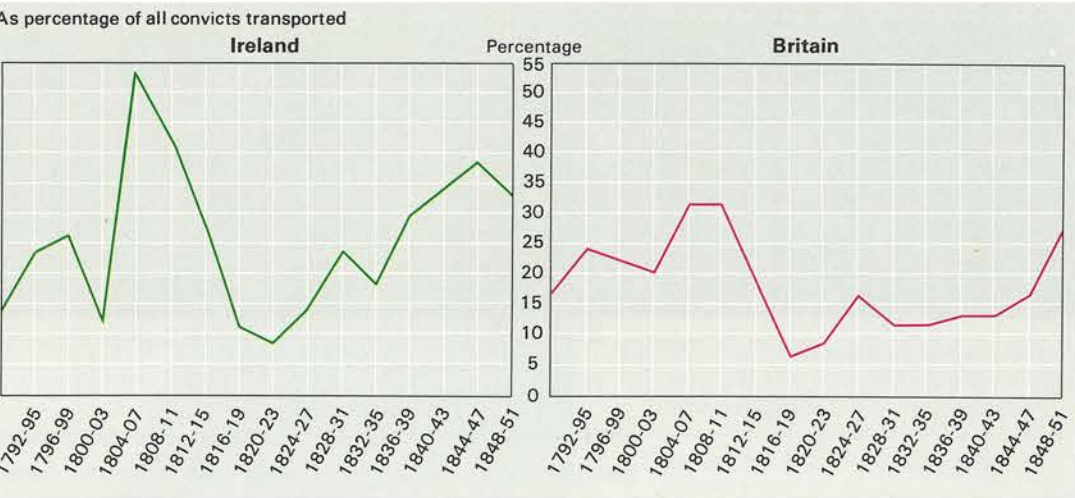
Note: Figures are for those from Britain and Ireland only. The 1304 convicts sent to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land from other colonies are excluded.

* Only male convicts to Western Australia

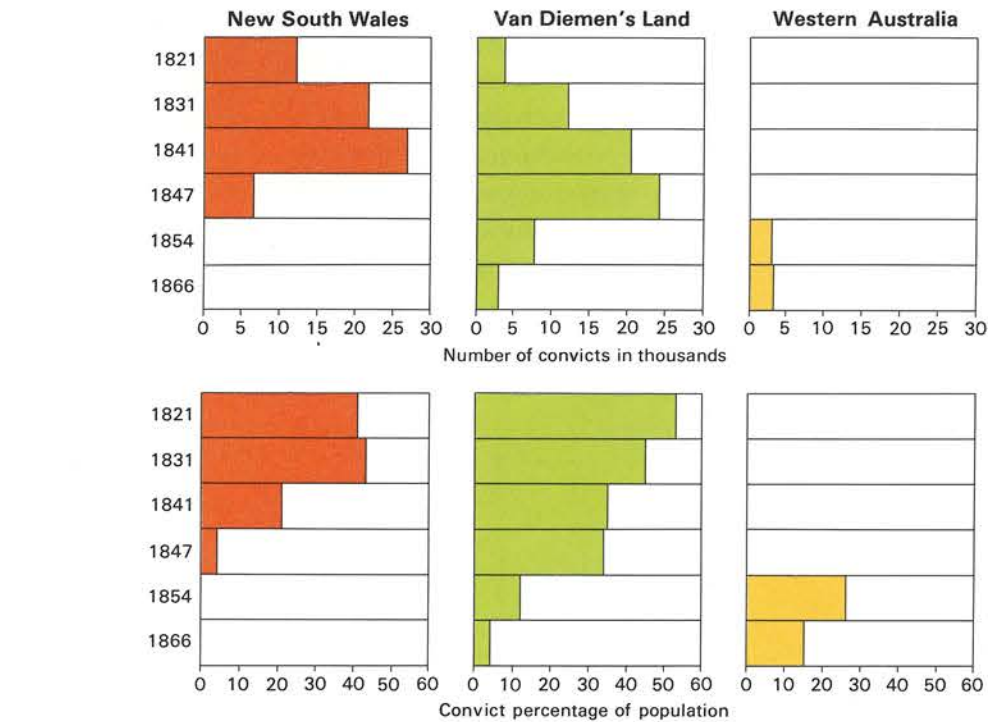
Origins



Women transported to Australia 1788-1851



Convicts in the population



ticularly the rebellions in Ireland in 1798 and 1848, and a changing crime rate.

Until 1840 all convicts transported from Ireland were sent to New South Wales. Van Diemen's Land did not receive convicts from Ireland until the 1840s.

Convicts and population

The significance of convicts within the population as a whole is covered in greater detail in the following pages. These graphs present an overview.

In terms of absolute numbers, the convict population of New South Wales (including Moreton Bay and Port Phillip) was substantially larger than that of Van Diemen's Land until the 1840s. The impact of the suspension of transportation to New South Wales can be seen in the convict populations for both colonies in 1847. But as a percentage of total colonial populations convicts were far more significant in Van Diemen's Land. The description of the eastern colonies as a vast open gaol during the convict years was particularly true of Van Diemen's Land. The number of convicts sent to Western Australia never matched that of the eastern colonies. Nor did the proportion of convicts in the colony's total population. The two maps on this page show the origins of convicts transported to New South Wales between 1817 and 1840, by birthplace and place of trial.

In terms of birthplace, the most significant counties were York, Lancashire and Middlesex. Only slightly less significant were the counties of Kent, Essex, Warwick, Somerset, and Stafford in England and Dublin in Ireland. Few came from England's southwestern, southern, and northeastern counties, Wales, and most of Scotland and Ireland. The newer industrial cities and towns were the most highly represented.

Regarding place of trial, in England and Scotland the urban-industrial counties registered the highest levels. In Ireland, the most urbanised county, Dublin, registered the highest concentration. Indeed, the proportion of convicts from these counties was higher than that based on place of birth. People had moved to these counties in search of work.

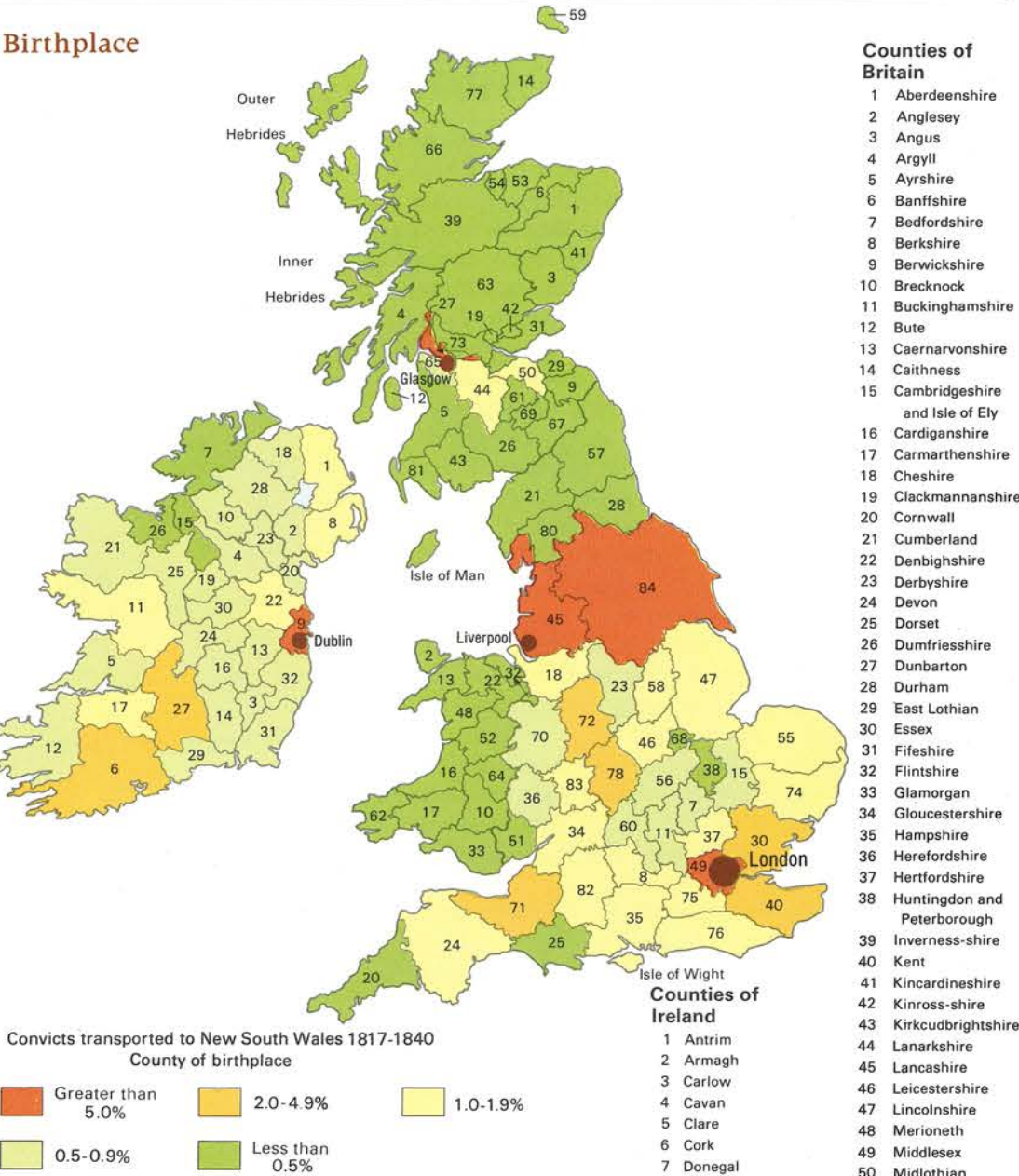
REGIONAL ORIGINS OF CONVICTS TRANSPORTED TO NEW SOUTH WALES 1817-1840

Regional origin		Trial-place (%)	Birth-place (%)
Southwest	(i)	7.6	9.2
Home counties	(ii)	25.2	21.2
The Wash	(iii)	4.4	5.0
Midlands	(iv)	10.9	12.0
Northwest	(v)	9.1	7.9
Northeast	(vi)	4.4	4.8
<hr/>			
ENGLAND		61.6	60.1
WALES		1.4	1.1
SCOTLAND		4.3	4.9
Six counties	(vii)	5.1	5.5
Northwest	(viii)	2.7	3.7
Northeast	(ix)	12.5	10.5
Southwest	(x)	4.2	4.5
Southeast	(xi)	8.2	9.7
IRELAND		32.6	33.9
UNITED KINGDOM		100.0	100.0

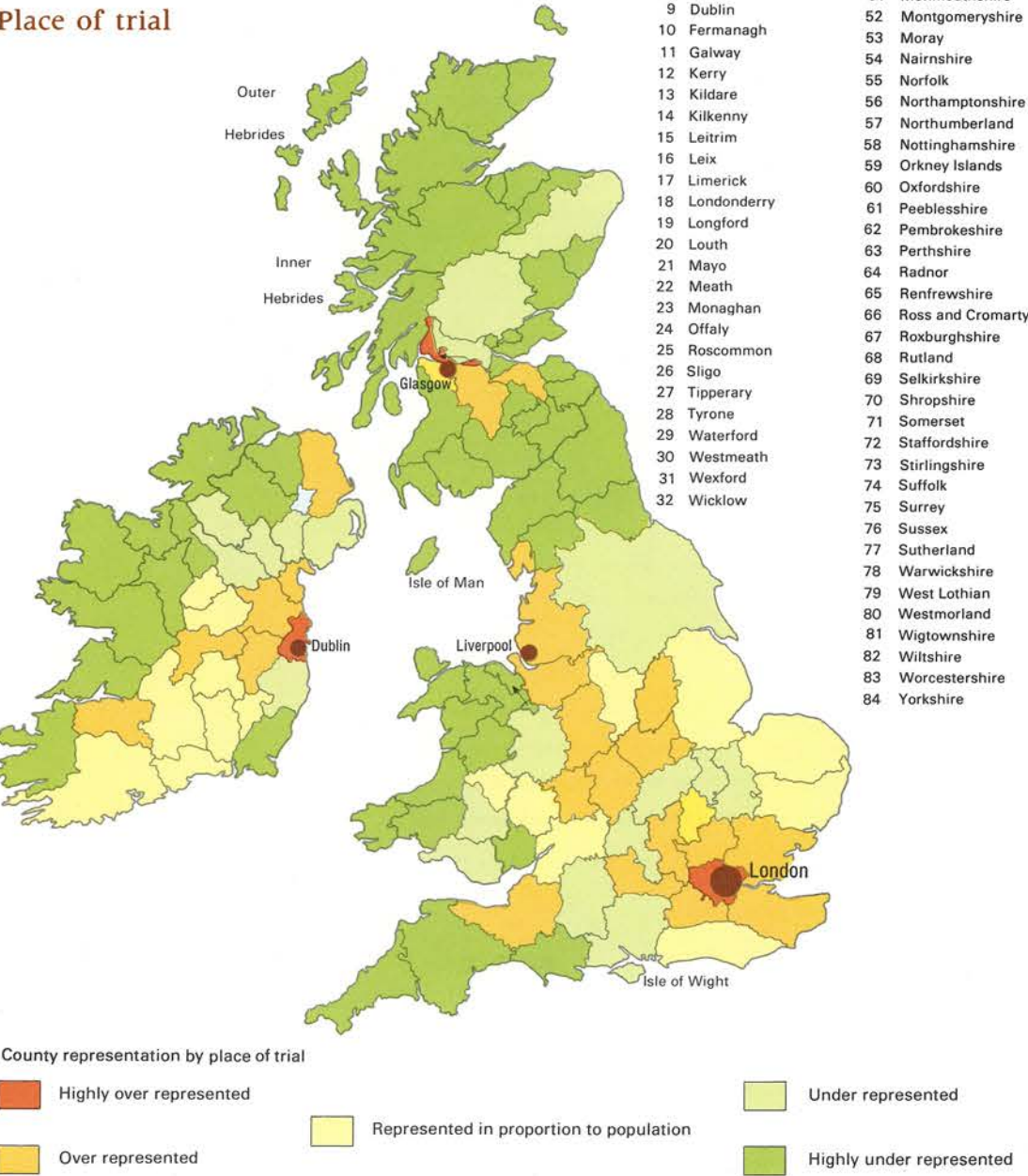
KEY
(i) Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Gloucester, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Sussex (ii) Middlesex, Kent, Surrey, Berkshire, Oxford, Buckingham, Hertford, Essex (iii) Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, Huntingdon, Rutland, Lincoln (iv) Northampton, Warwick, Worcester, Hereford, Shropshire, Stafford, Derby, Nottingham, Leicester (v) Cheshire, Lancashire, Westmorland, Cumberland (vi) Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland (vii) Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone (viii) Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo (ix) Cavan, Longford, Dublin, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Westmeath (x) Clare, Cork, Kerry (xi) Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Kings, Limerick, Queens, Tipperary, Waterford

Sources: Survey of all 19764 convicts who arrived in 1817, 1818, 1820, 1821, 1825, 1827, 1830, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1839 and 1840.

Birthplace



Place of trial



Convicts in New South Wales

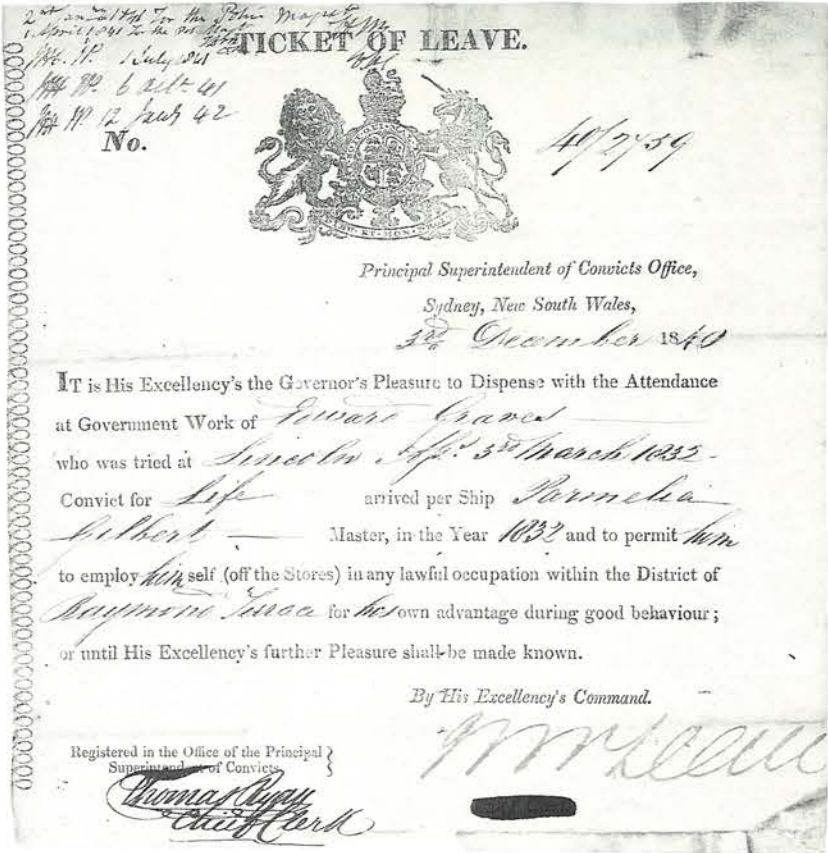
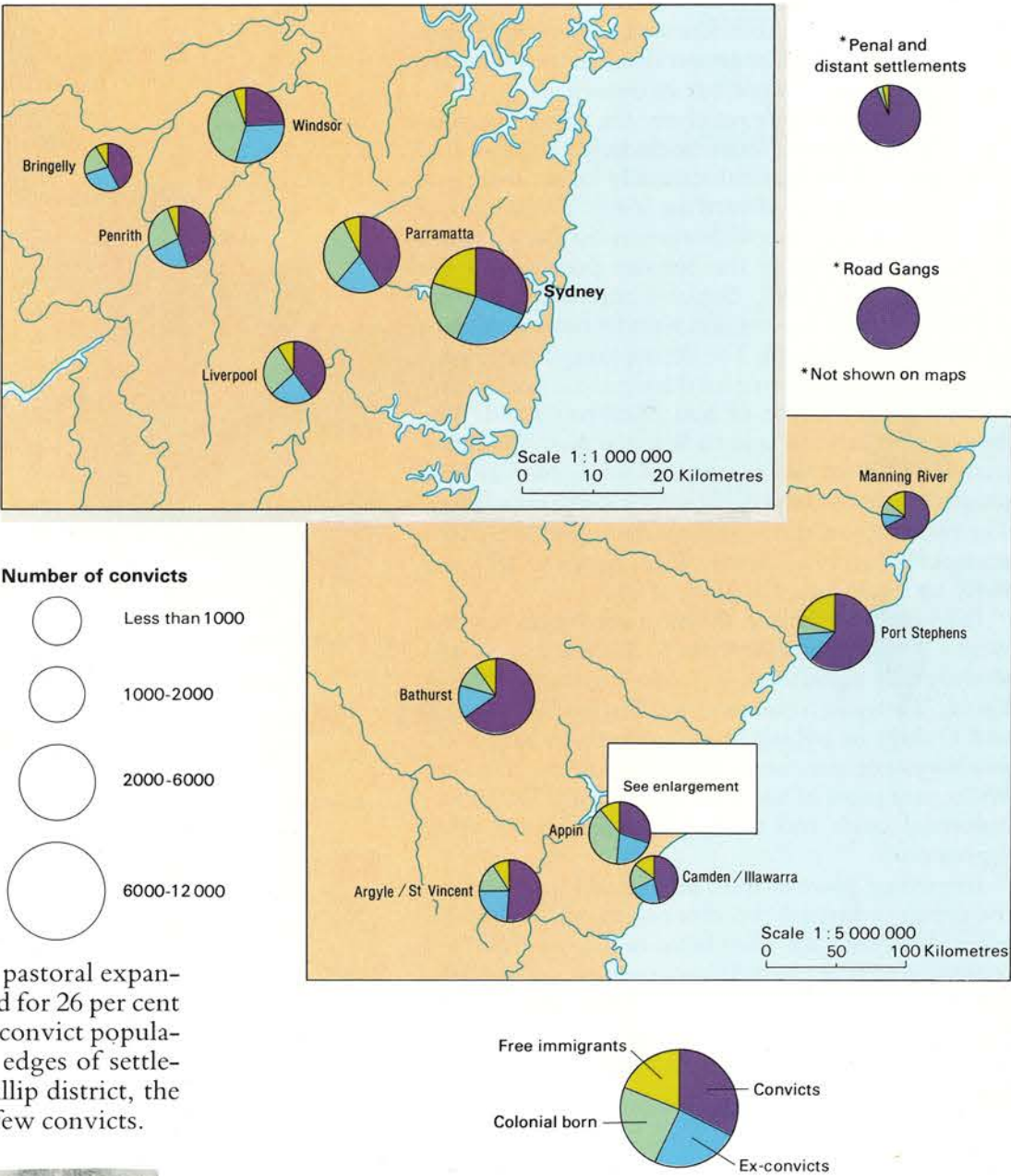
IN 1828 CONVICTS made up more than a quarter of the population in all areas of the colony, in some areas more than half. They formed the highest proportion in the outer areas of settlement: in Bathurst, where most were assigned to large landholders; at the Manning River outpost; and in Port Stephens, a place of secondary punishment. In the pastoral and agricultural districts of Argyle-St Vincent, Camden-Illawarra, Bringelly and Penrith, convicts made up about half the population and most worked as labourers. In the older, more closely settled areas (Parramatta, Windsor, Liverpool and Sydney), they accounted for less than half the population. Most were assigned, and many were in scattered government road gangs. Emancipists, or ex-convicts, were found in every district and their distribution was fairly uniform. In 1828 convicts and ex-convicts together made up most of the population in every district.

The distribution of the colonial born reflected the length of settlement in each district; their numbers were highest in the older districts. Free immigrants were distributed fairly evenly, and in all districts they were a minority.

By 1841 the picture had changed. Transportation had been suspended in 1840 and the number of free immigrants had grown substantially. The proportion of the colonial born had increased. Moreton Bay and Norfolk Island had replaced Port Stephens as places of secondary punishment. Pastoral settlers had extended the frontier in all directions. In the districts mapped for 1828, the proportion of convicts had fallen substantially. In counties outside the districts mapped for 1828, the proportion rose.

In the commissioners' districts established to oversee pastoral expansion beyond the surveyed counties, convicts accounted for 26 per cent to 40 per cent of the population. As in 1828, the male convict population was more significant in districts located on the edges of settlement, where their labour was valuable. The Port Phillip district, the most recently settled area, was exceptional in having few convicts.

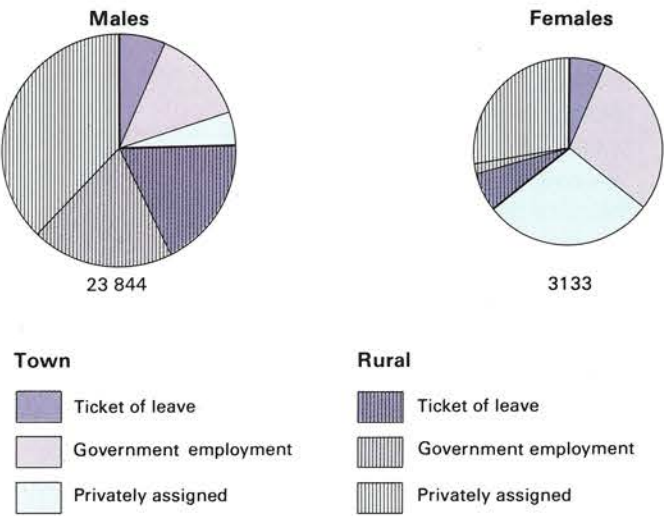
Convicts and free 1828



Convicts sentenced to transportation received terms of between seven and twenty-one years, or were sentenced to life. As an incentive to good behaviour, tickets of leave were issued to convicts. This allowed them to work at any 'lawful occupation' within a designated district, and required them to report regularly to the district's police magistrate. The ticket could be revoked if its holder was found guilty of bad conduct. The ticket of leave, which stopped short of a pardon, became one of the central elements in the convict system.

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The convict population 1841



The imbalance of the sexes in the convict populations is illustrated by these pies, which also show a significant difference in the allocation of men and women. The majority of males went to rural areas, and males were more likely to receive a ticket of leave. The majority of females remained in the towns, where they were frequently used as domestic servants. The women were also more likely to be in government service, particularly in the towns. For both sexes, assignment was common.

The distribution of ex-convicts in 1841 was less uniform than in 1828. They now made up a higher proportion of the population in outlying counties and the commissioners' districts, where many had taken up squatting runs or were working as stockmen. In the Port Phillip district, they were less evident, except in the west, where the shepherds included ex-convicts from Van Diemen's Land.

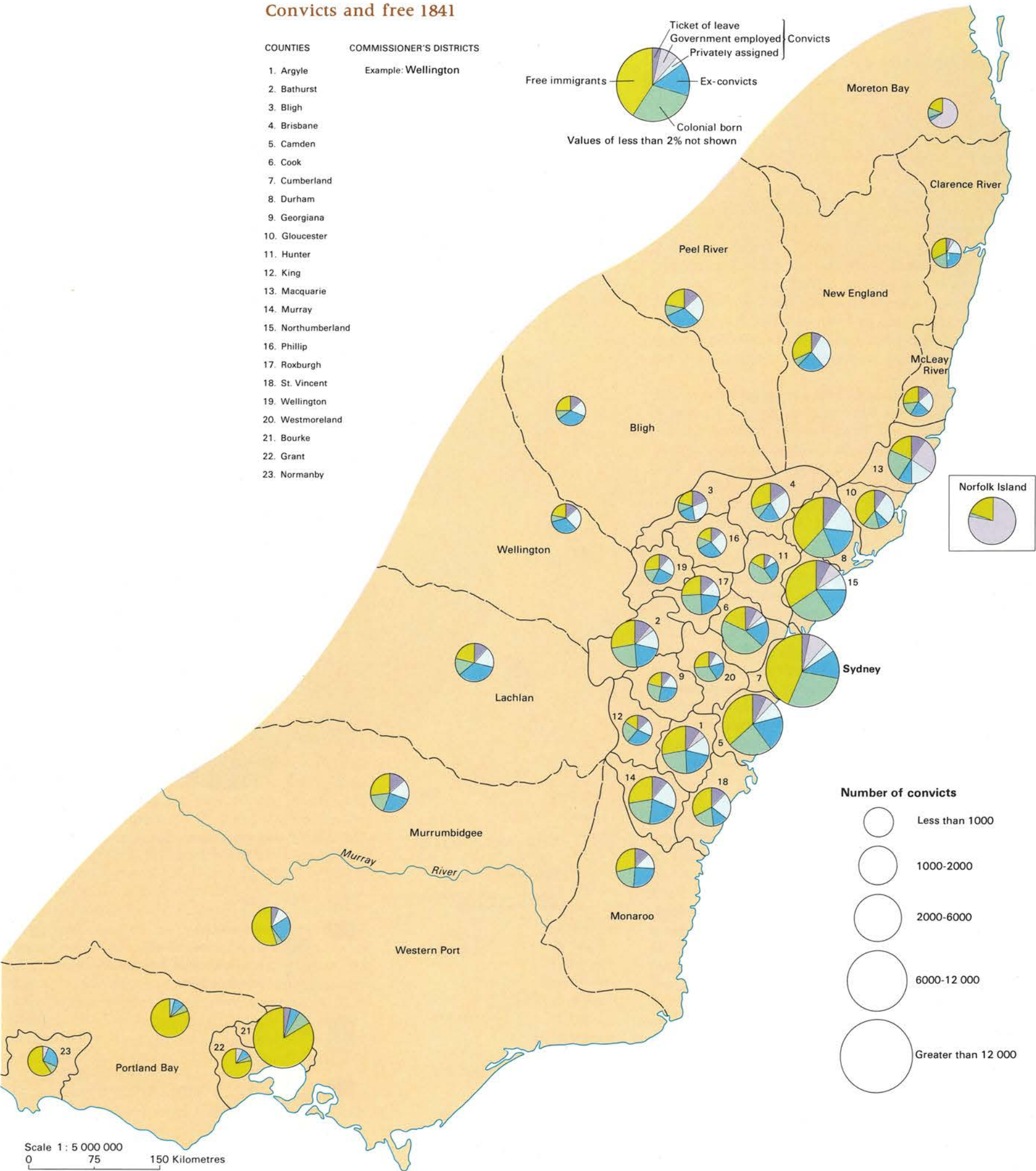
In 1841 convicts and ex-convicts were no longer a majority in every district. In the older areas and in Port Phillip they were a minority. In most outer counties and commissioners' districts north of the Murray, however, they still formed more than half the population.

The colonial born were found in every district in 1841 but had begun to concentrate. Their proportion was higher in the older districts and lower in the newly settled areas. Except for the penal settle-

ments of Moreton Bay and Norfolk Island, the colonial born were fewest in Port Phillip. Clearly they preferred to stay near where their parents had settled.

On the 1841 map convicts are shown in three categories: ticket-of-leave holders, those in government service, and those assigned to private employers.

Convicts assigned to private service made up the overwhelming majority of the convict population in 1828, and nearly half in 1841. The assignment system aroused much controversy, and from 1839 no newly arrived convicts were assigned. Assigned convicts were put to work as agricultural labourers, shepherds, station hands, domestic servants, clerks, sailors and tradesmen. The economy of New South Wales was built on their labour.



Convicts in Van Diemen's Land

THE HISTORY OF transportation in Van Diemen's Land differed from that in New South Wales in many ways. Van Diemen's Land was a place of secondary punishment in its early years, and there was a higher proportion of 'in-corrigibles' among convicts sent. Road and chain gangs were used more extensively, and the first fourteen years of the colony's history were dominated by drunkenness, inefficiency, brutality and brigandage. In 1817 Sorell became lieutenant-governor, and he had restored order by the time of his recall in 1823, the year of the first map.

1823
This map shows the dominance of the convict in the population of Van Diemen's Land. Convicts accounted for over 50 per cent of the population in every district except Clarence Plains, New Norfolk (where free settlers from Norfolk Island had been resettled) and Launceston. Apart from a strong concentration at George Town, which was the administrative headquarters of the north, convicts were more evenly distributed throughout the colony than they were in New South Wales.

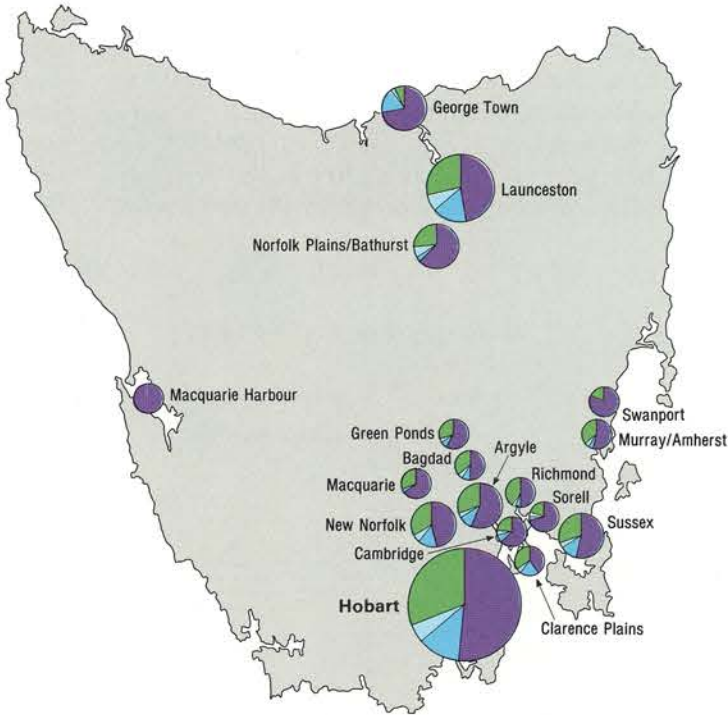
The full significance of convicts in the population can be appreciated when the convict and emancipist segments of the pies are added together. In every district, both groups accounted for over 50 per cent of the population. In over half the districts their proportion was greater than 75 per cent. In George Town convicts and emancipists accounted for 92 per cent of the population.

Changes introduced to the convict system in 1840 were significant for Van Diemen's Land. All convicts sent to the colony went directly to Port Arthur. Assignment was abolished, although those already assigned remained for the moment with their masters. In 1842 a system of probation was defined. All convicts were to work for at least two years in probation gangs on public works. A probation pass was then to be issued, allowing convicts to work for wages. With further good behaviour a ticket of leave was issued. But by 1846 the system was in a shambles. Economic recession during the 1840s had led to cut-backs in public works and in the private sector, and the number of jobs declined, leaving ticket-of-leave and pass holders unemployed. As well, the number of convicts arriving in Van Diemen's Land had risen substantially with the suspension of transportation to New South Wales. Quite simply, there were too many convicts in the colony, so transportation was suspended until 1848. The second map shows the island just before transportation was resumed.

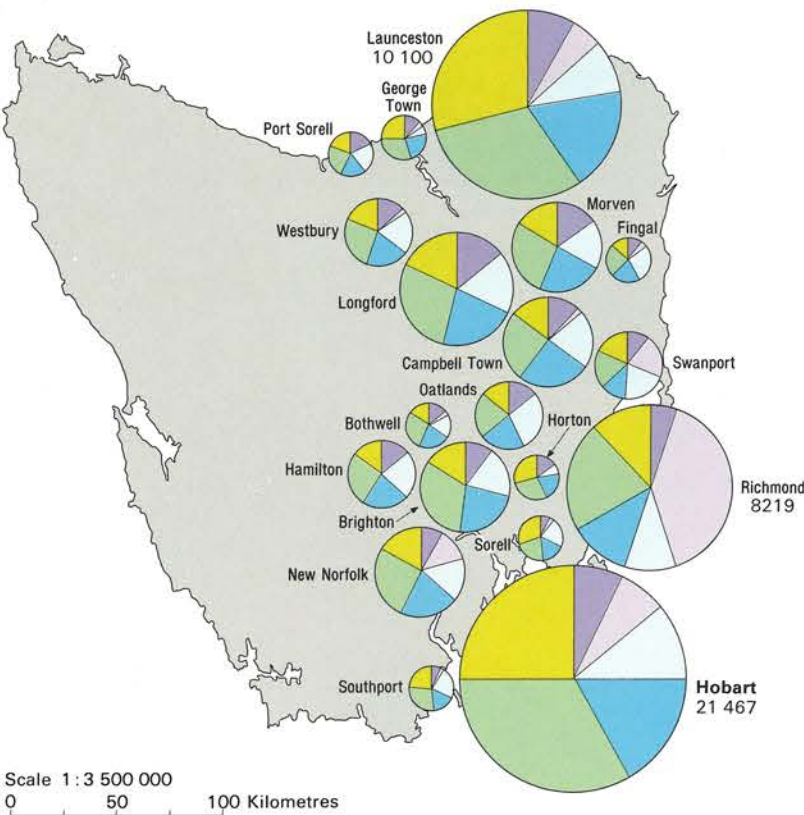
1847
Probation stations had been established in most districts to supervise the work of convicts in government employment, but convicts were concentrated in four districts: Hobart, Swanport, New Norfolk and Richmond. Held at Port Arthur, or in transit from one station to another, were 3739 men in government employment. Ticket-of-leave holders were found in all districts with a slight concentration in the midlands districts (from Longford to Hamilton) and Port Sorell. They worked mainly as agricultural and pastoral labourers. In over two-thirds of the districts, assigned convicts still accounted for the majority of the convict population. Many were actually pass holders, although officials still listed them as assigned convicts.

Although their proportions at district level had fallen since 1823, convicts and ex-convicts still represented more than 40 per cent of the population in every district. The native born and free immigrants were still a minority in most districts.

1823



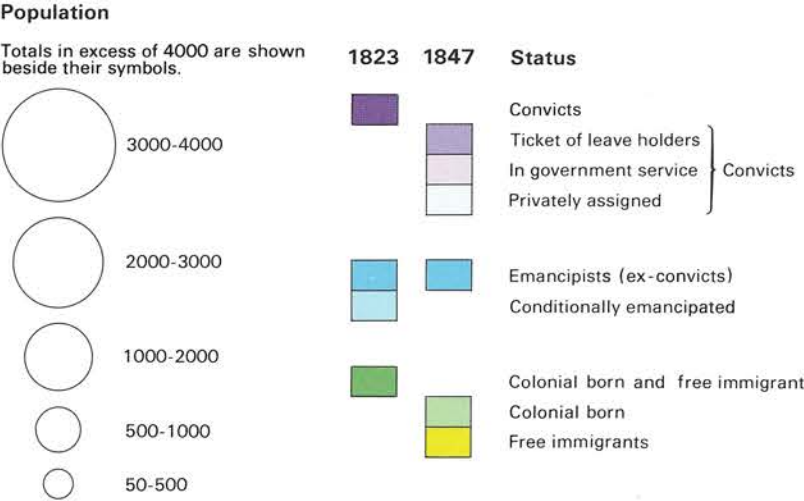
1847



Scale 1 : 3 500 000
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Convicts and free

The 3739 convicts in Port Arthur and in transit between probation stations not shown.



Women convicts

OVER 24000 WOMEN were transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, approximately 16 per cent of the total number of convicts transported to the eastern colonies. By place of trial, 55 per cent came from England, 33 per cent from Ireland and 12 per cent from Scotland. By native place 47 per cent came from England, 43 per cent from Ireland and 9 per cent from Scotland. With regard to prior convictions, the Scots had the highest proportion, the Irish the lowest. The majority of women gave domestic service as their occupation although one woman's occupation was given as 'hard work', another's as 'good for nothing'. A significant (but unascertainable) number of women transported were prostitutes.

The number of convict women arriving in Australia reflected the general pattern of convict arrivals. But, as the graph shows, the proportion of convicts transported varied significantly between 1788 and 1853. Until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, women accounted for up to 36 per cent of convicts transported. After 1815, the proportion of women declined, remaining below the average until the late 1830s. In the period 1848-1851, the proportion of women climbed sharply to 30 per cent. This was partly due to the failed Irish rebellion of 1848, and partly to the British government's decision to transport more women to Van Diemen's Land. Although women convicts had been sent from New South Wales soon after the foundation of Van Diemen's Land, they were not transported directly from Britain to the colony until 1817. Thereafter until 1840, they accounted for a quarter of women transported.

The second graph points to an interesting difference between the women transported from Britain and those transported from Ireland. In general, women consistently made up a higher proportion of the convicts transported from Ireland. Unlike their English counterparts, the Irish authorities were less likely to commute sentences of transportation handed down against women to imprisonment in Ireland.

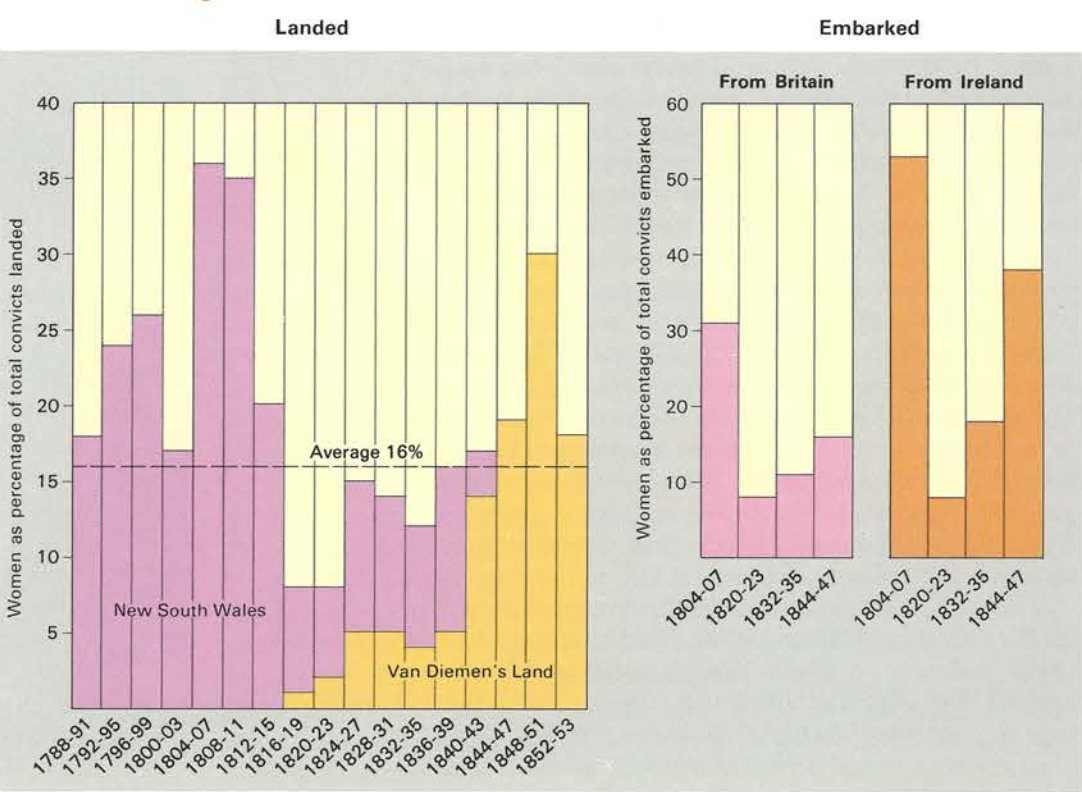
The maps of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land illustrate three major characteristics of the history of female convicts in Australia. The first was the concentration of females in settled districts and towns. In New South Wales 97 per cent of female convicts lived in the twenty counties. Just on 64 per cent lived in towns within the counties, the majority in Sydney and Parramatta in the county of Cumberland and in Newcastle in the county of Northumberland. In Van Diemen's Land, over 70 per cent lived in the Hobart and Launceston districts.

The second characteristic was the high proportion of women who were assigned. In New South Wales assignment accounted for over 60 per cent of the female convict population in every county except Cumberland. In over half the counties in New South Wales, the proportion assigned was greater than 75 per cent. In Van Diemen's Land the only districts where the percentage of female convicts assigned fell below 60 per cent were Hobart, Launceston and Southport.

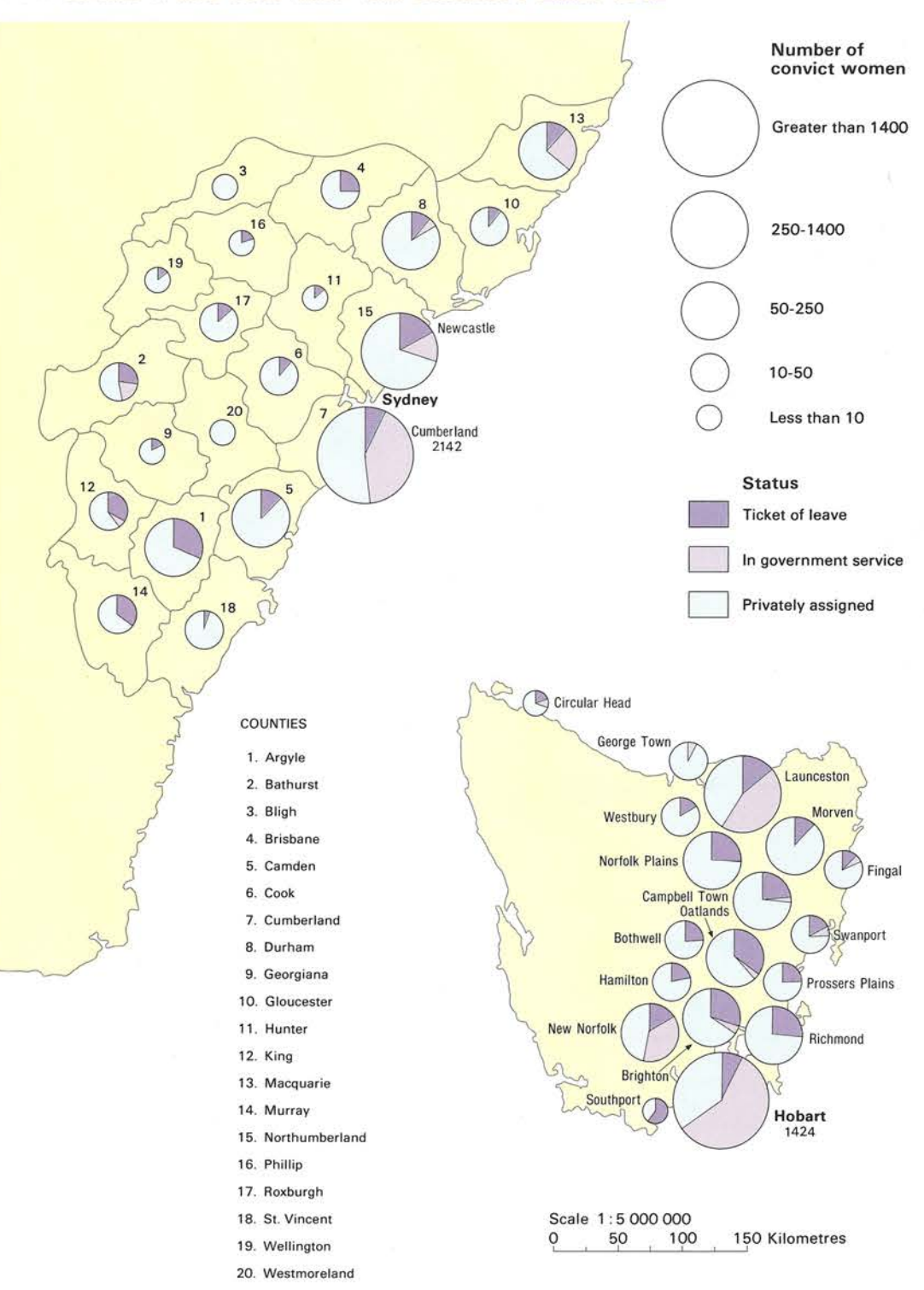
The third characteristic was the lower proportion of women in government service. The female factories in Parramatta in New South Wales and Hobart and Launceston in Van Diemen's Land accounted for over 90 per cent of women in government service in both colonies. The factories served as gaols for women convicted of offences, as holding centres for assigned women in transit from one master to another, and as lying-in places for pregnant convicts.

The number of ticket-of-leave holders was small: in New South Wales 316 out of a total population of 3133, in Van Diemen's Land 348 out of 2691. Their distribution basically reflected the overall distribution of female convicts in both colonies.

Women transported 1788-1853



New South Wales 1841 and Van Diemen's Land 1842



Convicts in Western Australia

THE CONVICT SYSTEM in Western Australia differed greatly from that in the east. Only men were sent, and only after they had served part of their sentence in Britain. Assignment had been abolished; instead, convicts were employed on public works until they earned their tickets of leave. Ticket-of-leave holders worked for wages, and hiring depots were established in towns such as York. A conditional pardon could be issued to ticket-of-leave holders, but recipients could not return to Britain until their sentence had expired.

As the map for 1854 shows, Western Australia was never the vast gaol that New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land had been. The convicts comprised less than one-third of the population in any district. The number of ticket-of-leave holders was generally greater in rural districts, particularly in Swan, Toodyay and Wellington, where they worked as shepherds, farmhands and tradesmen.

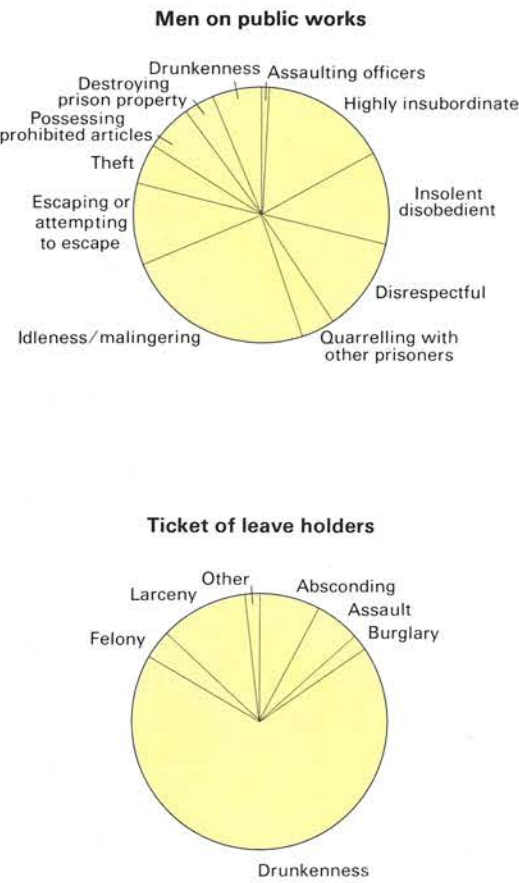
Convict employment on public works is shown on the maps for 1854 and 1866. Numbers remained fairly constant in Perth and Victoria and in the agricultural districts of Swan, York and Plantagenet. In other districts, as the work was completed, the convicts were transferred. In the newer districts convict numbers had risen by 1866.

Until 1862, approximately one-third of the convicts were employed on public works, half held tickets of leave and one-tenth held conditional pardons. Governor John Hampton introduced harsh modifications to the system. He reduced the number of tickets of leave issued. Conditional pardons were cut back, and replaced in 1865 by conditional releases that prohibited convicts from leaving the colony. By 1871 the pattern of 1854 had been restored, following Hampton's departure.

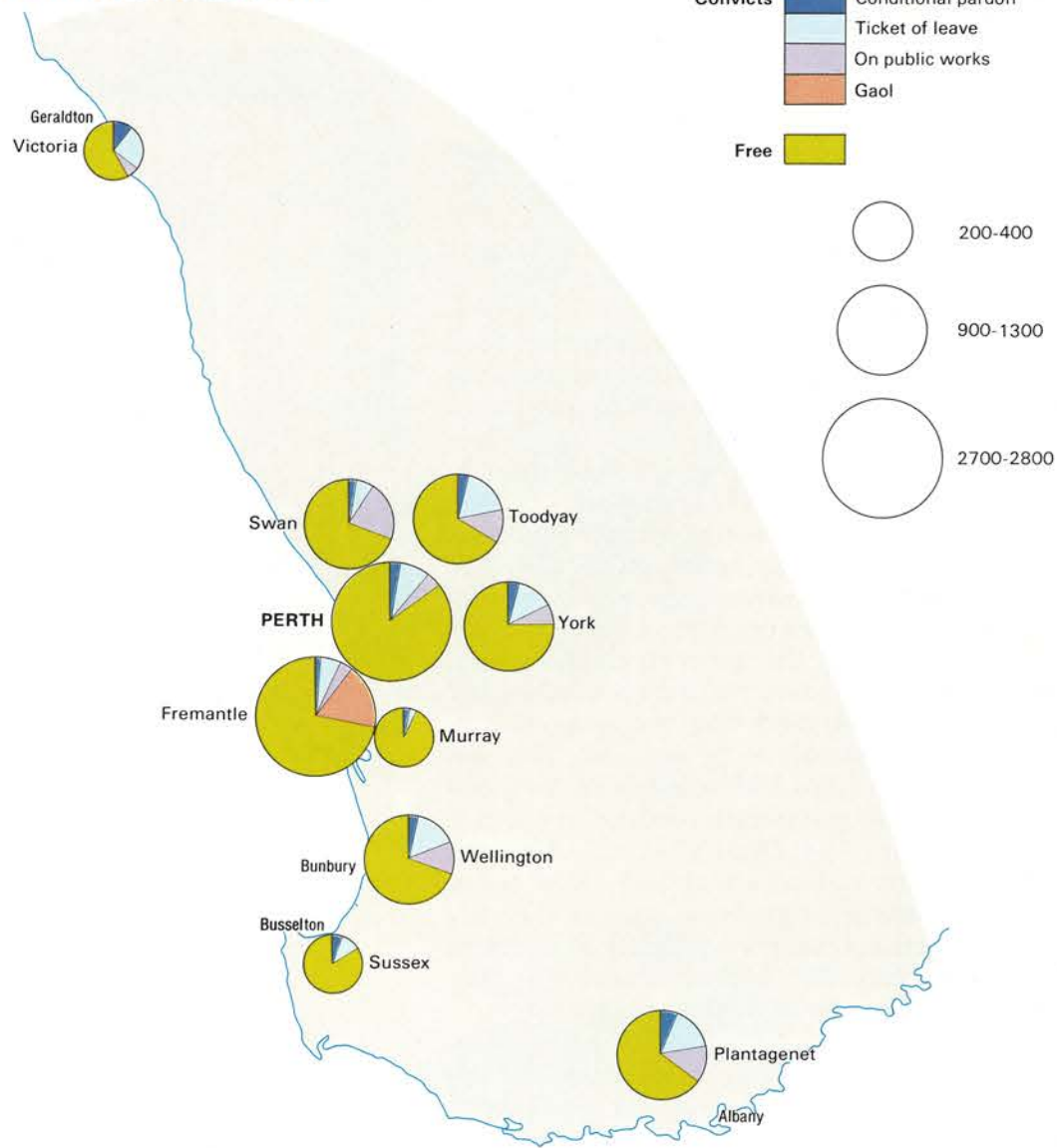
Convicts' misdemeanours were severely punished. The pies show the contrast between the offences committed by men on public works and those committed by ticket-of-leave holders.

Transportation to Western Australia ended in 1868 having served its original purpose to provide labour to stimulate the economy.

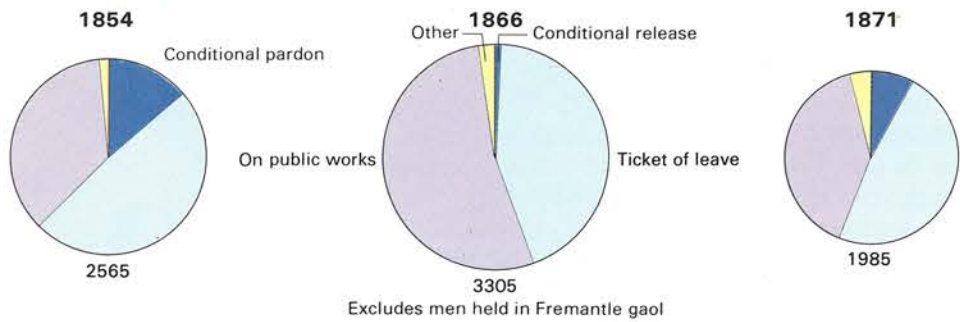
Convict offences 1866



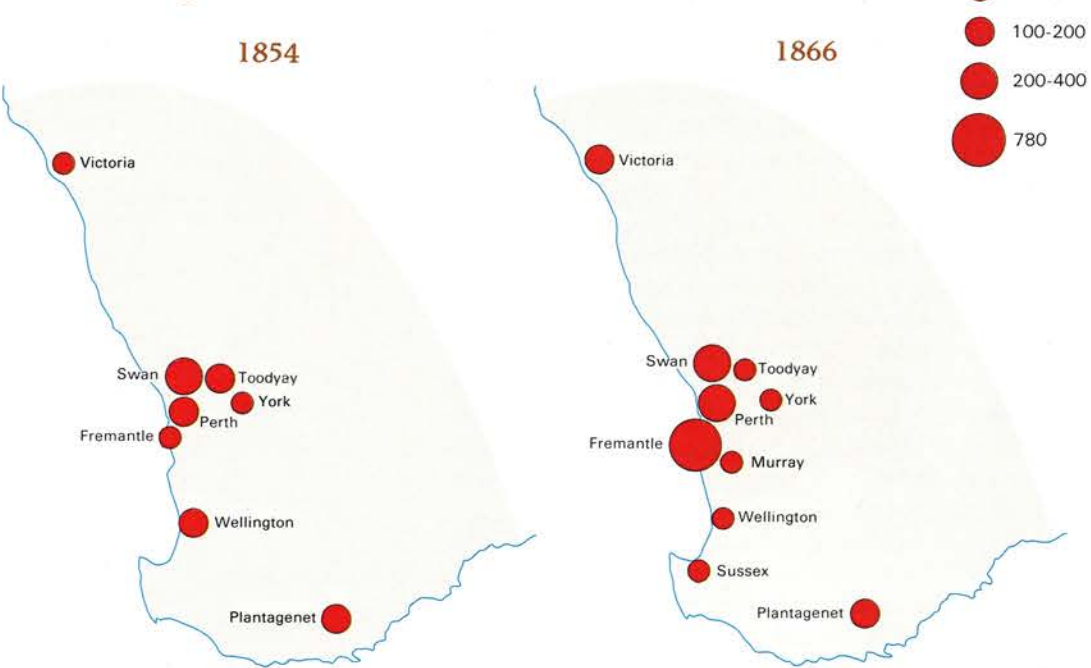
Convicts and free 1854



Convict deployment



Convicts on public works



Places of secondary punishment



IT QUICKLY BECAME APPARENT in New South Wales after 1788 that separate penal settlements were needed for convicts who committed offences in the colony. These were created for male convicts only, and were located away from the main areas of settlement. Newcastle in New South Wales was the first, established in 1804. Van Diemen's Land, in its early years of settlement, served the same purpose. Discipline and punishment at these settlements were harsh.

As settlement spread beyond Sydney, and as Hobart and Launceston grew, these penal stations, or places of secondary punishment as they came to be known, were moved. In New South Wales, Wellington and Port Macquarie were established in 1823 and Moreton Bay (on the present site of Brisbane) in 1824. In Van Diemen's Land, Macquarie Harbour on the west coast was established in 1822. It was closed in 1832 when Port Arthur opened. Maria Island also served as a place of secondary punishment from 1825.

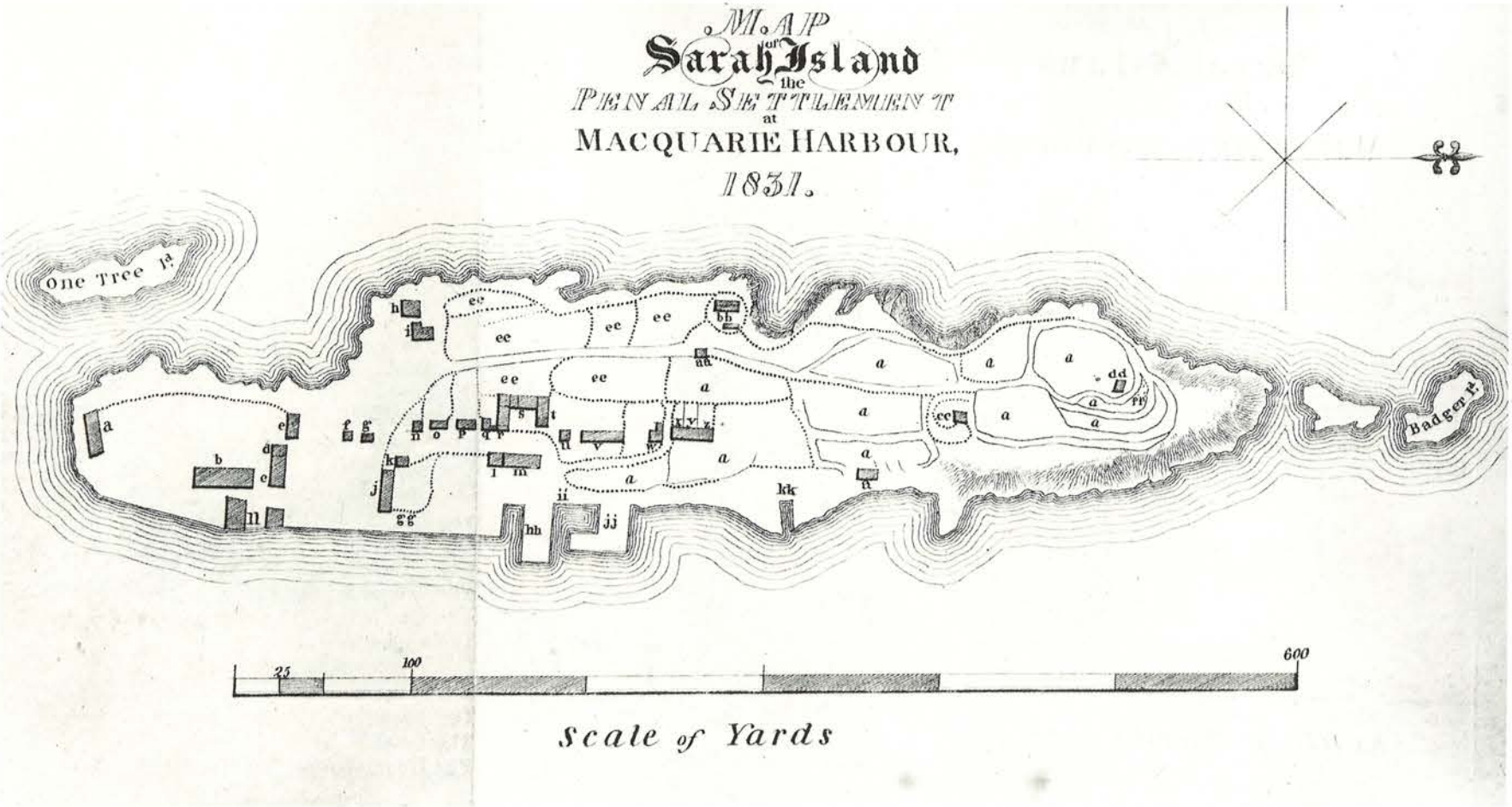
Norfolk Island, where convicts were taken as early as 1788, was turned over to free settlers in 1814. In 1825 it became a place of secondary punishment, and its free settlers were shipped to New Norfolk in Van Diemen's Land.

All settlements yielded tales of cruelty and brutality, but the worst settlements were Macquarie Harbour and Norfolk Island. Both became a living hell for the men sent there.



Above left.
Watercolour of the settlement at Norfolk Island, by Thomas Seller, 1845.
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Left.
Watercolour and pen and ink of Macquarie Harbour by Thomas James Lempriere, c1830.
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Key to map of Sarah Island

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| a. The Saw-pits | n. The Commissariat office | aa. The Signal house | ii. A basin for boats |
| b. The shipwrights' work-shop | o. The Commandant's clerk & superintendent | bb. The Hospital | jj. A large platform or jetty on which the new stores are now building |
| c. The Boatwain's hut | p. The Commissariat | cc. The Gardener's house | kk. The Commandant's wharf or landing place |
| d. The Nailer's workshop | q. The Master ship builder | dd. The Old Signal-house & Flag-staff | |
| e. The Blacksmiths' forge and work-shop | r. The Bake-house | ee. Gardens | |
| f. The Lime-house | s. The Tannery | a. Grass plats | |
| g. The School house | t. The Gaol | ff. The spot where Lieut. Cuthbertson was buried, and where free persons are now interred. (Along the coast, beginning at the left) | |
| h. The New Penitentiary | u. The Guard-house | ll. The Slips where the vessels are built | |
| i. The Old Penitentiary | v. The Military Barracks | gg. A range of wharfs for landing timber, etc. | |
| j. The Lumber-yard | w. The Chaplain | kk. The principal wharf or jetty | |
| k. The Shoemakers' work-shop | x. The Acting Engineer | | |
| l. The Engineer's stores | y. The Surgeon | | |
| m. The Commissariat stores | z. The Commandant | | |

The dotted lines represent the lofty fences which have been erected, principally to shelter the settlement from the weather and high north-west winds which so generally prevail. *Van Diemen's Land Anniversary & Hobart Town Almanac, 1831.*
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Major bushranging outbreaks

Tom Roberts' painting, *Bailed up*, illustrates the romantic folkloric view of bushrangers prevalent by the end of the nineteenth century. For many, the bushranger had become the 'typical' Australian: a bushman, a horseman and anti-authoritarian.

ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



BUSHRANGING, the term coined in the early nineteenth century to describe rural crime, usually involved stock theft, robbery and murder, but was broad enough to include cannibalism. It became an integral part of Australia's settlement history. The first convict 'bolter' was at large a year after the arrival of the first fleet; in 1900, as the colonies finalised plans for federation, the Governor brothers were at large. No decade between the two dates was free of some activity inevitably described as 'bushranging'. Bushrangers had become part of the Australian consciousness by the late nineteenth century. They lived on in ballads sung by ordinary people, and formed the subject of paintings, novels and plays. During the twentieth century, films and television series have been made about them.

Predictably enough, most bushrangers were quickly forgotten, but a small number became Robin Hood figures in folklore. During their brief and violent criminal careers, they were able to rely on a local population for support and sympathy. For

their sympathisers, the bushrangers became symbols, vicariously expressing grievances held against authority. These are the men who are remembered as bushrangers today and they form the focus for this section.

Major periods

There were three major periods in bushranging history.

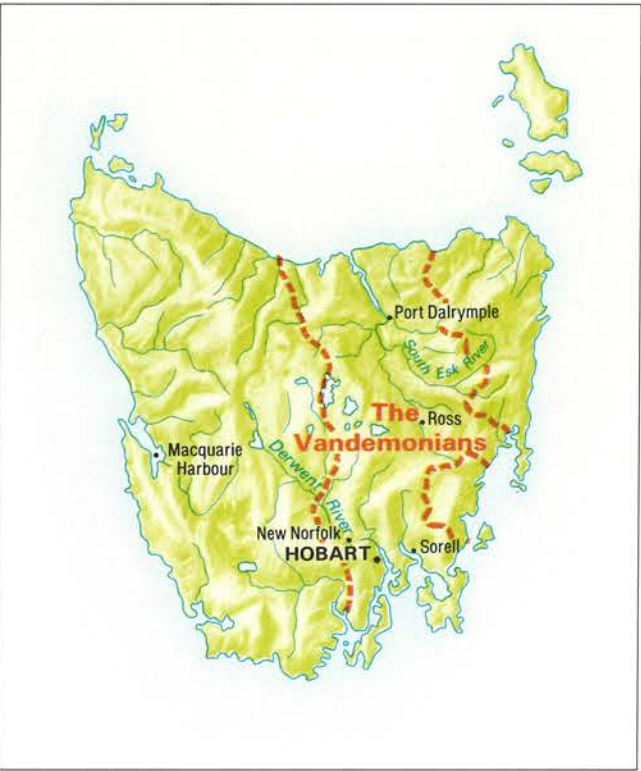
The first began about 1805 with the 'banditti' of Van Diemen's Land and ended with the capture of Martin Cash in 1843. Although Jack Donohoe, the original 'wild colonial boy', was at large during this time, the period was dominated by the bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land, the Vandemonians.

The second followed the major discoveries of gold in the 1850s and lasted until the early 1870s. The Lachlan men, led by Gardiner and Hall, the Clarkes, McPherson, Ward ('Captain Thunderbolt'), and Johns ('Moondyne Joe') operated during this period, a time described by apologists as 'the golden age of Australian bushranging'.

The third (1878–1900), foreshadowed by Harry Power, was dominated by the Kellys. Bushranging's coda came with the Governor brothers, whom some now describe as black resistance fighters.

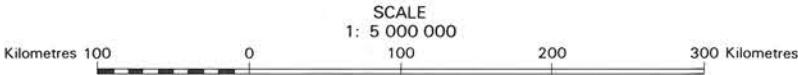
Major characteristics

Australian bushranging has four major features. The first is the role played by geographical factors. Outbreaks occurred where mountain ranges meet river valleys and plains, particularly to the west of the Great Divide's watershed. Areas of contrasting relief, they offered bushrangers protection and refuge and they were often also economically marginal areas for small landholders. This tended to



Major bushranging outbreaks

- 1810-1844: {
 - The Vandemonians
 - Jack Donohoe
- 1860-1870: {
 - Harry Power
 - Joseph Johns (Moondyne Joe)
 - The Lachlan Men (Ben Hall and Frank Gardiner)
 - Frederick Ward (Thunderbolt)
 - The Clarke Brothers
 - James McPherson
 - Dan Morgan
- 1878-1900: {
 - The Kelly Gang
 - The Governor Brothers



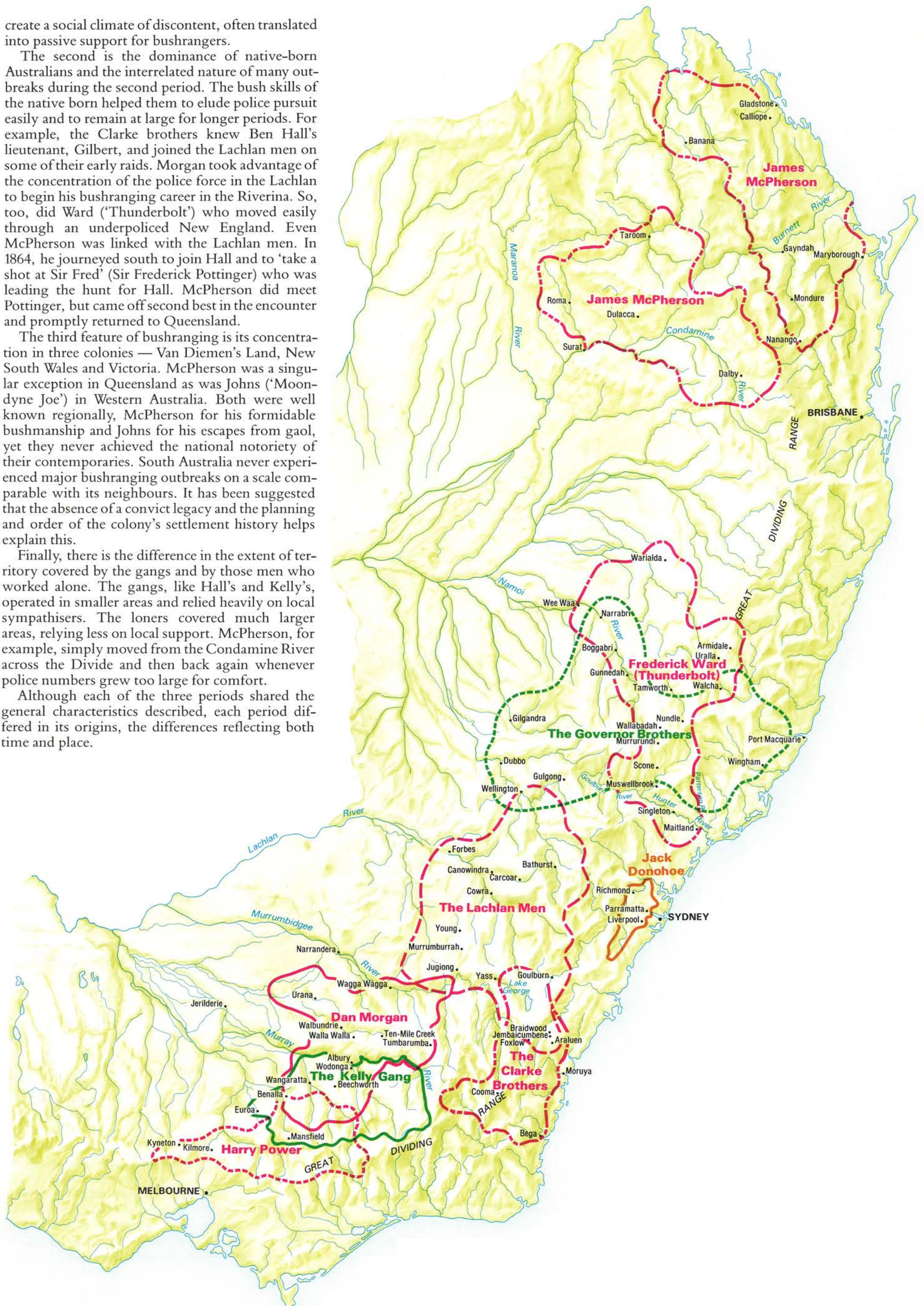
create a social climate of discontent, often translated into passive support for bushrangers.

The second is the dominance of native-born Australians and the interrelated nature of many outbreaks during the second period. The bush skills of the native born helped them to elude police pursuit easily and to remain at large for longer periods. For example, the Clarke brothers knew Ben Hall's lieutenant, Gilbert, and joined the Lachlan men on some of their early raids. Morgan took advantage of the concentration of the police force in the Lachlan to begin his bushranging career in the Riverina. So, too, did Ward ('Thunderbolt') who moved easily through an underpoliced New England. Even McPherson was linked with the Lachlan men. In 1864, he journeyed south to join Hall and to 'take a shot at Sir Fred' (Sir Frederick Pottinger) who was leading the hunt for Hall. McPherson did meet Pottinger, but came off second best in the encounter and promptly returned to Queensland.

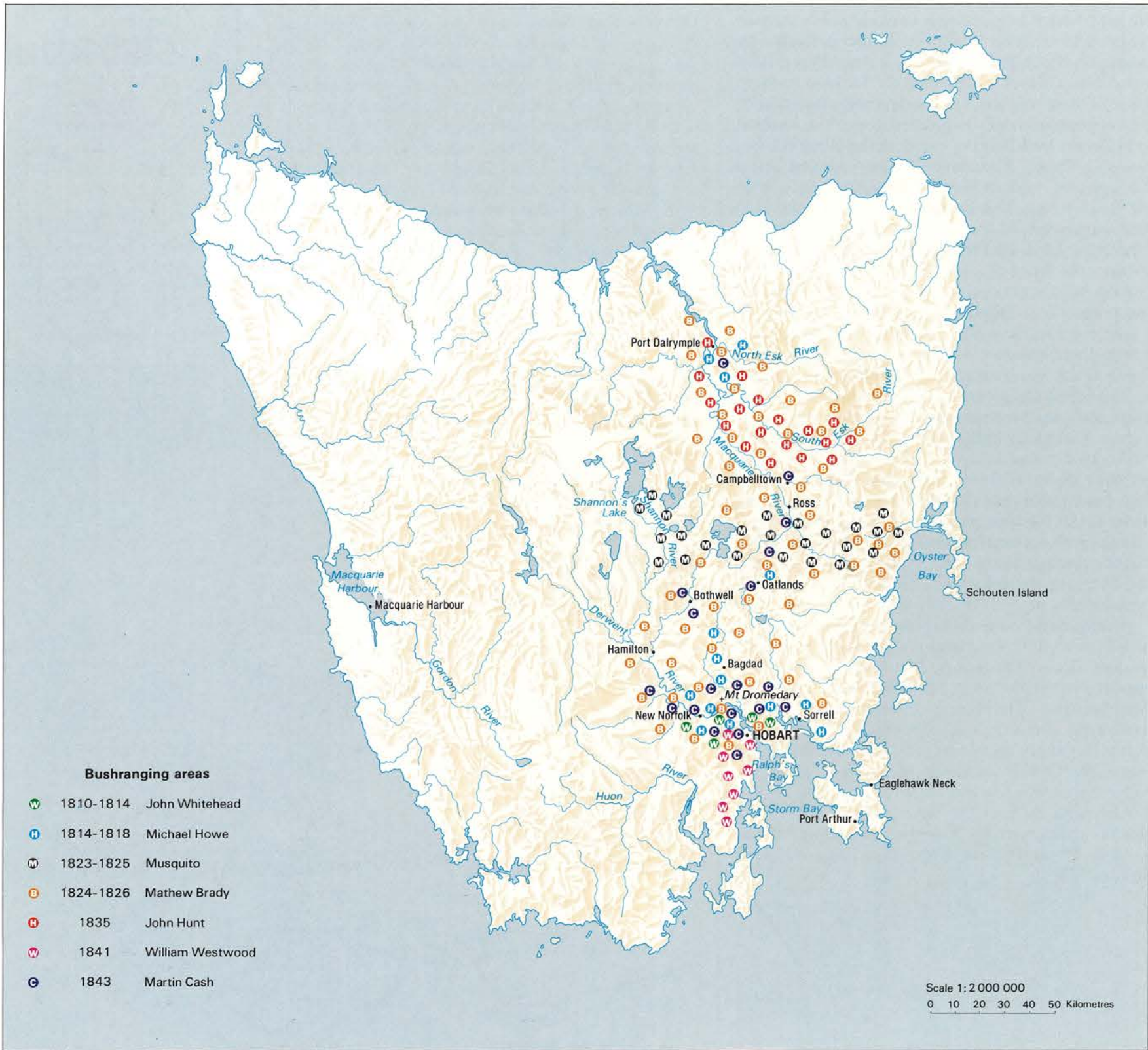
The third feature of bushranging is its concentration in three colonies — Van Diemen's Land, New South Wales and Victoria. McPherson was a singular exception in Queensland as was Johns ('Moon-dyne Joe') in Western Australia. Both were well known regionally, McPherson for his formidable bushmanship and Johns for his escapes from gaol, yet they never achieved the national notoriety of their contemporaries. South Australia never experienced major bushranging outbreaks on a scale comparable with its neighbours. It has been suggested that the absence of a convict legacy and the planning and order of the colony's settlement history helps explain this.

Finally, there is the difference in the extent of territory covered by the gangs and by those men who worked alone. The gangs, like Hall's and Kelly's, operated in smaller areas and relied heavily on local sympathisers. The loners covered much larger areas, relying less on local support. McPherson, for example, simply moved from the Condamine River across the Divide and then back again whenever police numbers grew too large for comfort.

Although each of the three periods shared the general characteristics described, each period differed in its origins, the differences reflecting both time and place.



The Vandemonians



One of the great monsters of Vandemonian bushranging folklore, Alexander Pearce is remembered for cannibalism. Twice Pearce ate fellow escapees. At his trial for murder in 1824 he claimed that a man's flesh tasted sweeter than pork or fish.

ARCHIVES OFFICE OF TASMANIA

BUSHRANGING began with and evolved from the convict system. Without exception, the Vandemonian bushrangers were convicts or ex-convicts. Many were 'bolters' from places of secondary punishment — Macquarie Harbour and Port Arthur. Bushranging outbreaks were violent. Murder was common. The life of the bushranger was 'nasty, brutish and short'.

Although bushrangers had been mentioned in official reports as early as 1805, the most serious outbreaks occurred between 1810 and 1830. Settlement was seriously impeded. Farms were abandoned and settlers sought refuge in the towns. The authorities introduced martial law, issued proclamations of outlawry, and offered rewards and amnesty to informers to cope with the problem.

Howe, 'governor of the woods'


The appearance of Whitehead's gang in 1810 marked the beginning of eight years of systematic brigandage by the 'banditti' of Van Diemen's Land. Concentrating on the lower Derwent, Whitehead's gang was powerful enough to raid small settlements such as New Norfolk. The military proved incapable of

protecting settlers and Governor Macquarie offered amnesty to all bushrangers who surrendered. The offer was ignored.

In 1814, Whitehead was killed and his place as gang leader was taken by Michael Howe, an ex-seaman. Howe wryly appreciated the significance of bushranging in the colony, referring to the lieutenant-governor as 'governor of the town' and taking 'governor of the woods' as his own title.

Howe expanded the gang's area of operations to include the district south of Port Dalrymple (Launceston). He created an effective 'bush telegraph' using convict servants and ex-convicts and had enough confidence in the protection it offered to carouse in Hobart. Even the introduction of martial law did little to hinder the gang's raids.

In 1817, Howe offered to surrender himself in return for a pardon, probably because his gang was steadily disintegrating. Several men had been captured, others who joined were government spies. More significantly, Howe had shot and wounded his Aboriginal wife, Mary, and she began to work for the authorities. Howe's offer was accepted, but he thought better of it and returned to the bush. In



REWARD!

FIFTY SOVEREIGNS, and a Conditional Pardon.

WHEREAS the three Convicts (Runaways from Port Arthur) **MARTIN CASH, GEORGE JONES, and LAWRENCE KAVENAGH**, whose descriptions are as under, stand charged with having committed divers Capital Felonies, and are now illegally at large: This is to give Notice, that I am authorised by His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor to offer a Reward of Fifty Sovereigns to any person or persons who shall apprehend or cause to be apprehended and lodged in safe custody either of the said Felons; and should this service be performed by a Convict, then, in addition to such pecuniary Reward, a **CONDITIONAL PARDON**.

19th January, 1843.

M. FORSTER,
Chief Police Magistrate.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ABOVE-NAMED CONVICTS.

Martin Cash, per Francis Freeling, tried at Launceston Q.S., 24th March 1840, 7 years, labourer, 6 feet, age 33, native place Wexford, complexion very ruddy, head small and round, hair curly and caroty, whiskers red small, forehead low, eyebrows red, eyes blue small, nose small, mouth large, chin small. Remarks—remarkably long feet, a very swift runner.

Lawrence Kavenagh, per Marian Watson, tried at Sydney, 12th April 1842, life, stonemason, 5 feet 10, age 30, complexion pale, head long large, hair brown to grey, whiskers brown, visage long, forehead high, eyebrows brown, eyes light grey, nose long and sharp, mouth and chin medium size, native place Wicklow. Remarks—A. D. above elbow joint left arm, 2 scars on palm of left hand, lost little finger on right hand.

George Jones, per Marian Watson, tried at Sydney, 14th April 1842, life, labourer, 5 feet 7, age 27, complexion ruddy fair, freckled, head long, hair brown, whiskers brown, visage long, forehead perpendicular, eyebrows brown, eyes blue, nose medium, mouth medium, chin pointed, native place Westminster. Remarks—H. W. anchor on right arm, breast hairy.

JAMES BARNARD, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, HOBART TOWN.



Martin Cash in later years.
BEATTIE COLLECTION,
NATIONAL LIBRARY

Broadsheet issued by the Tasmanian Police Department offering a reward for the capture of Martin Cash, 1843.
MITCHELL LIBRARY

1818, he was killed by one of the spies planted in the gang and his severed head was brought into Hobart as proof of his death.

Howe's death coincided with the capture of several smaller gangs also operating in Van Diemen's Land and it was believed that bushranging had come to an end. But the respite was brief.

Musquito, Aboriginal guerilla

In 1823, the Sydney-born Aborigine Musquito began a major new outbreak. Contact between the Europeans and Aborigines had become hostile during the 1820s and Musquito emerged as leader of the central and Oyster Bay clans. He led several attacks on homesteads in a broad arc from Oatlands to the Shannon River and Oyster Bay, mounting a skilful and bloody guerilla campaign. He also formed a brief alliance with Brady, which partly accounted for the latter's surprising ability to move quickly from one end of the island to the other. Musquito was captured and executed in 1825.

Brady, 'gentleman bushranger'

Mathew Brady's gang emerged in 1824. Brady, with twelve companions, escaped from Macquarie Harbour in a boat, sailing around the southwest coast to Hobart. His gang raided from one end of the colony to the other, the major targets being the homes of large landholders and magistrates. Like Howe, Brady established an effective and well-paid 'bush telegraph' system. Brady was confident enough to give warnings of his raids in advance, and when Governor Arthur offered a reward for his capture, Brady offered a reward of 20 gallons of rum for the governor's capture.

Brady was the first of the Vandemonian bushrangers to consciously espouse England's highwayman tradition. Women were treated with courtesy and violence was kept to a minimum. Any gang member who broke this rough code of chivalry was dismissed. In 1826, however, Brady's gang was split by internal quarrels. A newly organised police force was proving to be effective in handling the bushranging outbreaks and rewards led inevitably to betrayals. Brady was captured and executed in 1826. He passed into folklore as the 'gentleman bushranger'.

Cash, the highwayman

Bushranging declined in the late 1820s—Hunt and Westwood were never more than localised threats. By the time Martin Cash took to the roads rather than to the bush, he was an anachronism. He even



received quite favourable reports in the local press.

Cash began his brief career with the impossible. With two companions, Kavanagh and Jones, he escaped from Port Arthur across the closely guarded Eaglehawk Neck in 1842. 'Cash and Co.' selected Mount Dromedary, near Hobart, as their headquarters. Operating mainly in the south of the colony, Cash's robberies were executed with flair. Seeing himself as Dick Turpin's spiritual heir, he played the gallant with the ladies. Captured in 1843, he served a gaol sentence and after eleven years he was released and died a free man in 1877.

Howe, Brady and Cash became part of Australian folklore. The reality of their lives, particularly the violent episodes, soon blurred. The ballads sung about them formed the basis of the bushranger's legend: an underdog seeking justice, a man who never killed except in self-defence or for just revenge, a man chivalrous towards women, one who robbed from the rich to give to the poor. It was a legacy inherited by the Lachlan men in the 1860s who in turn added new elements to the legend.

Initially established as a place of secondary punishment for convicts in New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land soon established its own places of more severe punishment. The first was at Macquarie Harbour on the west coast. Inhospitable, and isolated by rugged country to the east, where escaped convicts had been known to starve to death, it earned a grim reputation. Port Arthur was established when Macquarie Harbour was closed down. It lay at the bottom of the peninsula, separated from the mainland by a narrow neck of land, heavily guarded, known as Eaglehawk Neck. To the north lies Maria Island, also used as a place of secondary punishment.
AUSTRALIAN LANDSAT STATION



Detail from a sketch entitled Mosquito and Devils Hole, by 'J.R.', 1868.
MITCHELL LIBRARY



Mathew Brady, sketched by Thomas Bock, c1823.
DIXSON LIBRARY, SYDNEY

Jack Donohoe

JACK DONOHOE was at large for two and half years between March 1828 and September 1830, when he was shot dead by police northwest of Campbelltown. Initially, Donohoe was part of a larger gang operating in the Bathurst district, but in early 1829 he switched his attention to the Nepean River district. Aided by Walmsley, Underwood and later, Webber, Donohoe remained at large in one of the better protected and more densely settled districts in the colony. Most of Donohoe's victims were wealthy men, although he and his associates also robbed poorer people. Attempts to capture Donohoe and his companions proved ineffective until the proclamation of the Bushranging Act in 1830. The act was aimed not just at capturing the bushrangers but also at prosecuting the people who had allowed them to remain at large for so long: members of the local community who harboured them. The map shows the complex nature of the local community's attitudes towards Donohoe and his companions.

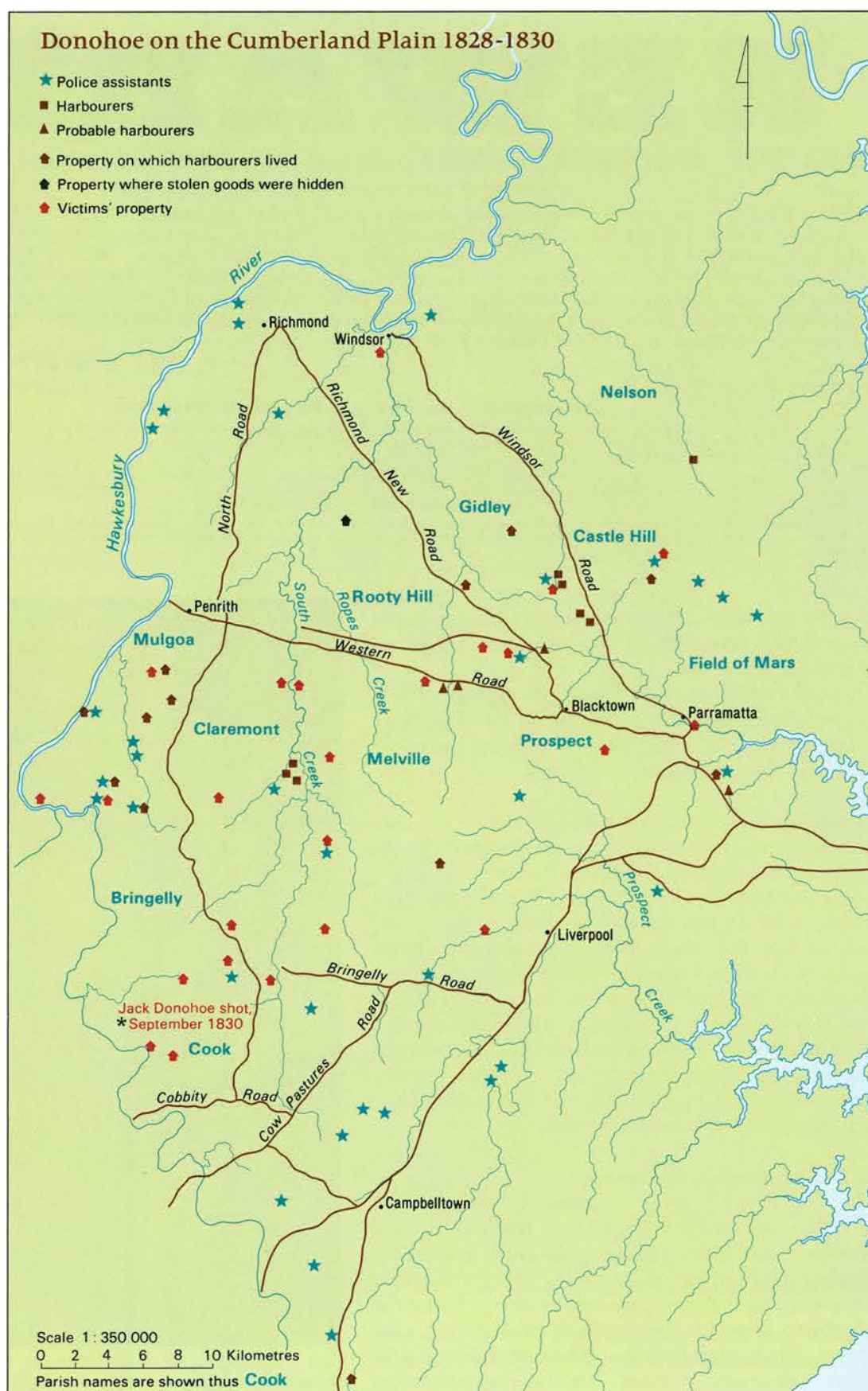
It is difficult to gauge the exact nature and degree of support Donohoe found in the Nepean district. No doubt there were some who felt some sympathy for him as an Irish convict on the run, because of their own convict and Irish backgrounds. Others believed that Donohoe was making a genuine protest against a harsh system of government. Many people in the district refused to inform the constables and magistrates when they saw Donohoe or his companions. But fear also played a part; when the major harbourers were put on trial after Donohoe's death, many of their neighbours refused to give evidence for fear of reprisals. No doubt that fear was also present when Donohoe was alive and at large.

But there were some members of the community prepared to put up resistance to Donohoe's activities. The map shows the places where people who assisted the police lived, some of them working as temporary constables appointed by magistrates.

Of actual harbourers a more accurate estimate can be made, for many families were identified and reported to the police, and some later stood trial. The map shows the family homes of the identified harbourers. The properties on which members of these families lived and worked were scattered throughout the district. Properties where stolen goods were hidden also indicate harbourers. Harbourers' families lived in two main areas: on South Creek and along the Windsor Road. On South Creek, the main families involved were the McGlynns, the Chalkers and the Hogans. On the Windsor Road, the O'Brien family were the principal harbourers.

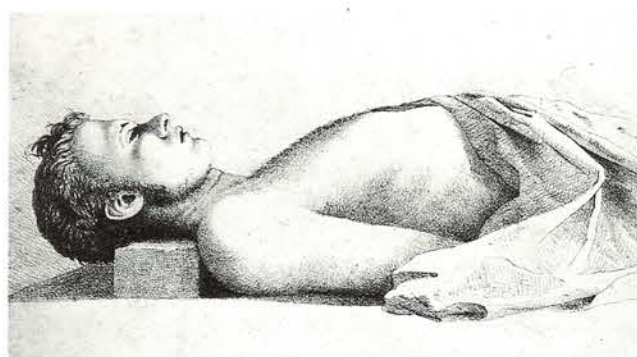
Many explanations have been given for these families acting as harbourers. An Irish background, a shared convict heritage, Catholicism and poverty have all been advanced as explanations. Yet the O'Briens were relatively large landholders by colonial standards, owning over 500 acres. The Chalkers were Protestants (as, indeed, were Webber and Walmsley, two of Donohoe's gang). All families shared a convict background with Donohoe and his companions, but this factor was not as significant in the 1820s as it was 40 years later, during the Lachlan outbreak by Ben Hall and his associates, when the ex-convict proportion of the population was considerably lower. More importantly, as the map shows, the police were able to obtain the assistance of local people. These included not only tradesmen and free immigrants but also a substantial number of ex-convict smallholders.

The link between the harbourers and the bushrangers was that they were friends before Donohoe and company took to bushranging. Webber, for example, had been an assigned servant in the district and knew the Chalkers and the McGlynns. Donohoe knew the O'Briens before 1828. The bushrangers



knew and trusted the families who became harbourers, rewarding them with a share of their plunder.

Donohoe became a part of Australian folklore soon after his death. A play was written about him, and his exploits were whitewashed and magnified in a series of ballads until he became Bold Jack Donohoe, the original Wild Colonial Boy. This ballad was sung by members of both Hall's and Kelly's gangs.



Donohoe became a hero more for his defiance of authority than for any concern he had for the poor. Even Sir Thomas Mitchell, the surveyor-general who drew this sketch of Donohoe after his death, paid tribute to the bushranger's 'indomitable defiance' choosing these lines from Byron as text: 'No matter, I have based my brow. Fair in death's face — before — and now.' MITCHELL LIBRARY

The Lachlan men

THE 1860s saw the emergence of the native-born bushrangers, the 'wild colonial boys'. To the Vandemonian legacy they added bushmanship and larrikin 'flashness'. And they saw themselves as Australians. The Lachlan men epitomised this new breed of bushranger.

Lachlan society

As early as the 1840s, the region along the Lachlan River had established a reputation for lawlessness. Emancipist squatters had established small runs on the Lachlan's back blocks, particularly to the east of the Wheogo Range. They formed a close and closed community, distinctly anti-authoritarian in nature. Stock theft was a major problem and the emancipist squatters were prominent in the trade.

Perhaps the Lachlan 'back blocks' would have remained no more than a troublesome backwater for the police if gold had not been discovered in the district. Law enforcement was one of the earliest casualties following the diggers' invasion of the district. The police were unable to control the anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat. Robberies rose in number and the rate of stock theft climbed sharply. A general belief that the police were incapable of apprehending rural criminals partly accounted for the number of local men who joined the Lachlan bushrangers.

Although general lawlessness prevailed in 1860-61, there was no major bushranging outbreak. A catalyst was needed, and Frank Gardiner, who had already served two gaol sentences for stock theft, provided it. Arriving at Lambing Flat in 1861, he soon began bailing up travellers on the road. Gardiner was joined by Johnny Peisley and men from the Wheogo district, and formed a gang drawn from the sons of the emancipist squatters. One outsider was added, the Canadian Johnny Gilbert.

Gardiner's gang carried out several robberies, the most famous being the robbery of the gold escort at Eugowra in June 1862. He then left for Queensland, where he was captured in 1864.

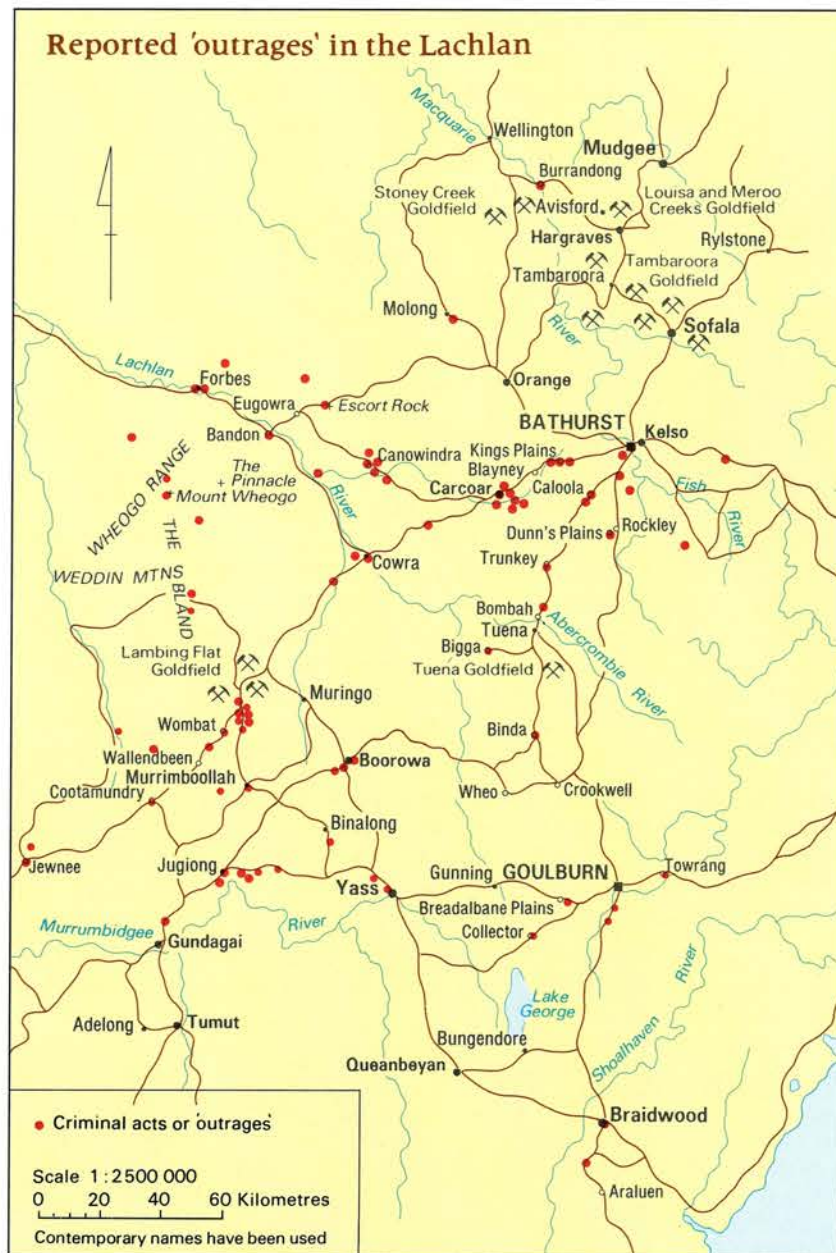
Ben Hall

Ben Hall had taken part in the Eugowra robbery. After Gardiner left for Queensland, Hall emerged as leader of the Lachlan men. Between February 1863 and April 1865, Hall's gang robbed ten mail coaches, bailed up twenty-one stores and homesteads, stole twenty-three racing horses, captured the village of Canowindra twice and killed two policemen.

Initially, Hall's activities were aimed at humiliating the police, particularly the leader of the police hunt, Sir Frederick Pottinger. From October 1863, however, Hall's raids became more serious. He began to attack the homesteads of large squatters and government officials. On two such raids in 1863 and 1864, two gang members were killed. Others surrendered as the gang was split by internal quarrelling. Hall recruited new men and continued his raids and robberies, which increased in both frequency and violence. Two policemen were murdered in separate incidents in 1864 and 1865.

On 8 April 1865, the New South Wales government passed the Felons Apprehension Act which offered a reward of £1000 for each gang member, dead or alive, and provided for lengthy gaol sentences for any person assisting the gang. It proved effective. On 5 May, Hall was shot by troopers acting on information supplied by one of Hall's friends. Gilbert died in similar circumstances eight days later. The first ballad about Hall was heard in the streets of Forbes a week after Gilbert's death.

The Lachlan outbreak was supported by, and sprang from, a specific group, the emancipist squat-



Ben Hall is regarded as one of few who could claim with some truth that police harassment drove him to bushranging. Until 1862, Hall had taken no part in the outbreak of bushranging in the district, but later he was arrested twice and acquitted of the charges on both occasions. Pottinger, the leader of the police hunt for the Lachlan bushrangers, ordered Hall's house to be burned to the ground.

To Hall, it seemed that there was no place for neutrality in the conflict between the police and the Lachlan bushrangers. He joined Gardiner's gang and took part in the Eugowra gold escort robbery.

FORBES HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ters. The police were only able to name the core group of bushrangers; clearly many other local men had ridden with Hall at various times. Pottinger had argued that the most effective way of coping with the outbreak was to remove the emancipist squatters from the region. An analysis of Hall's victims is also revealing: those robbed were people who had arrived in the region with the gold rush, the large squatters, or storekeepers.

The Kelly outbreak

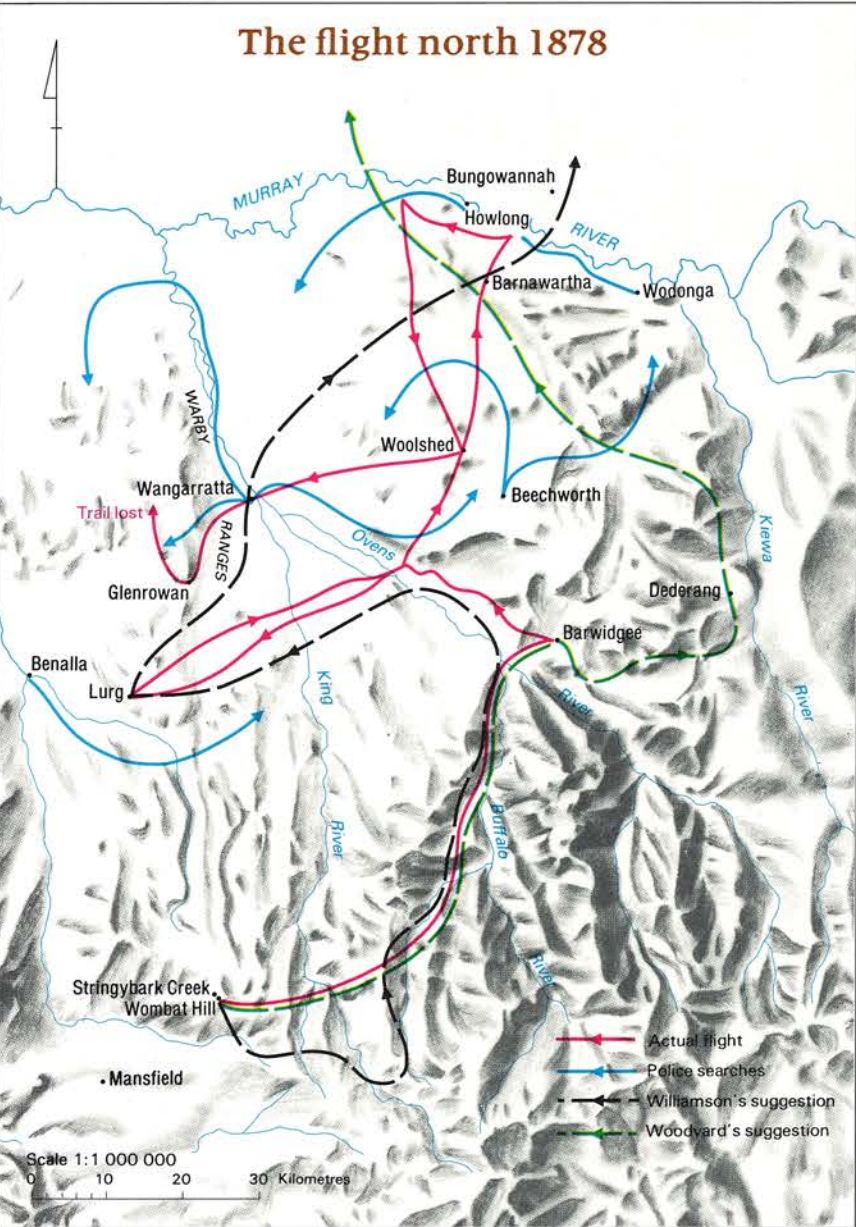
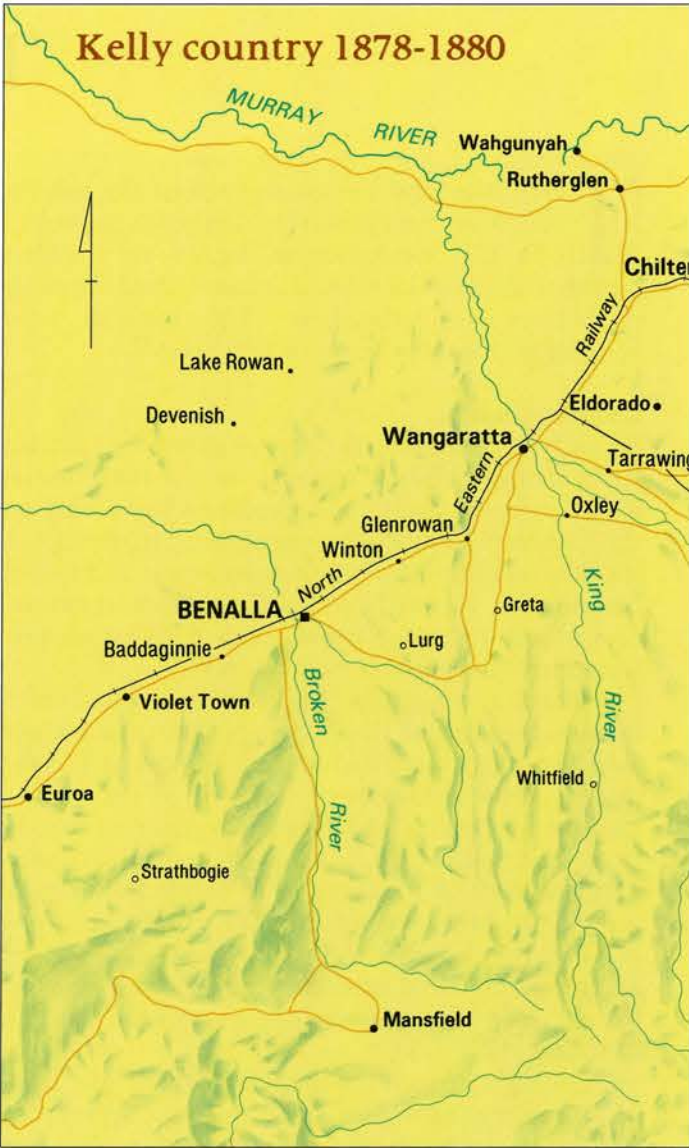


Ned Kelly was the most famous (or notorious) of Australia's bushrangers. He certainly received substantial press coverage. He led a gang of four selectors' sons and remained at large for twenty months. This portrait was taken the day before his execution. VICTORIA POLICE MUSEUM

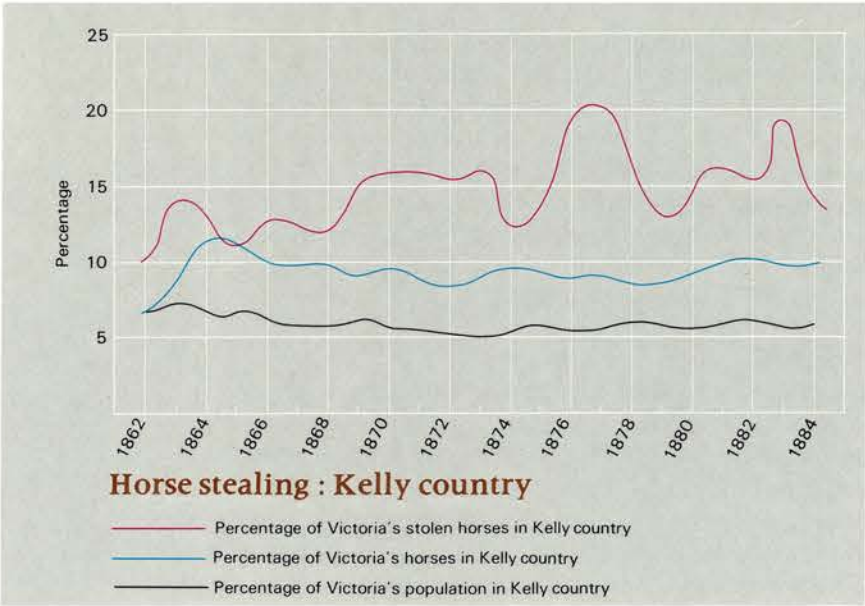
THE KELLY OUTBREAK remains the classic example of Australian bushranging. It was so firmly identified with northeastern Victoria that the region was known as Kelly Country. The combination of river valleys, mountain ranges and open plains provided the Kelly brothers with ideal conditions for eluding police pursuit. Their father had been a convict and they were native born. Like the Lachlan men, they were horsemen, bushmen and flash. Ned Kelly consciously lived up to a bushranger tradition, and the Kelly gang attracted local sympathy and support.

Beginning of the outbreak

The outbreak began in April 1878 with Constable Fitzpatrick's claim that the Kelly family had tried to murder him. The local authorities were hardly surprised. The Kelly clan had acquired an unenviable criminal reputation. The rate of stock theft in the region was high and the clan was clearly involved. It had only been a matter of time, the police argued, before one of them came to murder. Mrs Kelly was arrested at her home in Lurg, east of Benalla. She denied Fitzpatrick's allegations. Her sons, Ned and Dan, were in hiding. She was found guilty of attempted murder and sentenced to three years at hard labour. The Kelly brothers offered to surrender themselves if their mother's sentence was suspended. The offer was refused. Knowing that the Kellys had sought refuge in the mountains north of Mansfield, the police planned to send out search parties.

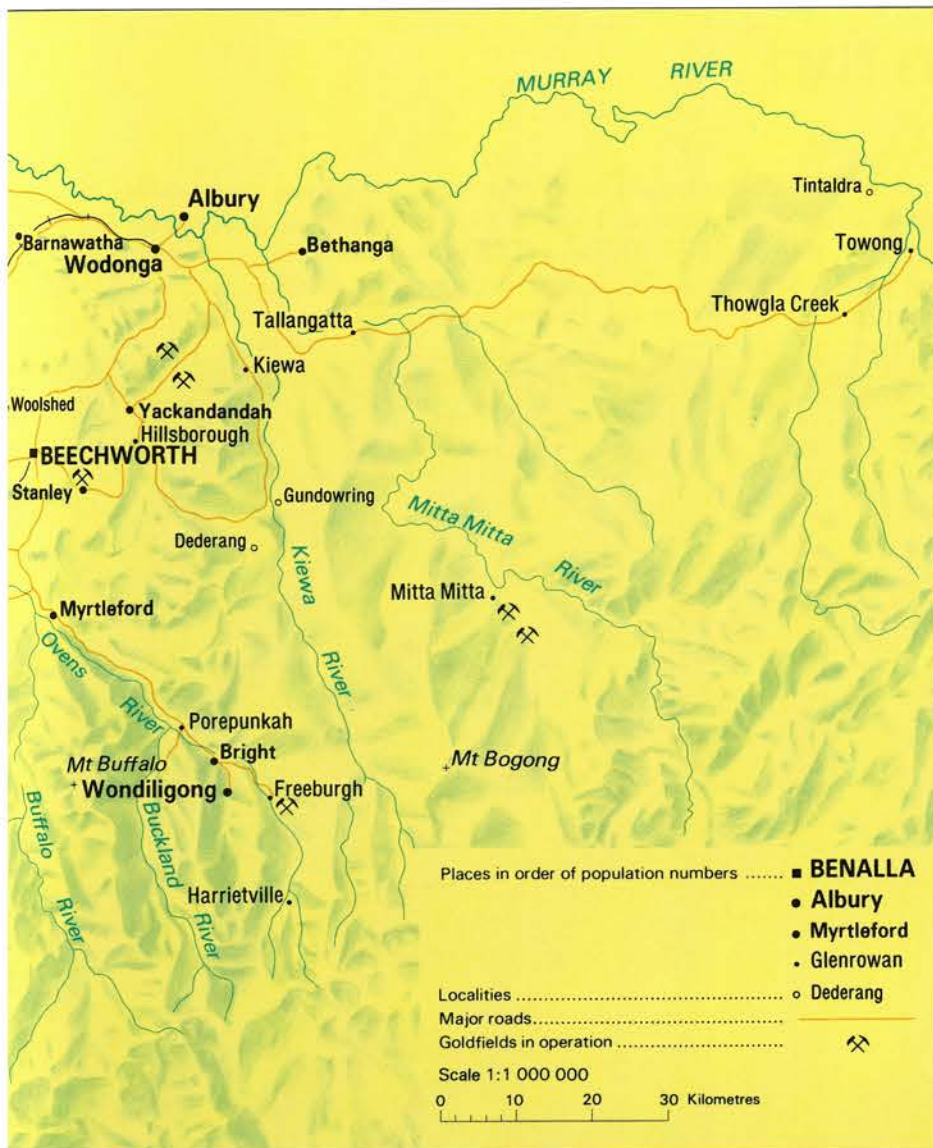


After Stringybark Creek, the police asked two Kelly associates in Pentridge gaol for possible routes the gang might take. They also sent out search parties from Benalla, Wangaratta, Beechworth and Wodonga. Both tactics failed to trap the Kellys.

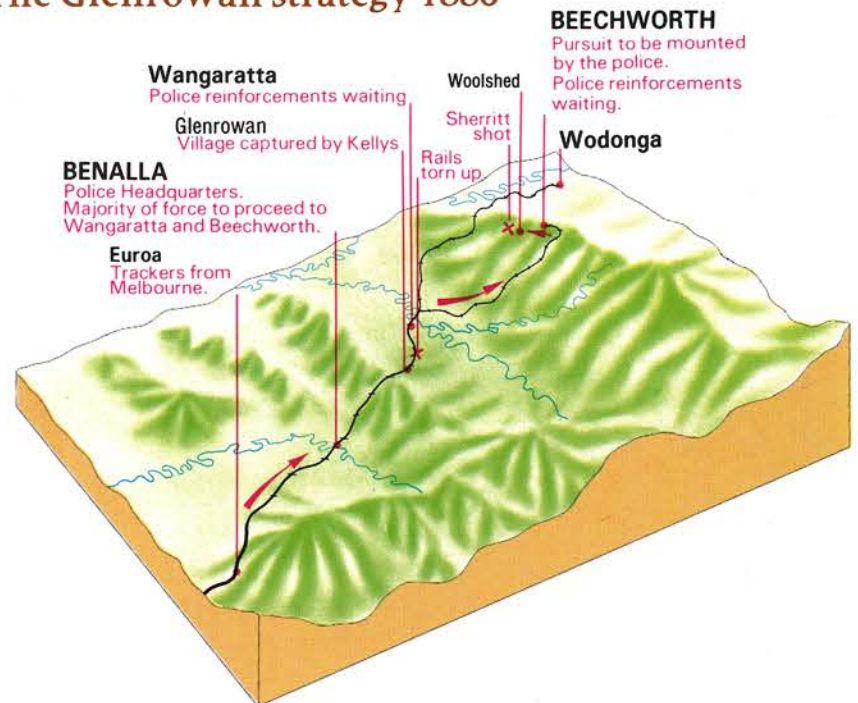


Stringybark Creek and police pursuit

In October 1878, two heavily armed police parties set out, one moving north from Mansfield, the other south from Greta. At Stringybark Creek, the Kellys and two friends bailed up the Mansfield party. In the following gun battle three policemen died. The Kellys fled north towards New South Wales. A flooded Murray River turned them back. The brothers and their two companions, Joe Byrne and Steve Hart, were declared outlaws and a reward of £2000 was offered for their capture. It was a substantial sum. A police sergeant earned £150 a year. Police reinforcements were rushed to the region and search parties were sent out, but the Kelly gang easily eluded them. Superintendent Nicolson, in charge of the pursuit, found that the police received little support in the countryside. The local people did not see Stringybark Creek as a premeditated, murderous attack. They saw it as retribution for police harassment of the Kelly family. Nicolson realised it would be a long hunt. Sympathy for the Kellys was a major worry for the police during the outbreak. It was widespread, cutting across ethnic, racial and religious barriers. A minority, the prominent sympathisers, formed the gang's telegraph and decoyed police search parties. The majority supplied food and did not report the gang's movements. Sympathy



The Glenrowan strategy 1880



Police claims that Kelly Country (left) was a major stock theft area were accurate. As the graph opposite shows, the region's share of Victoria's horse thefts was persistently higher than its share of either the colony's population or its horses. Cattle theft followed a similar pattern.

Above. In 1880, Ned Kelly reversed the roles of the gang and the police: the gang would become the hunters. With a police party billeted in his hut, Aaron Sherritt was believed to be a traitor. He would be shot. His murder would draw the majority of the police north from headquarters in Benalla to Beechworth, collecting reinforcements at Wangaratta, to begin the pursuit. They would travel by rail. En route, the train would be derailed at Glenrowan. Protected by armour, the gang would be a match for any survivors. Then, joined by sympathisers, Kelly planned to raid Benalla's banks and, some suggest, declare a republic in northeastern Victoria. The plan failed.



Left. Superintendent Hare was charming, self-confident and ambitious. Twice he headed the Kelly hunt, primarily because of his friendship with the Chief Commissioner of Police. The Royal Commission found him to be incompetent and his evidence unreliable. VICTORIA POLICE MUSEUM

Below. Mrs Kelly was arrested here in April 1878. The house is typical of selectors' homes in the region. Ned's half-brother, Jack King, stands on the verandah. VICTORIA POLICE MUSEUM

came from the selectors in the region. The Kelly gang itself was made up of selectors' sons.

Robbery at Euroa and Jerilderie

The Kellys emerged from hiding in December and, in a masterly display of strategy, robbed the National Bank at Euroa. The effect of the robbery was dramatic. The reward rose to £4000. Further reinforcements arrived in the region. Nicolson was replaced by the Chief Commissioner of Police, Standish, and Superintendent Hare.

To curtail the movements of the gang, Standish arrested the prominent sympathisers. The Kellys illustrated the futility of such a policy by travelling 100 kilometres into New South Wales and robbing a bank in Jerilderie in February 1879. Ned Kelly left a letter to be published in the local paper setting out his side of the story. The reward doubled to £8000.

Black trackers were brought from Queensland and spies were recruited to trap the gang. Neither met with much success. Hare and Standish returned command of the hunt to Nicolson.

In mid-1880, the hunt changed significantly. Spies reported that a new raid was imminent and that the Kellys were making armour from ploughshares. Sympathisers were reportedly prepared to join the gang in the new raid. This was the genesis of Kelly's Glenrowan strategy outlined in the map above.

Capture and execution

At first the plan seemed to work well. Aaron Sherritt, believed to be a police spy, was shot on 26 June and Glenrowan was captured. But the police party would not leave Sherritt's hut until Sunday 27 June. The news of Sherritt's murder did not reach police headquarters until mid afternoon. Hare, who had replaced Nicolson for a second time, began to organise a police party to travel north to begin pursuit.

As the gang waited for the police train on Sunday, they bailed up the local residents. By nightfall, there were 62 prisoners in the Glenrowan Inn. They accepted their lot with little resentment. The hotel was later described as 'a house of sport'. As the night wore on, Ned Kelly allowed prisoners to go home. One of them, Curnow, stopped the police train and warned the police. The hotel was quickly surrounded.

The siege of the hotel lasted all day Monday. Police bullets killed Joe Byrne and wounded three prisoners. Ned Kelly was captured in the early morning. In the afternoon, the hotel was burnt to the ground. The charred remains of Dan Kelly and Steve Hart were turned over to relatives for burial.



Ned Kelly was hanged on 11 November 1880, despite an active campaign for a reprieve. The oldest member of the gang, he was 25 when he died. A Royal Commission into the police force followed. The leading figures in the hunt were found to be incompetent and were demoted or retired. With its findings, the last of the major bushranging outbreaks came to a close. Australia had, arguably, found its first national hero.

Larrikin turf

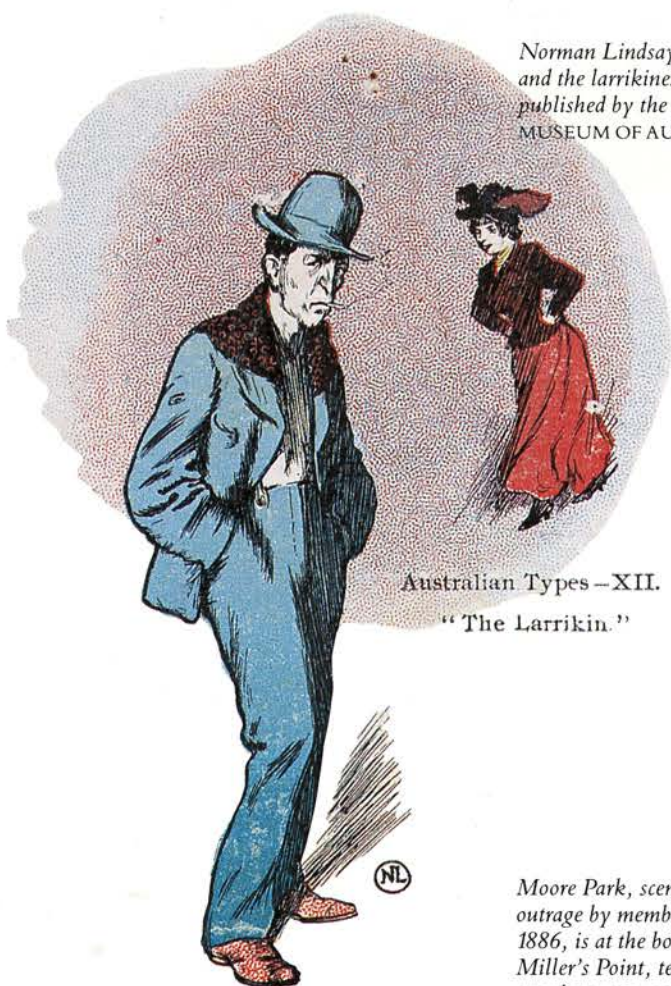
MAGISTRATES, SCHOOLTEACHERS, clergymen and other moralists were troubled from about 1870 by the appearance of *larrikins*. As E. E. Morris observed in his *Austral English* (London 1898), the word had 'various shades of meaning between a playful youngster and a blackguardly rough'. Versions of its origin varied accordingly, from one about the Irish policeman in Melbourne charging a youth with *a-larr-akin* (larking) in the streets, to derivations from *leary kin* (knowing youngster) in thieves' English as heard by warders, and the French *larron* for thief, both of which connected the larrikin not with mere mischief but with robbery. The problem of larrikinism was among the most widely debated issues in Australian society between 1870 and 1914. The discussion was inconclusive both because one word was used to cover a wide variety of phenomena and because the participants had different notions of how the young ought to behave. Similarly confused debate was going on wherever people in the European world contemplated what went on in the streets of a newly urban civilization and worried in unfamiliar ways about the young. London had its roughests and street arabs and hooligans; American cities had hoodlums. The larrikin was male, but the word *larrikinness*, for his female companion, also had some currency. The larrikin was primarily urban, but some observers noted a rural variant, the bush larrikin. This term was applied for example to a group of Ned Kelly's sympathisers known to police as the Greta mob, young men who dressed flashily and rode together from pub to pub through the towns and townships of northeastern Victoria, drinking and larking and fighting and planning to steal their neighbours' horses. 'Bush "larrikins"', wrote a clergyman in 1889, 'have gone on to be bushrangers.' According to one view, gangs of larrikins in cities actually used rural models, trying to reproduce the exploits of the bushrangers.

By most accounts larrikins were young workers, commonly factory workers. Reports of their misbehaviour were usually of episodes that occurred outside working hours: on Sundays, on public holidays, at night. Unless he made money by crime, the larrikin must have earned enough to afford the tobacco that he smoked in his pipe or chewed and spat, the drinks at the street-corner hotel outside which he lounged, and his 'flash' clothes.

By 1890 all the largest cities had bands of young men known to themselves and others as larrikin *pushes*. Mainly in Melbourne and Sydney, but also in Adelaide, Brisbane and elsewhere, groups based on particular city or inner suburban streets or districts assembled to roam, menace and maraud. Pushes took names that were territorial or intimidating or both: in Sydney the Miller's Point Push, the Blue's Point Mob, the Forty Thieves, the Bantry Bay Devils; in Melbourne the Eastern Road Push, the Flying Angels, the Fitzroy Murderers. In 1886 members of Sydney's Waterloo Push were convicted of criminally assaulting a young woman near 'Mount Rennie', a hill in Moore Park; nine youths were sentenced to death, of whom four (two aged 17, two 19) were hanged. In 1893 eight members of the Miller's Point Push were acquitted of murdering a seaman in the Rocks. Their ages ranged from 17 to 27; three were labourers, two printers' apprentices, one was a driver, one a steward, one a seaman.

Like the bushranger gang, the larrikin push was portrayed more mellowly by later observers than by many contemporaries. Clarence James Dennis, born in 1876, brought up by aunts as a little gentleman, said in adult life that as a small boy he had 'a devout and urgent desire to become a larrikin', believing that 'the thimble-heeled, bell-bottomed, slouch-hatted expectorating blades who infested the streets in those days possessed all the manly virtues worth having, and every attribute of chivalry, romance, and high adventure.' In 1913, when, for reasons still disputed, the pushes were disappearing into history, C. J. Dennis created his lovable larrikin, the Sentimental Bloke.

Norman Lindsay's drawing of the larrikin and the larrikinness, from 1907. Postcard published by the Bulletin.
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Australian Types - XII.

"The Larrikin."

Moore Park, scene of the 'Mount Rennie' outrage by members of the Waterloo Push in 1886, is at the bottom right of this map; Miller's Point, territory of the push whose members were acquitted of murder in 1893, is at the top left. Tourist's Handbook of Australia, 1905.

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