Section IV

Making a Living

'Jean Ezzy, Cambridge Street [requests] a beer licence Being Situated in a populous part of the town Many Laybouring People Destrous of getting Beer have requested me to make this Application...'
- Petition of Jean Ezzy,
  July 9 1820

'They [the overseers] must be strictly enjoined to exert themselves and shew an example of Industry and Exertion to their Men, not walking about with their hands in the Pockets in a State of Intoxication according to the Old School...'
- Francis Greenway to Major Druitt
  14 August 1819, on the improvement of the Government work gangs.

'Your petitioner is 72 years of age and quite enfeebled with an Obstinate Asthma...although [he] cannot procure a Livelihood by Labour, he is not desirous of spending the remainder of his days in Idleness But would be very willing to perform any work...that his age and strength would permit.'
- Petition of Timothy Ryan,
  7 August 1815.
‘Many Laybouring People’

When Rockswoman Jean Ezzy applied for a beer licence in 1820 for her Cambridge Street house, she wrote that she lived in ‘a populous part of the town’ where there were ‘Many Laybouring People Desirous of getting Beer’. It was they who had ‘requested me to make this application’.¹ Labouring people had always made up a large proportion of the Rocks’ population: but they were by no means an easily defined group. They included assigned convicts working for masters, free servant labourers, convicts and ex-convicts who lived independently and went to work each day for government or private individuals, or both. Some were married and had children, others, who were single, lodged in or near hotels or in skillions. But some who described themselves as labourers, and hence unskilled, owned houses and sometimes land, had assigned servants and lived steadily in one place. Still others describe themselves as ‘labouring plasterer’ or ‘labouring shoemaker’ or ‘itinerant taylor’. They had skills, but no large concerns or property; they worked in a small way for wages or small jobs here and there, rented small houses and/or moved about to where there was work.

One of the most startling responses emerging from the analysis of the 1822/23 Constables’ Notebooks in comparison with the 1828 census is that over half were not even listed in 1828. In five to six years, over 600 people had either died, left the colony, or for some reason failed to register or be registered in the Census (Table 10). (The accuracy of the Census itself as a indicator of the colony’s population therefore also deserves further investigation). These ‘hidden’ or ‘lost’ people also included women who married or remarried and changed their

¹ Jean (or Jane) Ezzy, Petition for a beer licence, 9 July 1820, Wentworth Family Papers, ML A764 p171. A free arrival with a convict husband, Ezzy had been granted land at Mulgrave Place in 1796. By 1820 she was married and aged about 50. She died just over a year later. See Mutch Index, ML; Ryan, Land Grants 1788-1809, p100; Bigge, Report, Appendix, ‘A Return of the Number and Names of Persons (above 21 years of age) residing and settled upon property of their own within the First and Second Districts of the Town of Sydney’, 1819, ML A2131; see also Perrott’s account of her career in A Tolerable Good Success, p85.
names, so becoming ‘invisible’, and their children, if they took the name of a stepfather. The largest proportion of those who vanished were the assigned convicts - 63% of the 162 mostly male assigned convicts were not traceable. As Table 10 shows, just over half the convicts living independently, the Ticket of Leavers, those who were free by servitude, and even those who had come free were also untraced. Only among the young native born, and the old people holding Conditional or Absolute Pardons, did the proportion of those traceable reach over half the total.²

These numbers suggest a community and a colony where mobility was at least as much the norm as staying in one place, especially for the recently arrived and those with no property or family. Many were accustomed to this, though, as mobility among English and Irish people in the search for work and betterment was also commonplace.³ In Sydney the sea presented the constant possibility of departure, or escape, while the countryside could with equal ease swallow and hide people. Men, women, families moved around constantly to get work, or to escape detection, pulled by the desire to try something else, driven by family crisis, tragedy or breakdown, or by the assignment system, their movements leaving only the barest imprint on written records. It is important to see the fixed and settled Rocks individuals, families and households, those we know something about, against this backdrop of a vast mass of obscure, shifting people who seem to have made up such a large proportion of the Rocks population. When viewed through official documents, the colony seems so fixed and rule-bound, but from the people’s perspective it appears far more fluid and shifting, a place of movement, not stasis. The moving mass of people explains that ongoing dialogue

² These and the following figures are drawn from Karskens, Analysis of the District Constables’ Notebooks.

³ Laslett, The world we have lost; and Laslett and John Harrison, ‘Clayworth and Cogenhoe’ in H. E. Bell and R. L. Ollard (eds), Historical Essays Presented to David Ogg, London, 1963 pp157-184.
of order and disorder, the rationale for the constantly repeated orders and encouragements to settle, fix, list, number, and count.

What, then, became of those we can 'see'? Here is paradoxical evidence of movement around stasis. Nearly sixty percent of Rocks people who were traceable were still living on the Rocks in 1828, and nearly forty percent were at the same address. Of the remainder, around 20% were living in other parts of Sydney, and 15.6% had moved to country towns, villages and areas. Again, the patterns are related to civil status, gender and age: as Table 11 shows, those who were convicts, whether assigned or independent, were much more likely to have moved away than those who were native born or held pardons. With regard to the large group of those free by servitude, women were much more likely to have remained on the Rocks than men. Children were most stable in their place of living: nearly 70% were still on the Rocks in 1828. Similarly, 70% of same-name families remained on the Rocks. These are the people among whom there are clear signs of stability and continuity, as we have seen in the discussion of marriage and family life. Conversely, among those who can be counted, it seems that those who were recently arrived, still under sentence, in their 20s and 30s, without families, and possibly male, were most likely to have been unable to remain on the Rocks. It is probable that they shared these characteristics with their 'vanished' counterparts.

Invisible people are obviously a problem for the historian. Who can fathom the reasons for success or failure, or the motivations, let alone the personal experience or outlooks of people who are scarcely recorded? These following pages contain a few reassembled parts of life stories, sketchy glimpses which reveal what we can and cannot know directly about the drifting, labouring poor. To explore the cultural dimension, it is necessary to reconstruct the attitudes, values and habits of working people of the Rocks from what local evidence is available, and to draw also from the wider context of historical interpretations of convict workers generally.
The young convict cooper Joseph Armstrong arrived in 1818 and lodged with publican Mark Byfield in 1822. He had a coopering business in Hunter Street and a ticket of leave in 1824, but by 1828 was again a government servant plying his trade at Bathurst. Irishwomen Bridget Lever was a lodger of sorts at Mary Redmond’s ‘house of ill-fame’ in 1822 on the Rocks. She was involved in the alleged murder of Happy Filler in that year, and died herself at the hospital at only 26 in 1826. Michael Bennet lodged with five others like himself in Cumberland Street in 1822; he had a ticket of leave and then his certificate, was acquitted of a charge of robbing Edward Redmond, but was nevertheless at Moreton Bay in 1828. Another Irishwoman Ellen Dinan (Lord Wellington 1819) lived in Gloucester with her little boy Jacob Kinchela, who was born a year after she arrived at the age of 21. His father may have been labourer and one-time constable Thomas Kinchela, who was often in court on charges of assault and robbery. By 1826 she too was living at Mary Redmond’s house, and in that year was arrested for stealing a watch from the ‘quack-doctor’ Walter Boston in Kent Street, who saw to the medical needs of Mary Redmond’s household. She was acquitted but sent to the Female Factory for three months for being ‘a notorious prostitute’. By 1828 she was working as a housekeeper to William Myers at Evan (her child seems to have died) but later that year she returned to the Rocks to marry Patrick Fanning, probably a labourer, who had also arrived in 1819 and had lived on and around the Rocks at least since 1822.4

Robert Noble was the slaughterman who showed such compassion to old John Rogers. He arrived on the Marquis Wellington in 1815, and his wife Ann followed him on the Northampton in the same year. They may have acquired a small house at 97 Cumberland Street from which he would have walked to work at the slaughterhouse on the shores of Cockle Bay. His career was chequered: a Ticket of Leave granted in 1825 was cancelled in

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4 District Constables’ Notebooks; Census, 1828. Re Joseph Armstrong, SG 4 September 1823; 29 July 1824. Re Bridget Lever (or Liver), see inquest on Happy Filler and St Mary’s Register. Re Michael Bennet, SG 23 October 1823, 17 June 1824. Re Ellen Dinan, see Robinson, Women of Botany Bay, p318; SG 18 January 1826, St Mary’s Registers, entry for 29 September 1828.
in the same year. He worked as a Parramatta constable for a while, then the couple, still childless, moved to Liverpool. James MacDonald arrived on the Admiral Gambier in 1809 and was assigned to Ann Chapman to assist her in running her Passage Boat service. He earned a Ticket of Leave and then worked at Dixon’s steam engine, before going to Bringelly. He too became a Parramatta constable in 1822, but was dismissed for drunkenness the same year. By 1828 he was 45, a boatman at Parramatta, single with no family. Peter Macpherson, a married or partnered labourer, seems to have rented a Rocks house from Andrew Coss. He lost his infant daughter in a well there in 1815 and then vanished, but by 1828 was an inmate of Hyde Park Barracks. The convict Irishwoman Martha Dunne (Admiral Charles 1813) was ‘wife to tinplate worker William Collins in Cumberland Street in 1823, but the relationship faltered, and she was convicted of a crime and transported. By 1828 he was married to someone else and she was at Port Macquarie. Second-fleeter Richard Cole led a quiet, steady life, but did not manage to rejoin his family or start a new one. He was a well-behaved plasterer and bricklayer who hired himself out to various masters, moving where work was offering, first at Parramatta, later, at 70, bricklaying for Chief Constable William Thorn in Cambridge Street. His plea for a pardon ‘to enjoy the comforts once more of a long lost Wife and three Children’ was apparently not granted and he died at the hospital in 1828.5

Others, unskilled, were itinerant, like old David Douglass stooping and staggering around the town with his basket of fruit and cakes by day, lodging in Ann Leighton’s stable at night. Another was the ‘jobbing carrier’ whose only abode was his horse and cart, much to the

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5 Re Robert Noble see inquest on John Rogers, 17 September 1817, CSC R6021 4/1819 p605; re James MacDonald, see his petitions for a Ticket of Leave 1818, and for mitigation of sentence 1820 CSC F3187 4/1855 p171 and F3203 4/1861 p35 and other details from CSC Index. Re Peter MacPherson see SG 7 January 1815, 16 December 1826, Census 1828. Re Martha Dunne, District Constables’ Notebooks and Census 1828; Re Richard Cole see entry in Flynn, Second Fleet.
disappointment and disgust of a woman he tried to enlist as ‘housekeeper’ in 1804. Still others were caught in a downward spiral of unemployment, homelessness and disease. Poor James Haslem had been a baker, then a labourer, and by 1819 ‘was in the habit of lying out in the streets’. Eventually he asked the bakers Thomas Wheeler and Sophia Langford to be allowed to sleep in their George Street bakehouse. He sometimes shared space on the oven with his long-time friend William Thompson, who said that in Haslem’s final week he had severe dysentery and was ‘a great Drunkard’. Thompson came to his friend’s aid when he vomited ‘for about two hours’, then lay down beside him to sleep. When he woke up in the night he found Haslem dead in the darkness.⁶

These stories are presented as a mosaic, as myriad crisscrossing voices, paths, journeys, lives which suggest different interpretations from each perspective, each standpoint. Hence they defy easy generalisation, although it may be observed that such people were likely to have considered themselves subject to the uncertainties, the vagaries of fortune. They were correspondingly unlikely to have felt that they had a great range of moral options from which to choose, to direct their lives. Their lives sketch out not logical, linear progress of cause and effect, nor tales of happiness after perseverance through adversity, but rather tangled webs of allegiance and suspicion, deep compassion and callous indifference, the powerful pull of desire for things, or drink, or escape. Their lives were often shadowed by tragedy, and demonstrate the fragility of relationships, and material, physical and mental well-being. Some could employ the mechanics of deference with success, others were disappointed. Many were granted the ‘indulgences’ of the time, but obviously these had little effect on their behaviour. There was often no fixed, logical correlation between ‘behaviour’ and ‘indulgence’ in the first place; the impression is more of hit-or-miss randomness. What may be observed, too, is the way many turned to a various types of work, involving many different work-relationships -

⁶ Re David Douglass see inquest, 14 October 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p183; re the carrier, see SG 15 July 1804. Inquest on James Haslem, 4 October 1819, CSC R6021 4/1819 p287-9.
independent trades-person, wage-earner, servant, the partially employed, the itinerant hawker, the prostitute, the married woman. Their outlooks on making a living were as fluid and unfixed as their spatial status.

At the same time, the Rocks was a more long-term home to labouring people who had built a house on land held by permissive occupancy. Joseph Prosser, a 'poor labouring inhabitant', apparently a plasterer, and his wife lived there at least between 1804 and 1822, when the constable listed them in Cumberland Street. William Wakeman and Mary Lettamore, who married in 1811, lived in Cambridge Street with their two children. He was among the Rocks people granted a spirits licence in 1810, but between 1815 and 1818 he was overseer at the hospital from six in the morning to nine at night. His duties were 'to look after the patients, keep them clean, to muster them and lock them up at night'. He received no wages, apart from having his family on the stores. In 1819 he was dismissed for 'drunkenness, incapacity, corruption' and 'drinking the Spirituous cordial medicines'. After that he became a Rocks constable.\(^7\)

From such ranks of ex-convict labourers and tradesmen came some of the longest established and more comfortably-off Rocks people, who themselves became the masters of convicts. Thomas Bristow, who shared his house with Mary Long/Ward and her sons, and listed himself as a 'labourer', had convicts assigned to him in 1824 and was still living at his house in 1828.\(^8\) Andrew Goodwin was a convict labourer who married Ann Peyton, the daughter

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\(^7\) District Constables' Notebooks; Re the Prossers, SG 1 and 8 April 1804; CSC R6021 4/7079 pp113, 131. Re Wakeman, SG 21 July 1810; St Philip's Register; his petitions, 1817, CSC F3182 4/1853 p349, and 1820, F3033 4/1825B No 767 pp897-900; Wakeman's evidence, 1820, in Bigge, Report, Appendix, BT Box 6 pp2392-2398; and evidence re his dismissal, BT Box 26 pp6194,6229; constable at Sydney, BT Box 21 p3622.

\(^8\) District Constables' Notebooks; Census, 1828; Petition, 15 February 1825, CSC R6063 4/1785 p103; Bristow received assigned convicts in 1823 and 1824, see CSC Index.
of Isaac, and later said he expended his 'hard-earned pittance' buying his father-in-law's house in Prince Street. By 1829 he described himself as a carter, and his cantankerous father-in-law was installed in the Benevolent Asylum. In 1842 he was listed as one of the Gipps Ward's property-owning constituents. Samuel Hulbert, although he had some seafaring skills, called himself a labourer when he married Rebecca Selles in 1816. As a settled Rocks householder with a family and a 'most commodious house', he was granted a licence for the Sheer Hulk in Cambridge (now Gloucester) Street in 1817, and when he died in 1829 was listed as a 'dealer'. George Barnett, property-owner, boatman, carter, householder with servants, also described himself as a 'labourer' in 1828. In these ways the skilled and unskilled, the shifting and fixed, were intertwined and had common interests in the Rocks' social fabric. The lines between necessity and decency, subsistence and plenty were crossed. Yet here we have probably moved away somewhat from the 'many laybouring people' Jean Ezzy was hoping to serve in her newly licensed house.

Eighteenth and early nineteenth century labouring people are thus obviously difficult to categorize as an undifferentiated 'proletariat'. They cannot be described as a monolithic group, 'the working class'. In the colony, as in England and Ireland, the simple division of society into rich and poor, property-owners and propertyless, capitalist and worker, wage-worker and self-employed, head and hand work, and even, though to a lesser extent, skilled and unskilled, are inappropriate; they are polarisations of more modern origin. In many ways

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9 District Constables' Notebooks; Census, 1828; Mutch Index, ML; SG 1 January 1824; Petitions of Andrew Goodwin July 1824, August 1824, CSC R6061 4/1780 p198-9; 'List of Citizens in Gipps Ward in the City of Sydney', Australian, 9 September 1842.

10 District Constables' Notebooks; Mutch Index, ML; Hulbert, Petition for Mitigation of Sentence, 1817, CSC F3178 4/1851 p177, Memorial for licence renewal, 1819, in Wentworth Family Papers, ML A764 p149. Hulbert received assigned convicts in 1822-23, see CSC Index.

11 District Constables' Notebooks; Census, 1828; Barnett, Memorial, n.d., CSC F3001 4/1821 No 11a; granted a cart licence, Bigge, Report, Appendix BT Box 12 p271; Barnett was granted convict servants in 1823, see CSC Index.
such heuristic devices preclude an understanding of the vast complexity of an older, more organic society, whose intricate and subtly defined ranks graduated almost imperceptibly and had a tendency for ‘slipping and sliding into one another’.

Rank amongst the higher orders was dependent on birth and manners as well as wealth and profession. Among the lower orders (encompassing everyone else from lower clerks to vagabonds) skills, trade and literacy were very important, but so were the facts of stasis and movement, property-owning, the accumulation of small amounts of capital, gender, ambition and cultural mentalité.

The book Convict Workers stresses the fact that the convicts were workers, inferring that the status ‘convict’ should not override the status ‘worker’. Historians often simply focussed on convictism alone, with the result that the colony inevitably appeared as a prison. But work reflects the sheer normalcy of the colony, as does the existence of families and households. Furthermore, the work of convicts, often carried out on their own terms, had plainly been essential to the establishment of the colony. What was at first foremost in Governors’ minds was not punishment, nor even discipline, but survival: how to have houses, mills, wharves and stores erected, how to get roads cut, boats built, bricks made, stone hewn, tools repaired, crops sown, fish caught. Pragmatic lessons were quickly learned. Capable people were clearly happier and more productive working independently, and so any spark of initiative, any display of skills was actively nurtured by Governors. The first official seal of the colony, tellingly, showed ‘industry releasing convicts from their fetters’: work would redeem them by restoring their independence. The ‘mere tradesman’, though of low rank at home,

12 For discussion see Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, Chapter 2; Christie, Stress and Stability, Chapter 3, pp 54-59; McKendrick et al, Birth of a Consumer Society, pp19-20.

13 Nicholas, Convict Workers; compare to AGL Shaw, Convicts and the Colonies: A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to Australia and other parts of the British Empire, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1981, fp 1966; and Hughes, The Fatal Shore.
was raised in the colony by his extreme usefulness. Tench had a sort of grudging admiration for the ‘many persons of perverted genius and of mechanical ingenuity’ among the convicts.\textsuperscript{14}

The manner of social delineation itself was displayed when musters were held. In 1798 the first to be called in were the labouring men, free or otherwise, second, settlers, and third, women. The distinction here is clearly not based on convictism, but on types of work, lease- or grant-holding status, and gender. Even the distinction between head and hand work was not automatic: lists of employment of the non-grantees compiled by King in 1800 showed ‘town clerks, printers’ and ‘writers’ listed indiscriminately with tradesmen, labourers, the blind and insane, the gaol and town gangs and many others. Again, women were listed separately, the largest proportion of them described as those ‘who do no labour’. In another list they were grouped with the children, as though equally dependent; in still another, prepared by King, they appeared as a mere postscript to the ‘real’ work done by men. In the final analysis, though, the divisions were expressed in three parts which disregarded convictism: the civil and military personnel, the settlers and landholders, and the nominally propertyless ‘free people and convicts’, by far the largest segment, seen from above as one group.\textsuperscript{15}

One of the distinguishing features of the ranked society was the responsibility felt by those in authority to encourage the worthy and avoid rewarding the idle and dissolute, in other words to treat people according to their social and moral worth. Hence their own categorizing

\textsuperscript{14} See series of correspondence in \textbf{HRA}; Collins, \textit{Account}, Vol 1 pp 144, 319; Tench, \textit{First Four Years}, p295.

\textsuperscript{15} \textbf{HRA}, Government and General Orders, 2 July 1798, Enclosure in Hunter to Portland 20 August 1798, Vol 2 217; ‘Distribution of Free men and male convicts not holding ground by grant or lease, and supported and supported by the Crown’, September 1800, Enclosure No 1 in Hunter to Portland, 28 September 1800, Vol 2 615-7; ‘General Statement of...New South Wales’ 1801, Enclosure 2 in King to Portland 10 March 1801, Vol 3 70; King to Portland, 1 March 1802, Vol 3 p424. Blumin, in \textit{Emergence of the Middle Class}, points out that observers of pre-industrial society ‘tended to see division in the upper echelons of society’ but put the middling and unskilled together at the bottom, pp17, 35-38.
devices, within the parameters of order and rank were complex, individualized and personal. They included those who were ‘steady and best behaved’ as opposed to those of ‘more dissolute dispositions’; ‘those who can get a living by their work’ versus ‘those who cannot’; ‘industrious’ versus ‘idle and worthless’. Then there was the taxonomy of skills. Robert Campbell used the simple, well-known ‘mechanics and labourers’, but where more finely honed detail was required, there were carefully calibrated lists, where skills were intricately bound up with disposition, in words suggesting a sliding scale of worth: ‘good, tolerable, willing and able, ordinary, very ordinary, indifferent’.

Again, when lists of working people were compiled, they were not divided up into head and hand work but according to function. It was a system often turned on its head, eroded, made nonsensical by colonial conditions. Yet these are the manifestations of mental categorisation. Through them we can grasp something of the way society was understood.

Women’s skills, on the other hand, tended to be overshadowed by suspicions and expectations of their moral worth and biological ‘tendencies’. Hence the reports on women’s’ work can be quite contradictory. Collins complained that they had ‘grown so idle and insolent’ and were ‘unwilling to do anything but nurse their children’. The work of child-care was equated with ‘idleness’ and Collins never considered who was to care for them if their mothers did not.

Tench wrote that they were in ‘total idleness’, yet that some made the pegs to fix the clay tiles on the roofs, and others were picking up shells for lime burning. He also described their ingenuity in ‘shifting and patching’ the worn out clothes, and while he was referring to both sexes, he noted that the ‘superior dexterity of the women was particularly conspicuous’.

These constant reference to idleness might be explained in several ways: foremost was the

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17 Collins, Account, Vol 1 p87, see also p194.

18 Tench, First Four Years, pp71, 166.
way that ‘women’s’ work (spinning, stitching, washing and ironing, housekeeping, childcare and so on) was, in the male gaze, considered menial and unimportant. They were certainly paid far less for it: in 1796 a woman who worked all day at washing clothes was paid only one shilling and sixpence, and her meals; a labourer was paid three shillings for a day’s work.\footnote{Collins, \textit{Account}, Vol 1 p415} When they did undertake tasks such as peg-making, shell collecting or constructing the bridge approaches over the Tank Stream, they were invariably described as ‘a few’ or ‘feeble women’,\footnote{\textit{SG} 23 October 1803 and see 6 November 1803.} conveying the sense of inadequacy or ineffectiveness. It is hard to interpret these comments and diatribes as much more than male prejudice against the worth of women’s work, and a belief that women were naturally lazy drones.

Second, the attitudes and behaviour of women towards work, and generally, was similar to those of men. They were noisy, unruly, could be violent, used profane language, cared little for time discipline, probably disliked the strictures and supervision of domestic service. As a result the lower orders were generally viewed in a poor light, but women in particular were seen to be failures, perversions of vague ideas as to what ‘women’ were supposed to be.

There were also larger ambiguities in the way the labouring poor as a whole were seen. Their attitudes and way of life were often described as ‘profligate’ and ‘thoughtless’. They were often considered in disparaging and disdainful ways, and threatened with brutal punishment for idleness and wandering about the colony. On the other hand, as Malcolmson and Christie observe in seventeenth and eighteenth century English society, the poor were regarded as an essential part of society, since their labour sustained the whole. This was obvious in the early years of the colony. George Howe referred to them as ‘those inferior yet not least useful

\footnote{Collins, \textit{Account}, Vol 1 p415}
\footnote{\textit{SG} 23 October 1803 and see 6 November 1803.}
orders of British metropolis’. Their poverty was a natural outcome of their lowly social position, but there were cultural norms which directed that, in exchange for some facade of deference, they be cared for, protected and defended by those in authority. As E. P. Thompson observed, ‘the poor imposed upon the rich some of the duties and functions of paternalism just as much as deference was in turn imposed upon them.’

Hence while Governors raged about the ‘turbulent and refractory set of people’, they were also at pains to regulate supplies so that the poor could afford decent food. The price and quality of bread was the subject of many early orders, and numerous Rocks bakers were fined for not adhering to them. Spirits licences were granted ‘for the accommodation of working people’ (hence the grounds for Jean Ezzy’s appeal). Holt observed that Macquarie lowered the price of beef and pork, which was of ‘great service to the poor’ and ‘hurt no one but them that could bear it’. Some Governors tried to protect small settlers and others from the extortionate prices demanded by dealers in the early years, and were glad when they managed

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21 Such descriptions are common in HRA correspondence, for example, Vol 1 583 ‘restless and idle’, 675 ‘turbulent and refractory’, 683 ‘idle and disorderly’, Vol 2 669 ‘thoughtless and profligate’; a Government and General Order, 30 January 1800, stated that persons who moved between the settlements without passes would be flogged and sent to the gaol gang, King to Portland, 10 March 1801, Vol 3 44. Malcolmson, Life and Labour in England, pp12-17; Christie, Stress and Stability, pp216-17; SG 12 June 1808.


23 HRA, Government and General Order, 6 August 1798, condemning the use of ‘false or improper weights and measures, to the great injury of [ labouring people]; and also referring to the liquor licences issued ‘for the accommodation of working people’ in Hunter to Portland 20 August 1798, Vol 2 219; another order regulating bread prices remarked that Sydney bakers ‘Avarice appears to be greater than their Humanity’, and declared firmly that ‘it is the Governor’s Intention To place bread within Reach of those who need it most’; in King to Hobart, 9 November 1802, Vol 3 629. Some Rocks bakers evidently remained among those who practised ‘those starving extortions’; in c1821 eleven of them, including William Prentice, William Davis, Thomas Saunders, William Welsh, Elizabeth Cassidy, George Cribb and Patrick Cullen, were fined for selling light bread or using false weights. See Wentworth Papers, Police Reports and Accounts 1810-1827, ML D1 p223. Holt, Rum Story, p111. The sale of meat had been regulated since at least 1802, see HRA Government and General Order 3 August 1803, in King to Hobart, 7 August 1803, Vol 4 p346.
to ‘make themselves more comfortable and independent of the higher classes’. King felt
bound to protect the ‘ignorant and unlearned’ from the ‘artful and litigious’. When the
millwright John Baughan was attacked by soldiers, Hunter quickly tried to calm and reassure
the people. Clearly, he thought of them not so much as prisoners, but as the lower orders,
whose personal liberties had been threatened by the soldiers’ attack and who were thus
justifiably alarmed. In 1801 a priority list was drawn up for the ‘Discharge of Deceased
person’s debts’. Servants and workman’s wages came at the bottom of the list, but they were
to be paid before the book-debts of ‘Merchants and Tradesmen’.

Protecting the poor was also part of George Howe’s stock of rhetoric, and was likely to have
been familiar to his readers and listeners. People who threw broken glass onto the roadway
were condemned for scattering ‘danger in a poor man’s tracks’, since many people did not
wear shoes. The poor needed fairly priced, affordable food, so that when high prices on
market day resulted in ‘the further mortification to a number of poor persons who attended’,
they deserved sympathy. Sellers who demanded dollars, which poor people did not possess,
were frowned upon, while Robert Campbell earned praise for offering to exchange dollars for
5 shillings each. Magistrates met to examine the ‘difficulties of the poorest orders of the
community in obtaining wholesome bread at a reasonable price’, and outlined breadmaking
rules and prices. Butchers appealed to be allowed to vend meat on Sundays since ‘many of
the Poor Inhabitants do not receive their weekly stipends sufficiently early on Saturday to
procure their Sabbath days dinner’. Brewers wanted to provide ‘labouring people and...the
lower classes’ with ‘plenty of good wholesome beer for their drinking’. In 1826 richer
inhabitants were called on to help pay for a Dispensary providing medical advice for the ‘free

24 HRA, Hunter to Portland, 2 March 1798, 1 May 1799, Vol 2 140-46, 352; King to
Hobart, 17 September 1803, Vol 4 p391; for Baughan incident, see Hunter to Portland,
June 1796, and Enclosure, Vol 1 573ff; Government and General Orders, 15
December 1800, re priority of debts discharged, in King to Portland, 10 March 1801,
Vol 3 43; and re written transactions, 13 November 1800, in King to Hobart, 7 August
1803, Vol 4 343.
class of Poorer Inhabitants’. Being called ‘a poor man’ or ‘a poor widow’ (like Mrs Gammon who had a large family and whose Cumberland Street house burnt down in 1814) was not so much an insult, embarrassing, or shameful as a statement of fact calculated to excite sympathy while identifying the person’s correct place in the social order. The social stigma attached to being poor, the belief that poverty was caused by fault of character rather than the natural order of things, would become more pronounced and widespread as the century progressed.

Nevertheless, such attitudes were also dependent upon spatial and work status, the poor labourer of settled habitation and steady habits was looked upon more kindly than the itinerant worker, who if nonetheless normally gainfully employed, was in turn seen in a better light than the occasionally employed, the idle, and the roaming vagabond. Peter Cunningham’s 1827 description of the ‘neatness of dress and personal cleanliness’ of most of Sydney’s people, and his glimpses into their houses as he strolled past perhaps typified the positive, even rose-tinted view of the settled lower orders:

Among the great majority of the houses, too, even of mean exterior, inside cleanliness and comfort appear most conspicuous; and in passing along one of our back streets, about the dinner-hour, you will almost uniformly observe a clean newly-unfolded cloth spread upon the table, with a shining show of dinner-utensils upon it, all equally

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25 SG 11 November 1804, 23 June 1805 (hazards of broken glass); 5 and 12 October 1806 (market days and currency exchange); 2 June 1810 (Magistrate’s rules for breadmaking); 21 July 1810 (the brewers); Howe himself wrote of the benefits of ‘malt liquor’ as a ‘wholesome and agreeable beverage’, which was supplied to the labourer at a ‘very reasonable rate’, 16 December 1804; 29 July 1826 (the dispensary). ‘Petition of the Butchers of Sydney’ 7 January 1822, CSC R6054 p70.

26 SG 20 August 1814; Jane Gammon’s name was also often spelt Gabbage and sometimes Gammage. Another example was the ‘poor woman Sarah Armstrong’ who ‘laboured under severe dysentery’ and ‘died in the street’, 31 August 1806.
inviting. These, together with the pure whitewashed wall, and the articles of comfort and even luxury ranged round it, convey a very agreeable impression to the mind. 27

These are not mere romanticisations, and Cunningham followed this immediately by observing that ‘Sobriety, however, by no means ranks among the conspicuous virtues of our general population’. Drinking, self-respect, cleanliness and a degree of comfort were not mutually exclusive, they ran together. There is much evidence, particularly from the Gazette, that Rocks people owned things like tablecloths and comfortable furniture, while the archaeological evidence from even the smallest and crudest houses of the 1810s and 1820s offer all manner of fine, everyday and coarse table and storage ware and utensils. 28

Another 1820s observer of Sydney’s lower orders (who were ‘mostly Irish’) noted their clean, well-dressed appearance, on Sundays at least ‘figuring away in shoes, stockings, hats and other luxuries, which few of them were indulged with ere they left their native hovels in Connaught…’. From the earliest years good or fine clothing was brought, sought after and worn by convict labouring people, with the finest reserved for special occasions or night-time revelry - Mann claimed that the ‘European women spare no expense in ornamenting their persons, and in dress, each seems to vie with the other in extravagance’ and described the ‘dashing belles who frequent the Rocks’ as ‘attired in the greatest splendour’. He countered this by adding that their daytime dress was ‘extremely mean attire’, although William Noah, while shaking his head over women’s ‘Whoring and Drinking’ also noted that they ‘go clean and neat much more so than in England’, and that they had ‘very fine hair which they plat Down their Backs’. Even the women who appeared at the hospital, drunk and distressed,

27 Cunningham, Two Years, p36-7.

were noted to be 'always clean'.\textsuperscript{29} Once more, 'profligate' moral behaviour was not linked with filthy rags, unkempt hair, unclean bodies. Women in particular expressed self respect and confidence, if not defiance, in their care for personal appearance and love of dress.

So from below, and to the more careful observer, there was much distinction and diversity in rank self-identification within the blanket descriptions 'labouring people' or 'the lower orders'. At the same time, when people expressed who they were, it was largely with a sense of knowing, and accepting, their place in the social order. They employed similar language to the elite in describing their own and others' livelihood and status and those of others around them, and as Atkinson points out, expected those of higher rank to be genuinely genteel and behave in a manner appropriate to their station.\textsuperscript{30} James Kenny, brother of the ill-fated John, described his earnings as 'the scanty portion derived from his Daily labour'; Andrew Goodwin's were a 'hard-earned pittance'. Eliza James Jones, temporary landlady to fugitives James and Jane New, remarked that several workingmen had come to visit New, but that she 'never saw any respectable person'. Slippery and ill-defined as it was, the word 'respectable' was nevertheless used by common people: working men were by definition not respectable.\textsuperscript{31} The Rocks tanner and shoemaker James Templeton had two prices for his

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Australian}, 29 August 1828; Mann, \textit{Present Picture}, p44; Noah, letter to a sibling, pp71, 75; evidence of Assistant Surgeon Owen, February 1819, in Bigge, \textit{Report}, Appendix BT Box 6 p2466. Cunningham also observed the fashion-consciousness of Sydney women, \textit{Two Years}, p36.

\textsuperscript{30} Alan Atkinson, 'Four patterns of convict protest', in \textit{Labour History}, No 37, November 1979, 32.

\textsuperscript{31} James Kenny, Memorial, 1810, CSC F3005 4/1821 No 171b; Andrew Goodwin, Petition, 2 August 1824, CSC R6061 4/1780 p198-9; Evidence of Eliza James Jones in papers from trial of John Stephen jun., 1833, Governors' Despatches, ML A1267\textsuperscript{16} p277.
'bespoke shoes': 10 shillings for workingmen, 11/3 for gentlemen; even shoes reflect the two great social orders.32

Property-holding was the other basic delineator observed and felt among the lower orders, but has we have seen it was not the exclusive preserve of the master craftsman or the dealer. The poor laundress Margaret Roach, accused of stealing clothes from her employer, and unwittingly betrayed by her own child, warned that 'persons of property in this colony can bring forward Evidence that ought to be viewed with a very zealous eye'. She expressed the gulf between herself and propertied people, and implied that the latter were not entirely what they should be. Conversely, William Hawkins defended his right to a plot of ground in Argyle Street by depicting a rival claimant, John Gleeson, as 'a labourer and inhabitant of the colony for eight years' (as opposed to his own twenty-five year residency) and 'a person of indigent circumstances' [my emphasis]. Hawkins was evoking, or creating, a gulf between the independent and settled man, capable of building homes, as he did, and the poor and itinerant labourer. To drive home his point he included with his petition an elevation and plan of the house he had built on the land, which he drew himself. Every stone was drawn in (Fig. 51). Yet in 1828 William Hawkins himself was listed as a labourer, a pardoned convict, living with his housekeeper Catherine Riely in Kent Street.33

Commonality of language reflected a commonly held understanding of the social order. There is no hint of repudiation of rank, or bridling at exploitation or the unfairness of economic and social inequality. Rather these were requests for compassion, indulgence, and fairness, and for adjudication in settling grievances and often to be allowed simply to live and to earn their living in their own way. As we shall see, it was not labouring people who came together and

32 Evidence of James Templeton on leather and shoemaking, 1818, CSC R6047 4/1741 p38-9. 'Bespoke' shoes were custom-made shoes.

33 Defence of Margaret Roach, 14 April 1821, CCJ R1975 p317 AONSW; William Hawkins, Memorial, February 1825, CSC 4/1824A No 368 p397; Census, 1828.
Fig. 51: William Hawkins' drawing of his house in Harrington Street at the corner of Argyle Street. He sent it to the Colonial Secretary in 1825 with a petition praying to retain the lease to the land on which it stood. A bake house with oven is attached at the rear, while one of the front rooms has a large shop window.

Source: Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, AONSW.
sought to change their standing in society, but the aspiring tradesmen, householders and dealers.

The actual ways and means of getting work, types of work and work practices also reflect the pre-industrial mode. The factory system, which had only made inroads in certain cities of England by the end of the eighteenth century, had had little or no impact on the habits and outlooks of colonial workers or their employers. Change occurred only very slowly, for many people’s work patterns would to an extent remain more traditional than modern right up until the turn of the century. As Aplin points out, early Sydney was powered by wind and water, by men and animals. Steam power was introduced in 1815 with Dixon’s steam mill, but this remained exceptional, and people still wheeled their wheat to the mill in wheelbarrows. A survey of the occupations of Rocks people indicate that the biggest employers in the town were the building trades, food, clothing, and personal care supplies and services, and activities involving the transport and storage of goods, and the movement and shelter of people. The Rocks also had a few clerks, the occasional jeweller and watchmaker, constables, watchmen, hospital attendants and nurses, a bellringer, town criers, an aspiring architect, quack doctors and, for a time, the loathed executioner. There were some whose skills were useless for the colony, particularly those involved in the manufacture of the consumer items so much in demand in England. John Massagorra, for example, found no call for his trade

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34 See Shirley Fitzgerald, Rising Damp: Sydney 1870-1890, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp9, 65, 143, 225. Nicholas suggests that the ‘factory system’ was imported and established in Sydney from earliest times, citing the government lumber yard as the ‘first and largest factory in Australia’, and pointing to organisational traits such as supervision by overseers (seemingly equated with ‘capitalists’ control of the production process’) and the emphasis on preventing ‘embezzlement and waste’. This infers that similar establishments in England, such as large shipyards, were also ‘factories’, hence stretching the idea of the modern factory system to include workplaces which clearly predate the industrial revolution. Convict Workers, p157.
as a looking-glass maker, and instead became a gaol constable. Buttonmakers became farmers, weavers went labouring.\textsuperscript{35}

Much work was slow and laborious, requiring great physical exertion, and most jobs were manual. Hands scrubbed clothes and stitched cloth, sawed timber, fashioned nails, hauled sacks and rolled barrels, strained at oars, and scraped flesh from the hides. Bodies were thus vulnerable to the kinds of dangers and accidents presented by the harnessing of wind and water, or the brute force of men and animals. Miller and millwright John Davis was permanently crippled by a millstone falling on him. William Collins, labourer to Isaac Nichols, was crushed to death, his head ‘dreadfully fractured’, when a log slipped from the workmen’s grasp and rolled on him. People were hit by the vanes of creaking windmills, or trampled by restive beasts. A boat’s crew member fell overboard and drowned in the Parramatta River near Kissing Point as he was ‘easing himself’ at the edge of the boat.\textsuperscript{36}

Many men and women worked in their own homes, especially blacksmiths, bakers, butchers, shoemakers, laundrywomen, dressmakers and tailors and shopkeepers, and their servants and labourers worked alongside them. Many Rocks people indicated as much by their Gazette notices and advertisements. The sounds and smells of workplaces permeated the domestic sphere - the bellows and squeals of beasts marked for slaughter in the rear space of George Cribb’s house in Cambridge Street, the odour of the blood and offal, and the piles of heads

\textsuperscript{35} Graeme Aplin, ‘Models of Urban Change: Sydney 1820-1870’, in Australian Geographic Studies, Vol 20 No 2 October 1982, p150. D. R Hainsworth, Builders and Adventurers: The Traders and the Emergence of the Colony 1788-1821, Melbourne, Cassell, 1968, pp128-9. Hainsworth comments that the introduction of steam ‘did not render the wind- and water-mills obsolete’, as a number of the latter were also built in the Macquarie period. James Rampling’s servant was sent to Dickson’s mill with wheat in a wheelbarrow in 1823, see CCJ Reel 1981 p322 AONSW. Nicholas, Convict Workers, pp143, 149.

\textsuperscript{36} John Davis, Memorial, 5 February 1810, CSC F3003 4/1821 No 83b; SG 9 December 1804; Inquest on Jeremiah Long, 18 September 1812, CSC R6021 4/1819 p393.
and horns are all suggested or confirmed by archaeological evidence. At the Lilyvale site in Cumberland Street, the poor widow Jane Gammon (nee Appleton, later Chandler) and her children lost their house when a spark from blasting at a nearby quarry ignited it in 1814. The archaeologists found the charred floor boards with burnt pine branches still on them. The thuds of hammers, wedges and drills, the chink of gads, picks and chisels, the dull crack and crash of stone blasted out from the quarries were heard in Cumberland and Prince Streets.37

As we have seen, wives ran shops while their tradesman husbands worked on government projects. Druitt said they returned home at midday for a meal and to ‘give directions’.38 This running together of home and work was the norm in official records. In the 1822 constable’s notebooks the two were assumed to be the same for servants or labourers. Those who worked away from their place of living were particularly noted. As late as 1828, the delineation between place of work and place of living was still muddled. The columns for ‘Employer or Remarks’ was an amalgam of landladies and landlords, co-occupants, masters and mistresses, employers, gang names and numbers, marital status and places of work. Similarly the occupation columns blended types of employment, skill descriptions, property-holding status, household or institutional status (‘lodger’ or ‘inmate’), with many other descriptions such as ‘infant’ ‘orphan’ ‘pensioner’ and ‘ux’. Once more, these categorisations are clues to mental organization: they indicate a more organic understanding of society, a society not yet conceived in terms of strict spatial separation of home and work, nor the segmentation of occupational status from other kinds. Each person described themselves, or was described, by the words that fitted them best.


38 Evidence of Major Druitt, 27 October 1819, Bigge Report, Appendix, BT Box 1 p4.
Much work was still small-scale, done at piecework or daily rates and on a personal, face-to-face manner, often on a short-term or day-to-day basis. Labourers could be hired through personal networks, and also through a 'labour bazaar' recalled by Obed West 'on the Western side of Sydney' where prospective employers and labourers came together, probably every week.\textsuperscript{39} For tradesmen working independently, production was usually small scale, the product sold directly and personally, the earnings often spent immediately. Rocks shoemaker James Templeton bought his leather for soles from a tanner, James Wiltshire, tanned his own upper leather, made and sold shoes at his house in Cumberland Street. He reckoned there were only three or four tanners 'who tan for sale' in the town, and knew only two curriers besides Wiltshire. The nailmaker Edward Ryan worked with a partner, and when a certain number of nails were ready, Edward went on foot to Robert Campbell's house at five o'clock in the evening and sold them for 15 shillings. He gave his partner's wife Margaret Connelly four shillings and his own wife Mary Ryan five. Mary went immediately 'into Mr Burk to get a little spirits', and they all sat down together with some other friends to drink and share a meal.\textsuperscript{40}

Women who took in washing and ironing, or made or repaired clothes, also made those journeys around the town, picking up bags of soiled linen, and dropping them off clean and pressed, collecting fabric and returning with garments. Kit Baker, the woman who lost her daughter in a fire, lived close to Mary Bryant's house, and called there to collect the fabric (stolen from Simeon Lord) to make a gown for Anne Dalton. Some like Elizabeth Nuttall went into other houses to wash and iron. She had worked for the foul-tempered Sarah Ewin for seven years and was paid about two shillings a day, sometimes in kind, such as the 'gown

\textsuperscript{39} West, \textit{Memoirs}, p.3.

\textsuperscript{40} Inquest on Edward Ryan, 13 September 1813, CSC R6021 4/1819 pp619-25.
full of wholes'. By contrast James Pass agreed to work for Rocks boat owner Bryan Eagan for 5 shillings a day. Many servants, free and unfree, shared a house with their master or mistress, although some preferred to live independently if they could. Elizabeth Kinsela nursed the children of 'Abbe the jew' but said firmly 'I always sleep in my own house'.

What of the large Government projects, or private individuals who employed large numbers of labourers and artisans? Here, too conditions of employment were based on personal dealings, and in a face-to-face manner. Often it involved taskwork or piecework, and usually some sort of reciprocal agreement or contract between employer and employee. Hence wealthy merchants or publicans would advertise for a certain number of bricks or lengths of timber. Isaac Nichols made a deal to employ J. MacDowell, a carpenter and cabinet maker who was in his debt, 'at a specific rate until the debt was paid'. If the government wanted skilled stonemasonry for a new building, payment was in agreed piece rates given by stonemasons. Hence Rocks stonemason John A'Heanne gave Major Ovens a list which included prices graduated according to the skill and time involved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Descriptions</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cutt Stonework</td>
<td>from 18s to 20s per perch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rustic groins</td>
<td>from 2s/6d to 3s per piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window stools</td>
<td>from 6s to 7s per piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window heads (rustic)</td>
<td>from 7s to 9s per piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door heads do</td>
<td>from 8s to 9s per piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axed work</td>
<td>from 12s to 13s per perch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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41 Papers from trials of James Pass et al, 15 March 1813, and Elizabeth Nuttall, 18 October 1821, CCJ R2390 p318, R1976 p132 AONSW.


43 For example SG 18 March 1804, Isaac Nichols wanted two labourers to break ten acres of ground; 23 September 1804, Simeon Lord advertised for coopers.

44 'Memorandum of prices of stone-work given by John A'Heanne Stone Mason to Lieutenant Ovens, Engineer', 2 June 1810, CSC R6042 4/1723 p16.
When Macquarie ordered the completion of the handsome and secure new stores begun at the Hospital Wharf in 1809 (Fig. 54), Isaac Nichols was commissioned to assemble the workforce. Here are the payment agreements drawn up:

James Doran himself & two children victualled and to rec. 1/2 gall rum per week provided he cuts 100 feet of stone to be paid in proportion of 1 gall of rum pr 100 feet for all he cuts over.

William Walsh same, though only self victualled. He is to work the whole of the week, all day.

Bary Dennison himself victualled & 20s per week he is to work the whole of the week all day.

Three others to work the prisoners working hours, to 3 o'clock.

Prisoners which work on their own time:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{for every 100 feet of fine stone} & \quad \text{for every 150 feet of rough stone} \\
\text{1 gall rum} & \quad \text{1 gall rum}^{45}
\end{align*}
\]

This is a document of disorderly cohesion: it appears untidy and complicated to modern eyes, but this belies the intricate, individualistic and reciprocal negotiations that had occurred between workers and employer, the underlying cohesion. There are no standard, fixed hours and rates here. Instead, each agreement was tailored to each individual’s position and requirements: Doran’s family was victualled, but not Walsh’s. Some had their work time specified (‘the whole of the week all day’ or ‘prisoner’s hours’), others, free and prisoner alike, were to be paid piece rates after a certain time obligation had been fulfilled. Most were paid in rum, a readily disposable ‘currency’, though Bary Dennison preferred money payment. There were distinctions in the quality of stone cut, rough and fine, and payment adjusted accordingly.

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\(^{45}\) ‘Agreement between Government and free Labourers...employed...for the building of the New Stores’, March 1810 CSC R6042 4/1723 p202-3. Collins’ 1796 list of prices ‘demanded and paid for labour’ also combined task and timed work: five shillings for a carpenter to work for a day, three pounds for a labourer to break up an acre of ground, six shillings to make a coat, and so on; Account. Vol 1 p415.
Deals concerning work could be also made between labouring people themselves, and these were considered binding before the law. When the town’s otherwise unemployed women were ordered to help fill up the bridge built by Isaac Peyton in 1803, Jane Smith and three other women paid Cornelius Henning to do their tasks. When he failed to perform the work, they took him to court and he was given a corporal punishment and ordered to labour on the bridge every afternoon.\textsuperscript{46} This emphasis on contract, agreement and reciprocity is not to say that there was no conflict over work, or that the workplace was always harmonious and consensual. But where conflict occurred it was usually because one or another of the parties had failed to fulfil their end of the bargain, and there were means available for resolution.

There were also cooperative stances and actions against authority by labouring people who shared certain traditional habits and outlooks. Such action was evident every time a new shipload of convicts arrived, although, significantly, they were almost as ready to exploit newcomers as to help them. It was less ‘class’ solidarity than cultural commonality, for there were other sides to the ‘hearty welcome’ described by William Noah. Those who clambered on board the newly arrived ships were in a good position both to give and acquire important information: who was there, old friends, or old enemies? What had they brought out with them? Money? Clothes? Food? Who might be useful? Who might be robbed? One of Bigge’s interviewees told him that many of the hapless new arrivals ‘on their first day spent or lost the little money they had brought with them, got drunk and were frequently robbed by their fellow prisoners of all their cloaths’.\textsuperscript{47} It is significant, too, that from the earliest times and possibly well into the 1820s the flotilla of small boats circling round the ship reached the convicts before the authorities did.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} SG 6 November 1803.

\textsuperscript{47} Evidence of Major Druitt, 27 October 1819, Bigge, \textit{Report}, Appendix, BT Box 1, p24.

\textsuperscript{48} Noah, ‘Voyage to Sydney’; Cunningham described a similar scene twenty-six years later: ‘Numbers of boats soon surround the ship, filled with people anxious to hear news, and traffickers with fruit and other refreshments, besides watermen to land passengers’, \textit{Two Years}, p30.
The mustering of the convicts on the deck by colonial officials was the link between shipboard (and earlier) connections and behaviour, and a ‘new’ life ashore. It was an opportunity for some to nudge destiny in one or another direction. For men, the key was their skills, while their strength and health was also assessed, and propelled them in certain directions. For women, marital status, marriageability, or status gained through ship-board relationships, were seen as more important than their skills.\(^{49}\) Convicts were acutely aware of these factors, and manipulated the first muster as best they could. The authorities were also sensible of what happened during the friendly receptions, the fevered exchange of information, the rekindling of old acquaintances every time a ship came in. Major Druitt explained to Commissioner Bigge in 1819 that an order had been passed that year

> prohibiting any persons whatever from having any communication with the convicts which might have the effect of producing from them a false description of their several trades and callings or unfounded expectations from the benefits they may derive by employment in Sydney.\(^{50}\)

These orders were not the first attempts to prevent Sydney people from advising newly arrived convicts on their ‘best bet’ in terms of skills, real or feigned, and quickly letting them know of the relative pleasures of life in Sydney when compared with the isolated farms and stockruns. With this useful information, some control could be exerted from behind the ‘cloak’ of the anonymous, unknown convict, standing in the orderly rows on the deck.

\(^{49}\) Noah, ‘Voyage to Sydney’. Bigge, Report, Appendix, Evidence of Major Druitt, BT Box 1 pp18-9: boys were sent to be apprenticed at the Dockyard; those with ‘bodily infirmities’ went to the town gang. Similarly, the first emancipations, in 1791, were rewards to skilled men who had behaved well, and to a woman ‘on her marrying a superintendent’, HRA Vol 1 270-71. Macquarie informed Bathurst in 1814 that young, healthy women were ‘well-disposed of’, moving quickly from the Factory into marriage, but that old, infirm women ‘come in great numbers’ and were ‘weight on the stores’, HRA, Vol 8 312.

\(^{50}\) Evidence of Major Druitt, 27 October 1819, Bigge Report, Appendix, BT Box 1, p17. The regulations to which he refers were the Port Regulations of March 1819, see HRA Vol 10 71.
The voyage itself was evidently used by some as an opportunity to manoeuvre into more favourable situations. Men like Joseph Holt cultivated shipboard acquaintances, and sought to impress the officers. As Plummer pointed out in 1809:

Almost every convict who has behaved decently during the voyage, and can exercise any trade or profession for his own support, [is permitted] to be at large in the Colony without any special control or obligation.\(^1\)

The women, it was often reported, formed relationships with the ships crew and officers in the hope of recommendation. This seems to have been partly successful, for Surgeon Joseph Arnold was disgusted that the ‘women of bad character’, those who had ‘nothing to recommend them but being kept by the different officers (from Captain to boatswain as their mistresses)’, were upon arrival ‘sent to respectable households’, instead of ‘to Parramatta with the rest’.\(^2\) The time of the voyage and arrival also seems to have had a marked effect on Rocks people’s emerging circles of intimacy and acquaintance in the colony. They worked with, lodged with, and married people from about their own time of arrival, rather than those from different periods.\(^3\) The convicts’ ‘new’ life in New South Wales was thus begun, given shape, months before they saw the wild rocky harbour foreshore, or the grim, familiar warning in the bones of the executed murderer Francis Morgan dancing in the winds off Pinchgut.

John Hirst has revealed the convict workers’ early preference for task work, and their success in enforcing it, despite repeated and determined efforts to make them work to the clock. Task

\(^1\) Holt, *Run Story*, p36ff; HRA, Plummer to Macquarie, 4 May 1809, Vol 7 204; my emphasis.


\(^3\) Karskens, Analysis of the District Constables’ Notebooks. Collins wrote of the first fleeters that ‘of them it was said the newcomers stood so much in dread that they were never admitted to any share of their confidence’, suggesting that there were strong bonds of identification between them.
work, in which workers were given a particular task to complete, left the decision over how quickly or slowly the job would be done with the workers themselves. If done quickly they had the remainder of the day to work for private employers or for themselves and earn more money or goods; or to drink, socialise or wander as they pleased.\(^{54}\) Despite the efforts of authority to impose control through drum-beats, bells and clocks, many labouring people did not work to the clock. Both convict workers and their overseers steadfastly ignored repeated orders to do so, and assembling for work at increasingly 'late hours'. In the early 'twenties overseers took no notice of convicts who straggled in late for work.\(^{55}\)

Rocks people were generally not strictly time-oriented, although they knew the hour of the day and night pretty well from the taptoo beat and from the constable bawling them out at night. Hence, in court evidence, if they gave a particular time at all, they commonly prefaced the hour with 'about', or expressed it as 'between four and five', by the passage of the sun - 'half an hour before sundown', or according their daily routines - 'after breakfast'. They measured the recent past time from events: Elizabeth Cullen recalled buying some fabric 'the day after the men was executed'; Elizabeth Cassidy remembered her lodger was out all night 'one night before the Hunter sailed'. The distant past was marked out, in petitions, for example, by incumbent Governors (hence 'in Governor Macquarie's time'), or by the petitioner's own period of occupancy in the colony, rather than by the dates. Asked their ship


\(^{55}\) Graeme Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute: How Australia Learned to Tell the Time*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1993, Chapter 1; *HRA, Government and General Order*, 21 July 1796, regarding the fact that the 'superintendents...take it upon themselves to task the working people in such a manner as they think proper', and ordering that workers work set hours, Vol 1 p696; another attempt was made in July 1798, see Vol 2 218. Taskwork was tacitly accepted by 1799, when an order insisted that, if workers started as late as they did, they should at least not be given a breakfast break, and were to work until three o'clock; Vol 2 p585. Bigge, *Report*, Appendix, BT Box 1 p524.
and year of arrival for the 1822 list, almost all Rocks people could recall the name of the ship, and its master, but the dates given were often incorrect.\textsuperscript{56}

For many Rocks people, work also lacked the regularity, fixedness, the 'daily grind' of the modern industrial world. Edward Quinn, constable, and later Deputy Marshall to the Vice Admiralty Court, punctuated his working day by returning home to drink with his wife Sarah and their friends, and by calling at the house of James Chisholm to meet with someone else. Dealers like Garnham Blaxcell were only in attendance at their stores for a few hours a day. Many people moved about in the early years, and much work was seasonal and spasmodic. There was great activity about the wharves when the ships came in, but it slackened off at other times. Hence George Phillips and his son was to be seen waiting about for work at the wharf with their boat, and George Barnett and his son with their cart. How then could idlers be distinguished from workers? Work in the fields and orchards was seasonal, work on a building or a ship lasted until the structure was complete. Again the impression is of movement, of searching and waiting between one job and another. Some interpreted this as 'restlessness', a general, unfavourable characteristic of plebeian culture. Hunter complained of the 'restless and idle dispositions' of ex-convict men for whom 'the prospect of a change' was an 'allurement' difficult to resist.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} See series of evidence in CCJ trial and other papers, for example, trial of George Legg 9-12 April 1797 R2391 p315; trial of James Pass et al 15 March 1813 R2390 p318; trial of William Gray and Edward Gaines, 1814 R2390 p216; trial of Andrew Frazier, 9 May 1817, COD 440 p145, AONSW. Karskens, Analysis of the District Constables' Notebooks. The dates of arrival were checked against shipping indexes.

\textsuperscript{57} Papers from the trial of Mary Turley, 29 March 1814, CCJ R2390 p288 AONSW; see also CSC index, entries for Edward Quin. Re Blaxcell, see SG 28 January 1810 and compare with Blumin's description of the relaxed habits of the Philadelphia merchants, Emergence of the Middle Class, p21. Papers from trial of Peter Ryan, 8 July 1822, CCJ R1976 p241 AONSW; HRA, Hunter to Portland, 15 August 1796, Vol 1 583.
Some work was marked out by day, beginning at sunrise and ending at sunset, and often also dependent on the seasons. Other people, like the oysterman George Humphreys set off from Miller’s Point in the black morning hours to collect oysters and catch fish. Still others would wait for the winds, begin their water-journeys up river at sunset, rowing through the night; or left Parramatta for Sydney on the passage boat at three in the morning.\textsuperscript{58} Not all servants worked during the daytime. William Howell, after spending the day disposing of goods stolen from his master Simeon Lord the night before, drank half a pint of rum at three o’clock in the afternoon, ‘went to my work’ labouring for Lord, and returned to his Rocks lodgings at seven. William Kaley left his master’s house at three in the afternoon to gamble with Solomon Davis. This evidence qualifies, if not contradicts, the assertion made by Nicholas that ‘Convicts were denied not only the right to impose their own order on work time, but the framework of community and mutuality which made up the context of workplace at home’, as well as the suggestion that the convicts’ work patterns had already been shaped by ideas and compulsions of time-discipline. More research is needed on actual work patterns and habits among Sydney’s people, for these points illustrate, once more, the drawbacks of relying solely on official documentation.\textsuperscript{59}

Occasionally convict workers banded together to demand certain working hours. The arrivals of 1791 were told to ‘go cheerfully to their labour’ and their hours of work were changed ‘agreeable to a request they had made.’ Nevertheless, Governors were frequently annoyed by workers’ lax attitudes. Hunter was ‘astonished’ to notice that ‘the gangs were never seen in the afternoon’, and every time it rained they simply abandoned their work for government to go and work for private people instead. The division between government and private

\textsuperscript{58} Inquests on David Douglass and Jeremiah Long, CSC R6021 4/1819 pp183, 393. Papers from trial of John Ainslip (also spelt Anslip, Hanslip), 23 March 1797, CCJ R2391 p279 AONSW.

work was blurred by workers who nominally worked for the former while really serving the latter and themselves. An early fisherman sold his catch rather than handing it over for distribution. ‘Government’ stonemasons sold the stone they cut to private individuals from the quarry behind the windmill on the Rocks in 1804, rather than stockpiling it for Government buildings.\(^{50}\) Quite a few of the more substantial early Rocks houses were probably built of this stone. These were extra-legal activities, but they might also be seen as ‘normalising’ manners of work. People seemed to act more in accordance with usual habits than with the unfamiliar government system.

Even when working, there was little sense that work time was strictly prescribed, completely separate from time for leisure, eating, drinking and sociability. One of the panels of Major James Taylor’s panorama of Sydney in 1821 shows labourers in one of the Rocks quarries, some working, carting, cutting, dressing, carrying stone. In the midst of this activity, others stand about talking, or are sitting down or lying about, resting. Another panel shows the steep slopes down to Cockle Bay and Miller’s Point where similarly dressed men chop wood, hoe a garden or carry a sack, while another man lies on the grass on his stomach, and four more stand and sit in conversation (Figs 52 and 53). Labouring people commonly interrupted work for a break, a visit, a chat, a game, a drink. Crowds quickly gathered at all times of the day to watch street fights between men or women, cockfights, a flogging, a hanging. John Cadman and the rest of the crew of the Putland longboat rowed up Parramatta River in the evening, but ‘the wind not answering’, put in at Kissing Point and retired to Squire’s Public House’ for the night.\(^{61}\)

\(^{50}\) Collins, Account, Vol 1 pp44, 155; HRA, Government and General Orders, 21 July 1796, Vol 1 696; 15 May 1798, Vol 2 214; 23 November 1802, Vol 4 328. Druitt also reported that convict workers were still ‘constantly in the habit of quitting their work when rain came on’ in 1820; Bigge, Report, Appendix, BT Box 1 p16.

\(^{61}\) Inquest on Jeremiah Long, CSC R6021 4/1819 p393.
Figs 52 and 53: Details from Major Taylor's panorama, 1821 (see Figs 34-36) showing, top, men at the quarry, some of whom are working, while others sit or lie down, or talk. In the bottom detail, some men work, collecting or chopping wood, while others sit yarning together or lie about on the grass.

Source: Published London, Messrs Colnaghi & Co, 1823.
Observers unfamiliar with these work patterns and habits often remarked that the convicts and the lower orders generally were lazy shirkers - 'idle people' was a favourite term. This must have been at least partly based on the sight of working people hanging around, waiting for work, or suspending it periodically, chatting, sleeping, looking about them. Working was also closely entwined with drinking. There was practically no sense that the two should not go together. In the case of hard outdoor work, drinking alcohol seems to have been considered essential for getting the job done. Hunter himself begged for supplies. Observing that settlers often 'indulged their people working in the field' and that 'expos'd to the sun in so hott a climate, a little porter, ale or grog on such occasions...really performs miracles of exertion'. "Why not then", he wheedled, 'send us out some of those things called comforts?' Macquarie's road gang hacking their way over the Blue Mountains in 1814 were supplied with rum and given an extra ration when the work was particularly arduous. Workers were also commonly paid in rum, something which Collins thought 'operated as a benefit and a comfort to them', although he warned against the dangers of intemperance. ⁶²

The court and coronial records are full of everyday glimpses of Rocks men and women drinking at all times of the day, before, during and after work. Men like householder Christopher Grogan, butcher Christopher Airey, and George Wright were seen drinking two by two from six in the morning at Christopher Flood's hotel on the corner of York and King Street, sharing the same glass. Thomas Parkes, Master of the Parramatta Boat, called in at Andrew Frazier's hotel between seven and eight in the morning 'called for and drank a glass of liquor', inspected some stockings that a man had come in to sell, and left.

This does not constitute evidence of a perverted, criminalistic society debased by rum: these people behaved as was normal to them. Hotels and drinking houses were gathering place for working people, places to hear news, see someone, buy goods, or be paid, as well as to join in a song or dance a reel. Shipwright William Chapman was at the Green Man hotel paying his workers, probably on a Saturday night, just before he beat his wife to death for daring to intrude. John Whelan told the court in 1821 that he and two others went to Patrick and Catherine Doyle’s Three Jolly Sailors hotel in Harrington Street, ‘for the purpose of seeing the overseer of the Grass cutters’, presumably over a work-related matter.63

Drinking together, the ‘circling glass’, also established and reinforced friendships and cemented deals for both men and women, though women were more often seen together in their own homes. People shared the liquor and vessels communally. An anonymous storekeepers book of 1804 presents a record of shared daily drinking patterns and small transactions:

22 June
John Gibson with Cickers 1 half pt 5 [shillings]
2 gills with Stephen 5 [shillings]
1 half pint do64

Joseph Holt’s first action after landing in 1800 was to visit the house of Maurice Margarot, where the two men and their wives became acquainted over a meal and a ‘wine bottle full of rum’. A few days later he met Judge Advocate Richard Atkins together with George Barrington. Invited to Atkins’ house, he drank with them (the ‘rum bottle, tumblers and

63 SG 2 June, 3, 14 and 17 October 1825; Papers from trial of John Whelan, 1 August 1821, CCJ R1975 p262 AONSW.

64 ‘Day book of an unknown [Sydney] Shopkeeper’, 1805-06, ML B437; the book in fact originates from Norfolk Island, pers. com. Professor Rob Jordan. See also inquest on Christopher Grogan, 3 August 1820, who died after sharing several drinks with various companions from six o’clock in the morning, see CSC R6021 p263.
spring water' brought to the table) remarking that 'when we finished the half-gallon bottle we were as full of chatter as a hen magpie in May'. He reassured his wife that this would not injure his health because 'the hotter the climate the more spirits could be drank', or so he was told. This was probably a widespread belief.  

Many people were paid in kind: mainly rum, food and clothing, all of which were readily saleable to neighbours, in hotels or at the markets. Hence Elizabeth Nuttell gave Sarah Ewin’s holey gown to Rockswoman Jane White to sell; she sold it to Rebecca Sivison of Cambridge Street for four shillings. Rebecca wore it to the market and was shocked when a drunk and aggressive Sarah Ewin ordered her to 'Pull off my gown'. ‘Wages’ could be more complex and variable than a fixed amount of money each week, and the value of money itself fluctuated, despite official attempts to fix and regulate both. This suggests that many people may have found it difficult to plan for the long-term future. Hence they were described as ‘thoughtless’, living from one day to the next, rather than adopting the virtues of thrift, careful management, abstinence from their pleasures and the accumulation of savings thought so beneficial by organizations as the ‘Society for the Betterment of the Poor’.  

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65 Holt, Rum Story, pp49-50, 52.  
66 Papers from trial of Elizabeth Nuttell, 18 October 1821, CCJ R1976 p132 AONSW.  
67 Re standardisation of currency see HRA Vol 3 p39 yet compare with the variations of exchange rates, see references in note 25 above. Re wages, see HRA Government and General Orders, 27 November 1795, (fixing the rate for reaping an acre of corn at ten shillings, and warning settlers not to pay more) Vol 1 683; 21 February and 14 April 1797 (rates of wages, and a similar warning for both employers and workers to abide by them) Vol 2 75, 78. Robert Campbell requested to be allowed to pay his workers in spirits in 1803, claiming that 'no concern can sustain the present daily wages of seven shillings and sixpence for the mechanics and four to the common workman', see HRA, Robert Campbell, Memorial, 1803, enclosure in King to Hobart, 9 May 1803, Vol 4 p128ff. Rates for agricultural work were fixed by Macquarie in 1810, see SG 12 May 1810, and the rate of 2 shillings and sixpence per day for a labourer suggests that, at four shillings a day, they were far better paid in Sydney. See also discussion in Hirst, Convict Society, p40. 'Extract from the Reports of the Society for Bettering Conditions and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor', SG 5 March 1803.
Convicts apparently soon decided that the extra clothes and rations held out as encouragement for hard or steady work were not the generous indulgence of their masters, but 'rights', or part of a bargain. They demanded these goods when they were not forthcoming, and refused to take them if they were of bad quality. They insisted on certain types of food and would not be fobbed off with substitutes. One of the few times convict workers acted in collective protest was over the distribution of food. When they discovered that rations were to be issued daily, they 'assembled in a rather tumultuous manner' in front of Government House at Parramatta, demanding that provisions be issued on Saturdays, as usual. Weekly provisions left more power in the hands of the receivers: they could more easily bartered for other goods. But their fire diminished when Hunter himself appeared, said he knew the names of their leaders, so reducing the anonymous mob to known individuals. According to Collins, he extracted a promise of 'greater propriety of conduct and implicit obedience' from them, and told them to disperse. This 'first instance of any tumultuous assembly' was blamed on newcomers, although it was more likely to have been an attempt to defend the established habits of the old hands of the colony. As a rare instance of outright, collective resistance, it demonstrates the standoff and bluster tactics, the 'contest for face', and the physical proximity and negotiations typical of encounters between crowds and authority in eighteenth century England.  

The direct, fluid, and overlapping relationship between labour, wages and material goods was also evident in attitudes to perquisites. In England the left-over pieces of cloth, the drippings or bones, the spare coals or scraps of iron taken away by workers were regarded as a legitimate supplement to their income, to which they were traditionally entitled. Peter Linebaugh sees working-class consciousness in London as having been formed in part by working people’s defence of their traditional rights to perquisites against savage laws which

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redefined perquisites as theft. The gallows at Tyburn in the late eighteenth century stood the apex of the war against working people, capital punishment in the service of capital.\(^69\) Though evidence for these practices in early Sydney is scant, it is likely that convict workers were familiar with them, and many had been transported for taking goods from their places of work in the first place. Customary rights to perquisites were probably expected in the colony. One woman, charged in England with stealing remnants, staunchly claimed that as forewoman ‘I looked on all those bits as my perquisites. I had but eight shillings a day. I did a man’s work’.\(^70\) There is evidence such practices were carried on in Sydney. According to Governor Phillip, when women were given cloth to make up into clothing ‘there are many little abuses in the cutting out and making up of clothing’. Like the factory forewoman, they felt entitled to the offcuts and scraps, and, by their own control over cutting and making, made sure they were available. What was Phillips’s solution? Ready made clothes, and a factory, where the women, no longer working independently at home, would be closely supervised, constantly watched. Both were fruits of the industrial revolution.\(^71\)

Another important cultural characteristic of labouring people was their strong preference for town life. The Rocks, visible, and studded with public houses, was an obvious gathering place. Mann observed that banishment from Sydney was a ‘most efficacious’ punishment because ‘they feel an unconquerable repugnance to the idea of separation from their old connections and companions...so truly congenial to their disposition’. Wentworth echoed this in 1819 when he told Bigge that the convicts hated Newcastle because of the ‘very unremitting state of employment’, the lack of liquor, and the isolation from friends.

\(^69\) Linebaugh, The London Hanged.

\(^70\) Mary Owen, cited in Robinson, Women of Botany Bay, p68.

\(^71\) HRA, Phillip to Nepean, 26 June 1792, Vol 1 357. Lieutenant Ovens’ insistence to Bigge that the supervision at the Government Lumber Yard prevented embezzlement and waste also suggests that the practice of appropriating perquisites had occurred; Ovens cited in Nicholas, Convict Workers, p157.
Newcastle thus represented the opposite of the working habits they preferred: working to their own inclination, drinking, companionship and personal networks.\textsuperscript{72}

But there was more at stake than conviviality. When the labouring cooper Peter Ryan, who came out free to work for Joseph Underwood, was arrested for stealing pork from his master, he appealed to the judge for clemency because ‘I am quite a stranger to the colony...I have no friends or acquaintances to depend upon’. Personal networks and relationships were essential, they were carried over from the old country or germinated on the decks of the ships. They also extended vertically up the ranks, expressed by complementary acts of deference and patronage. Hence the labourer John Lacey was successful in settling on the Rocks, through his favourable connections with his master Daniel Cubitt, and Rocks constable Arthur Martin. They provided him with glowing affidavits, and he was granted a ticket of leave and was settled in Cumberland Street with a wife and child in 1828. Ryan, though, had forfeited his most important link, that with his master, and was too recent an arrival to have built up any others. So he had no guarantors, no-one to vouch for his character, no-one to retrieve his tools and wages owing, no-one to bring him food and drink in gaol. Like Elizabeth Mandeville, he was dangerously alone. He begged to be allowed to ‘serve his time at Sydney, being a cooper by trade’ but was sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation.\textsuperscript{73}

Bigge, observing the teeming people’s town, the ‘many laybouring people’, the ‘tumultuous assembly of the chain gang’, was disturbed that such a state of affairs had arisen, and

\textsuperscript{72} Mann, \textit{Present Picture}, pp45-6; Evidence of D’Arcy Wentworth, 1820, Bigge Report, Appendix, BT Box 2 p576; See also Hughes, \textit{Fatal Shore}, p115, convicts referred the Sydney as ‘heaven’; and Collins, \textit{Account}, Vol 1 p173, the ex-convicts ‘preferred to work in Sydney’.

\textsuperscript{73} Papers from trial of Peter Ryan, 8 July 1822, CCJ R1976 p241 AONSW; John Lacey, Certificate of conduct 1825, and statement of character, November 1825, CSC Special Bundles: Tickets of Leave, R6027 4/1717.2 pp296-8; District Constables’ Notebooks, \textit{Census}, 1828.
badgered his interviewees about the Rocks. Druitt told him that when the 700 odd men who lived at the barracks were allowed out after church on Sunday, they 'run immediately to the part of Town they called the Rocks where every species of Debauchery and villainy is practised'. Meehan told him hesitantly that labouring people of the Rocks were there 'upon an occupancy generally' and not according to lease. Wentworth described the 'flash houses' there, which drew in 'thieves and prostitutes'. With every response the Rocks grew correspondingly more sinister in Bigge's mind, and in his official report he described it as 'chiefly inhabited by the most profligate and depraved part of the population'. Another of his conclusions was that the 'accumulation of labourers working in Sydney on St James are its greatest evil that now presses on the population'. Like Phillip, and so many others before and since, he thought that they ought to be sent to the country, which, by altering their working habits, would 'accomplish a change in their moral habits', something the Barracks had failed to do.74

Francis Greenway also objected to the Barracks, but he thought it created listless, poor and unmotivated workers. In 1819 he wrote to the Government Engineer Major Druitt bluntly setting down list of recommendations for the better management of the gangs of labourers and mechanics. He wanted to be informed of the appointment of overseers and foreman, who were to be 'strictly enjoined to exert themselves and Shew and example of Industry and Exertion to their men' and should no longer be observed 'walking about with their hands in their Pockets in a State of Intoxication according to the Old School'. Here are interlinked divergences and convergences between master and worker, government and people. Greenway wanted close, personal care and supervision of work, he wanted the men of higher status to act as example to the lower. His beautiful thumbnail sketch of the nonchalant,

lounging government overseers reveals exasperation where workers' drinking habits and their indifference to time were concerned.

But Greenway also objected to the 'New System' whereby 'mechanics' lived at the new Barracks near Hyde Park, worked a full day, and were supposed to submit to a battery of rules in which their possessions were taken away, their time strictly regimented, attendance at divine worship enforced, and their meals were prepared and provided. In its most benign form, it was supposed to be a place of 'comfortable lodging and regular diet', as opposed to the life of many single labouring men looking out for themselves. Greenway did not think the exchange beneficial. He wrote:

One of the principle Reasons of the Deficiency of Work is since the Men have been in the Barracks and made to work all Day with Full Rations they are in consequence become like the gaol gang nor will you or I or all the World according to the present System get them on fast with their work... [my emphasis]  

Here he was distinguishing between the slow, unenthusiastic work of the institutionalized gaol gang, and the mechanics and labourers such as those who lived independently on the Rocks. He wanted to supervise their work, not control their habits or place of living, and so recommended a partial return to the earlier system, with 'those men who will do their Duty, their work sound and good, be let work for themselves at the usual time' and 'those not doing their work be confined to work all day'. This was apparently instigated: Druitt told Bigge that the overseers, 'best behaved men and men married legally' were permitted to live independently. Here we come upon the distinction, commonly made in everyday language, between active 'subject', the self-supporting worker 'discontented' at restraint, and the passive

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75 Francis Greenway to Major Druitt, 14 August 1819, in Bigge, Report, Appendix, BT Box 19 pp2875-8. Collins also noticed, with annoyance, the slow, lackadasical attitudes to work among the convict gangs, Account, Vol 2 p80.
‘object’ (as in ‘Object of Charity’, a category for the very poor), those ‘who cannot support themselves by their labour’ and were ‘glad of’ the Barracks.76

Since the beginning of white settlement, convicts had set up independent households, families and businesses, and found their own work, with official or more often tacit permission of authority. This is something very much overlooked in histories of the ‘prison’ or ‘gulag’ colony. A way of life independent of authority within ‘a tolerable social structure’ may seem ironic in a penal colony, but it was a desirable, normal ambition among labouring people of the Rocks, and even convicts behaved in this way. The convict William Noah remarked that it was ‘a cruelty to keep a man or woman sent here for Life on the store’ and not permit them to settle. An independent life ‘would make Life Comfortable & everyone would be looking forward for to help themselves in their Old age’.77 Greenway recognized this. Convicts were simply unaccustomed to being dependent prisoners, and their behaviour - their actions, clothing, attitudes to food, even, it seems, the way they stood - reflects this fundamental point. If healthy and capable, they were not disposed to institutionalisation of any kind, whether gaol, asylum, barrack, or hospital.

The failure to internalize the mentalité of subjection, of the prisoner or slave, was often remarked on by elite observers. Collins said that orders had to be republished to remind convicts that ‘they were servants of the Crown’, while the women had to be ‘impressed with the nature of their position in the colony’.78 Surely Robert Howe’s native-born workers, refusing his overbearing insistence on directing their private moral and religious lives, and

76 Bigge, Report, Appendix, evidence of Major Druitt, BT Box 1 p17 and of Thomas Messling, 27 May 1821, BT Box 1 p531.

77 Noah, Letter to a sibling, pp74-5.

Daniel Cubitt, angry at being roused from sleep and refusing to meekly do as he was bidden, were acting from the same inherited stance.

Some of those men who condemned convict workers and society themselves grew to understand the lower orders a little better. Perhaps in a small colony with scarcely any middling ranks they had a rare opportunity to become familiar with labouring people, to learn something beyond the rhetoric about disorder, profligacy and 'immorality'; something very difficult to do in England. King, who at first was condemnatory of the 'vice and dissipation' he immediately observed, in time began to see other dimensions. By 1803 he said he did not want to 'stamp the whole with the villainy of a part'. While their 'morals are not very exemplary', yet they were 'not so generally depraved as may be imagined', and there were 'many industrious and deserving characters among them'.79 Even Richard Johnson, the chaplain who initially described the convicts disgustedly as 'so blind, so hardened' to his preaching, after a few years admitted quietly that he had 'found more pleasure at times' in 'visiting the convicts in their Hutts' than in 'preaching etc'.80

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Can collectively-held ideas and commonplace actions be interpreted as nascent 'class consciousness' pursued so doggedly by some labour historians? Can transported labouring people be characterized as a 'proletariat', direct ancestors, even the 'founders' of the organized labour movements of the twentieth century, with similar outlooks, experiences and beliefs? Some historians are vaguely disappointed that the evidence of resistance to the ruling

79 HRA, King to J King, 3 May 1800, Vol 2 505ff; King to Hobart, 17 September 1803 and 1 March 1804, Vol 4 pp394, 469. Tench concluded that the convicts' behaviour 'since our arrival...has been better than could, I think, have been expected of them', First Four Years, p71.

80 Richard Johnson, Letter to Henry Fricker, 4 October 1791, ML Safe Aj 1, copy C2322.
order is so individualistic, so meagre, so ideologically incorrect, and spend a great deal of time trying to explain the absence of something that could not have existed in the first place. 81 As E. P. Thompson succinctly argued in a discussion of the meaning of ‘class’ in the eighteenth century, the problem with reading one period as a kind of ‘primitive’ forerunner to a later ‘mature’ working class, is that this ‘entails reading back into a prior society categories for which that society had no resources and that culture no terms’. 82

Clearly the people of the Rocks and Sydney cannot be described as ‘industrialized’ or ‘working class’ in the modern sense. Modern work practices, conditions and expectations, and organized resistance were almost entirely absent. Their eighteenth century style of resistance might be better described as ‘less articulate, although often very specific, direct and turbulent’. 83 Rocks people generally thought of their society in terms of the old system of the two great orders and the multitudinous ranks, not the more modern three-class system. Rather than identifying with a monolithic ‘class’ drawn together by a common ‘class struggle’, they considered themselves in terms of their immediate personal networks of family, friends and acquaintances, the vertical ties between masters and servants, patrons and patronized, and the horizontal links among men or women who shared a trade or calling, a time of arrival, or ethnic allegiance.

Atkinson and Hirst document many instances where convict workers defied their masters, insisted on certain work conditions (using their skills for example) demanded their rations or clothing, refused to eat or work until they were provided rations, occasionally burning a hayrick in a blaze of personal protest. Sometimes when commonly aggrieved, they acted

81 See Introduction, Note 13 for these portrayals and analyses of convicts.
82 Thompson, ‘Eighteenth-century English society’, p152, see also p148.
83 Ibid. p150.
together, but more often as individuals.\textsuperscript{84} We may see these acts as an unmistakable oppositional culture, but working by a great variety of means \textit{within} and with the wider social structure of rank and deference, rather than against it. These were not revolutionary acts, they did not seek to change society. Rather they were acts of negotiation, which recognized power relationships, and took every opportunity to gain advantage by them. They did not seek to overturn or even defy the system of social order of rank and power \textit{itself}, but rather to assert and defend their place in it, and strongly felt rights, 'modest, subaltern, but \textit{rights}'\textsuperscript{85} to fairness, and independence of the free labourer. And in many everyday ways, they succeeded.

Cultural commonality - the 'normal' accepted work patterns, the 'naturalness' of rank and of the power relationships between governor and people, masters and servants, acceptance of the rule of law, a measure of fairness and care for the poor - meant that collective or institutionalised action in a modern, organized class sense was unnecessary. This does not infer a harmonious, conflict-free society, for the early Rocks was marked by grievances, violent outbursts, endless squabbles, and the ongoing struggle between authority and people. But underlying consensus facilitated resolution on an individual basis, using mechanisms available. The petitions of Rocks people clearly show that they were also awake to the mechanics of deference, and exploited each obviously well-known piece of rhetoric to obtain what they wanted. Many on the Rocks and in Sydney, through their employment in building or carting or as petty officials, were partly or wholly dependent on the government for their income and food. Rocks people, ex-convicts, some labourers, and tradesmen were adept participants in the process of law, and although the law was often harsher on the propertyless than on the propertied, the people nevertheless used the authority of the courts to seek redress,

\textsuperscript{84} Hirst, \textit{Convict Society}, Chapter 2; Atkinson, 'Four Patterns', loc. cit.

settle grievances, and punish those who had injured them. Perhaps most significantly, many ex-convict Rocks people themselves became agents in the process of transportation when they were assigned convicts, and stood in positions of power over people of their own kind.
Servants and Masters

The convict assignment system, which fostered most of the Rocks’ servant/master relationships, is often described as a lottery, akin to slavery, and inherently brutal and exploitative.85 Certainly, it could be so, but then much of working life for people of the lower orders of England and Ireland might be described in the same way. A close study of the system as it worked on the Rocks, in terms of the ways that masters and servants actually behaved towards one another reveals a far more complex, far more human, and often humane, dimension. Here the Rocks does not necessarily reflect the experience of assigned servants on the large estates, nor of the convict shepherd living a solitary existence at the boundaries; but it does speak for the experiences of many convict servants in the thriving towns.

TABLE 15. ROCKS SERVANTS AND MASTERS/MISTRESSES 1822/23, BY SEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Servants</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>95*</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The wives of masters were also de facto mistresses of servants.

TABLE 16. ROCKS SERVANTS BY CIVIL STATUS 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Convict</th>
<th>Ticket of Leave</th>
<th>Pardoned</th>
<th>Free by Servitude</th>
<th>Came Free</th>
<th>Born in Colony</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

85 See for example, Connell and Irving, Class Structure in Australian History, p45; Buckley and Wheelwright, No Paradise for Workers, p50ff; Hughes, Fatal Shore, especially p302ff.
There were 183 servants living on and around the Rocks in 1822/23, making up about fifteen percent of the Rocks population. They included small numbers who were ex-convicts (holding pardons or tickets of leave, or free by servitude, a total of 17), four who had come free (including two who accompanied a ship’s captain from his ship) and ten native born youths, eight of whom were girls (see Tables 15 and 16). The native-born seem not to have much liked working as servants; perhaps they though it too lowly, when much brighter prospects abounded. A hotel advertisement which specified ‘a youth of some little education and destitute of friends’ suggests a less than enjoyable working life.

But the large majority were assigned convicts still under sentence (83%) and these made up 78% of the total of 222 convicts living on the Rocks; the remainder lived and worked independently. In the Rocks therefore, assigned convict servants were not a numerically large presence, and cannot be characterised as a great enslaved mass ruled by a wealthy few. Of 291 households, 102 had servants, averaging just under two each. This average cloaks the many households with one live-in servant and the few, mainly those of publicans or merchants, which had three, four or more. For example, Robert and Sophia Campbell had four servants, three women and a man. Presumably the women worked indoors with the family, while the man may have worked outdoors around the grounds or at the warehouse and wharf. Publican and dealer Andrew Frazier presided over a household of ten servants in Cambridge Street, eight men including a clerk and a baker, and two women. One of the women was Jane Toomb, an arrival of 1791, and probably old, and the other was Mary Jones, who probably nursed Jane, ‘prolonging her life’ and who became Frazier’s lover. Near the wharf on George Street, Messrs Berry and Wollstonecraft had six servants, four convicts, one with a Ticket of Leave and one who came free, to assist them in their shipping and dealing.

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86 Karskens, Analysis of District Constable Notebooks; for discussion see Robinson, Hatch and Brood, pp154-5; SG 8 March 1822.
ventures. They were regarded by at least one of their servants as 'the two best masters in the colony'.

Another important feature of the Rocks' servant population is that the large majority were men. There were only 24 female servants on and around the Rocks (compared to 159 men) and of these, eight were young native born women, two held tickets and one was free by servitude. Only thirteen were assigned convicts, while several convict women lived as though they were free with legal or de facto husbands. These low numbers have several explanations. The ratio of female to male convicts was low to start with. Women obviously preferred, if they could, to have their own household or to lodge, and, married or not, took advantage of the fact that this was officially tolerated. Most female servants worked not in the small ex-convict households, but for wealthy merchants and shipowners with large families, and also for publicans with large hotels. Once more, their positions in these household may have been vulnerable. Mary Jones, for example, was sent off to the Factory when her master/lover, Andrew Frazier married someone else. Yet even here that ambiguous position of women both 'trapped and enabled' may be observed. It might easily have been otherwise for Mary Jones, and in the end, in just as capricious a manner, she became a rich woman because of her relationship with Frazier.

Lawrence Stone defined the idea of the 'family' in sixteenth and seventeenth century England as referring to all the members in the household, including apprentices, resident servants, lodgers, children, all of whom were 'legally and morally subordinate to the head of the

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88 See Section 3, Note 62.
Vestiges of this traditional attitude to household relationships may be read in the Rocks households. Servants, convict or not, were treated less as lowly minions separate from the family, expendable and unimportant, than as integrated members of the household, for whom it was responsible. Indeed, it is not immediately obvious that the roles of lodgers, servants, apprentices and children were clearly delineated. Conceivably, all were expected to help out with various household tasks, blended with the work of making a living. Hence, when William Chapman and Ann Mash advertised for a baker in 1805, they specified that, in addition, he ‘must make himself useful in a family’.

The overlapping and blurring of the authority of state and household was still more overt when, occasionally, a convict was assigned to members of his or her own family. William Thurston was master responsible for his brother or nephew, Dixon Thurston, at his hotel in Cambridge Street in 1822. Just northwards along the street, Thomas Cribb was assigned to his uncle, butcher and publican George Cribb, who embroiled him in a cattle-stealing case in 1825. Convict John Granger worked for ex-convict Thomas Granger, although they did not share a house, but lived close to one another in Gloucester Street. People also took on members of the same family as servants, such as James MacNeale, a Hillsborough man, and his native-born son John James; they too worked for William Thurston. A few convict husbands, usually tradesmen, were assigned to their wives, who sometimes had other convicts assigned to them as well. The Woodley household in Argyle Street comprised Robert, a baker, assigned to his wife Elizabeth, who came free, another assigned servant, three lodgers and two, later four children. By 1827 they had moved to a stone house in Prince Street, and Robert was convicted of selling spirits without a licence. He was still a convict in 1828, although living independently with his family in Pitt Street. In spite of the much stricter rules about marriage and cohabitation in the 1820s and 1830s, placing a person with his or her own

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89 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p27.

90 SG 18 August 1805.
family was still seen as desirable, for family bonds and the bonds of authority and control would merge; or at least seem to merge.\textsuperscript{91}

The private assignment system, centred on these households, was most likely seen by convicts as preferable to public labour, which was never very efficient or effective. Of course this was of great advantage to masters, but at the same time convicts may have felt more comfortable and secure in households rather than in shared huts or lodgings. Households provided familiar hierarchies, structure, spaces, and everyday cycles, unlike the unfamiliarity and unconnectedness of public labour, and its association with punishment, gaol-gangs and institutions. More than half of the 1822/23 Rocks servants had arrived in the previous four years. They were the colony’s newcomers, for whom households provided not only shelter and food, but a place from which to find their feet, with the possibility of establishing links of patronage and deference with one’s peers and betters. Other links were probably more personal, for master and mistress in the best of circumstances could act as surrogate parents. When Ann Silk, the servant of stonemason Richard Byrne and Margaret Kelly, married in 1828, her witnesses were Richard Byrne and his daughter Catherine Winch.\textsuperscript{92}

The prospect of a ticket-of-leave, pardon and eventually the certificate of freedom, although evidently not the most consistent or even-handed of systems, at least provided a path of progress in stages and levels, and the patterns of time-of-arrival and subsequent careers, described below, suggest that for many this was successful. While a majority of servants were lately-arrived, 25% had arrived between 1811 and 1818 (most in the latter years), and


\textsuperscript{92} New South Wales Registrar General, Registration of Marriage of Ann Silk and Claus Lambert Bionisen 10 March 1828. I am indebted to Val Garner for her generosity in allowing me access to her research into the Byrne family.
there were very few servants who had arrived earlier than that (Table 17). Having completed their time or been pardoned, they had moved on, making way for the next arrivals.

TABLE 17. ROCKS SERVANTS 1822/23 DATE OF ARRIVAL IN COLONY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>1788-1800</th>
<th>1801-1810</th>
<th>1811-1818</th>
<th>1819-1823</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>173*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* omits those born in the colony.

The power of the household over the movement of servants was also flexible, and the evidence for servant mobility, for better or worse, belies the idea of a servant’s movements being ironclad and fixed. Although most (81%) convict (and other) servants lodged in the household of their master and mistress, a sizeable minority of assigned convicts did not, and often their masters did not live locally (Table 18). They lived as lodgers in other family households (sometimes with a friend of their master), or independently with their own families, or with other assigned servants in group houses.

TABLE 18. ROCKS SERVANTS LIVING-IN AND LIVING-OUT AND AVERAGE NUMBERS PER HOUSEHOLD 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Servant No.</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>Average per Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living-in</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living-out</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some servants passed from one family member to another, like William Kaley, who between 1822 and 1823 moved from William Thurston’s household to that of his brother, teacher Daniel Thurston, in Cumberland Street. Other servants had already moved on in the short months which elapsed between the two halves of the constable’s survey. Cornelius Sanderson
was with George Street dealer John Macqueen in May 1822; by August the following year he was with another dealer Charles Pritchett in Cambridge Street. By 1828 he was ploughman to John Browne of Bathurst. A Ticket of Leave servant named George Hopwood was clerk to Joseph Broadbent in Harrington Street, then moved to the Prince Street household of William Deare, and by 1828 was watchmaking for W. J. Robertson in George Street below.

**TABLE 19. OCCUPATIONS/STATUS OF TRACEABLE 1822/23 SERVANTS IN 1828**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation/Status</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Servants*</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodgers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householders</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradesmen</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constables</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners/or in Road Gangs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY:</th>
<th>Living Independently</th>
<th>Servants (Many no longer convicts)</th>
<th>Prisoners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes skilled rural workers such as fencers, stockmen or ploughmen.

An extension and magnification of this de facto mobility emerges in the comparison of servants’ whereabouts in 1822/23 and 1828. Again, the same large proportion - sixty percent - vanish, probably for the same reasons as suggested for labouring people generally. But of those who are traceable, only three out of 73 were still with the same household. One was
with Berry and Wollstonecraft, probably partly because they were good employers, and the other two were old men, perhaps kept on or remaining out of obligation, loyalty or friendship. Arthur Collins had come out on the Irish ship Marquis Cornwallis in 1796 and was still with the wealthy Irish publicans and landowners Edward and Winifred Redmond in 1828. William Gafney had come out on the Three Bees (1813), the same ship as his master, the teacher and dealer Richard Archbold. By 1828 he was 74 and had moved with the family out to Hunters Hill as their ‘house servant’. 93

The majority of servants, though, had moved on, many were servants to other masters in the towns, or worked as ploughmen, fencers, stockmen or overseers out on rural properties. Quite a number had become people of some means themselves - tradesmen, dealers, householders and their wives - as well as free labourers; these independent ex-servants made up over half the total. They may have done as Mary Jones, Andrew Frazier's assigned servant, planned to do. Only two years after her arrival and assignment, she petitioned for a Ticket of Leave, claiming that she had 'saved all her wages' and was thus able to 'enter into a small way of business for herself'. At this stage, Frazier had no objection, saying she was deserving because of her 'steady, honest and upright behaviour'. 94 Ten male ex-servants had by 1828 been incarcerated at distant penal settlements or sent to Road gangs, their convict status considerably prolonged (Table 19).

If masters and servants are examined spatially and according to civil status, a striking pattern of distribution emerges. The masters who came free, often entrepreneurs or higher civil servants, tended to live not on the Rocks proper but around its perimeter: George Street, Charlotte Place, Prince Street, and the northern end of Cambridge Street, at 'Bunker's Hill'. The pattern is reversed for the streets of the Rocks: there over 73% of masters were

93 Karskens, Analysis of the District Constables' Notebooks.

94 Mary Jones, Petition, 1822 CSC F3220 4/1866 p16.
themselves ex-convicts, either pardoned or free by servitude, or in two cases holding Tickets of Leave. Taken as a whole, ex-convicts made up nearly sixty percent of the masters to whom more recently arrived convicts were assigned (Table 20).

**TABLE 20. ROCKS MASTERS AND MISTRESSES BY CIVIL STATUS AND STREET 1822/23**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Free by Servitude</th>
<th>Ticket of Leave</th>
<th>Pardoned</th>
<th>Came Free</th>
<th>Born in Colony</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1: Perimeter Streets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total:</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage:</strong></td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-convict masters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Group 2: Rocks Proper Streets** |                     |                 |         |           |                |       |
| Cambridge Street    | 3                 | -               | 3        | 4         | 1              | 11    |
| Gloucester Street   | 1                 | 1               | 2        | 2         | -              | 6     |
| Harrington Street   | 2                 | -               | 3        | 2         | -              | 7     |
| Cumberland Street   | 3                 | 1               | 6        | 1         | -              | 11    |
| Argyle Street       | -                 | -               | -        | 1         | -              | 1     |
| Surry Lane          | 2                 | -               | -        | -         | -              | 2     |
| Essex Street        | 3                 | -               | -        | -         | -              | 3     |
| **Sub-Total:**      | 14                | 2               | 14       | 10        | 1              | 41    |
| **Percentage:**     | 34.1%             | 5%              | 34.1%    | 24.4%     | 2.4%           | 100%  |
| Ex-convict masters  |                   |                 |          |           |                | 73.2% |

**TOTALS GROUPS 1 AND 2:**

|                   | 20                | 3               | 21       | 29        | 2              | 75 *  |

**PERCENTAGE:**

|                   | 26.7%             | 4%              | 28%      | 38.7%     | 2.6%           | 100%  |

* total includes only masters/mistresses whose servants were living-in

It is thus difficult to sustain the heuristic device of constant, simple opposition and struggle between convicts and authority. The convicts, in a way, became authority, and did its work. But ex-convictism, rank and culture had a profound impact on the nature of these master-servant relationships, one which in many ways turned the ideas of discipline, punishment and control on their heads. Our concepts of master/servant relationships have tended to be defined
in terms of opposition, inequality, exploitation, and the cultural and material chasm between servants and masters. This is perfectly accurate for such households as those of the wealthy, the arrogant, the careless and capricious described so well by Barry Dyster in Servant and Master, and compellingly distilled in his account of John Piper’s attempted suicide in 1822. Piper stepped off a boat his servants were rowing in the harbour, risking their lives in the ‘inevitable search for him’. ‘In its sheer selfishness’ observes Dyster ‘this act revealed, like a lightening flash, an inward truth about masters’ relationships with their servants’. 95

The gap between the social rank of servant and master was large in these households. Collins expressed the disquiet and distaste of the higher orders at the necessity of convict servants when he wrote ‘the enemy is within our doors’. 96 Relations could be haughty and summary, servants might be ordered around and expected meekly and quietly to obey. This was the kind of servant the midshipman Campbell MacDougall was expecting when he tried to rouse young Daniel Cubitt in the middle of the night.

But the Rocks ex-convict masters and mistresses demonstrate an entirely different relationship with their servants. They cannot be characterised as strict authoritarians, nor brutal tyrants bent on exercising complete control, nor careless people for whom servants existed merely to attend to their wants. Few were interested in acting as proxy gaolers and many allowed their servants considerable freedom. This is why officials constantly ordered masters to control the movements of their assigned servants. Collins complained that ‘the decks of the [newly arrived] ships were often filled with convicts who went with merely the sanction of the master’, although masters had been ‘ordered to prevent convicts from coming aboard


96 Collins, Account, Vol 1 p319.
without a pass signed by the Judge-Advocate’. The ex-convict James Hardy Vaux, who lived for a time on the Rocks around 1822, said he permitted his servant ‘to work for his own living, allowing me a weekly sum for the indulgence, according to the custom of the colony’, suggesting that the practice was widespread. When Hunter tried to collect the names, whereabouts and so on, of female servants, and to enforce a full working day upon them, hardly any masters responded.

The nature of ‘authority’ and ‘control’ in the ordinary Rocks households was not what governors officially envisaged, and they must have turned a blind eye to what were common practices. Glimpses of servants in households on the Rocks in the 1810s and 1820s indicate that these were loose or non-existent ideas. William Kaley, assigned servant to Cambridge Street publican William Thurston, said that Solomon Davis (a violent man, and an inveterate gambler) ‘gave me the nod’ at three in the afternoon, so he left his master’s house to play two-up with him in Richard Walker’s back skillion nearby. Kaley won over eleven pounds, Davis ran off ‘crying constables, thieves, robbers and said he was robbed’. Meanwhile Kaley, a little uneasy, went into Richard Walker’s hotel and called for a pint of porter. John Neale, an 1802 arrival with a conditional pardon who had married Harriet Cheers (Richard’s daughter) and held a licence to the ‘Sapling’ in Cambridge Street, told the court in 1820 that his servant John Fulton was called upon by two other men one Sunday. The men, who had stolen money to hide, had ‘much engrossed Fulton’s time the whole of that and the day following’. There is no evidence that these masters felt any responsibility, or even right, to

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97 Ibid., Vol 1 p399.

98 Vaux, Memoirs, p142; compare with order forbidding this, ‘once more given’ in 1802, see HRA Proclamation 17 April 1802, in King to Hobart 9 November 1802, Vol 3 621.

order and control their servants’ time or activities; these were entirely their own business. Babette Smith’s reconstruction of Susannah Watson’s life as an assigned servant in the house of Daniel Eagan and his young wife Mary Ann in 1829 shows that she was able to meet a man who became her lover, and by whom she became pregnant.

At least some of the work servants performed in households was completed more in accordance with their own inclination and at their own pace than under the master’s direct orders and supervision. One of Andrew Frazier’s servants, Randall McAllister, gave evidence about an incident at Frazier’s house, adding that he then ‘retired to pursue his own Business about the Premises’. What servants did may also have depended upon their age, skills, intelligence and disposition. A young, more biddable servant might be despatched on messages or to deliver or pick up soiled laundry and suchlike. An old man like Isaac Parker was asked to wheel a load of wheat in a wheelbarrow to Dickson’s steam mill for his master, Gloucester Street baker James Rampling, while old James Wilson was sent out at three in the afternoon to gather oysters. A younger skilled male might not be expected to do such tasks. It is likely that a great deal of negotiation, of sorting out what was expected, occurred whenever a new servant joined a household.

Rocks masters and mistresses who had themselves been convicts cared less for imposing authority, morality and order than for making sure their servants did not steal their hard-

100 Papers from trials of William Kaley (or Caley), 30 May 1821, CCJ R1975 p232 AONSW; report on trial of Laurence Fennel, John Fulton, James Sullivan, William Brown and Margaret Brown, SG 2 December 1820.

101 Smith, Cargo of Women, pp51-53.

102 Papers from trial of Andrew Frazier, 9 May 1817, CCJ COD 440 p145 AONSW.

103 Re Isaac Parker, see papers from trial of William Rolfe and Joseph Mead, 27 December 1823, CCJ R1981 p322 AONSW; re James Wilson, see his inquest, 11 December 1820 CSC R6021 4/1819 p729.
earned property. Until the reliability of the newly arrived servant could be gauged, this was a source of distrust, although it must noted that neighbours, lodgers, strangers and other people's servants fell into the same category of automatic suspicion. Samuel Thorley, early Rocks publican and dealer, took investigative measures into own hands when he suspecting his servant Daniel Brady of robbing him. After someone told Thorley that Brady had 'carried a quantity of spirits into a neighbouring house', he pretended that he was going to Parramatta, but hid in his own storehouse instead. There he overheard Brady saying to a woman who came in that 'he was afraid he should do nothing that day, as he thought that a woman in the neighbourhood was on the lookout'. However, the servant changed his mind, and an hour later he forced the door, 'made directly for the spirit cask' where Thorley caught him red-handed. Besides Brady's confidante, there was another Rocks woman, equally watchful, 'on the lookout' for his thieving. Brady was ordered to work for government for three years and sent to the gaol gang in the interim. He received no sympathy from Thorley, for he had breached the rules, and placed himself outside his master's protection.  

Conflict could also erupt when the servants, if there were more than one, did not get on. They worked alongside one another and often with their masters and mistresses in spaces where functions were integrated. Hence cooking, ironing, mending, eating and so on were done in the same room. In one volatile household, a female servant named Elizabeth Thompson 'kept the family constantly in hot water' because of her 'ungovernable temper'. She refused to allow a male servant, who was preparing breakfast, access to 'her fire' where she was ironing, and allegedly threatened him with a hot iron poker and hurled a torrent of anti-Irish abuse. It seems she was defending her workspace against someone who was an interloper and whom she disliked for his Irishness. Nevertheless, her master gave her 'an excellent character as a valuable servant', her temper an unfortunate characteristic which he

104 SG 13 November 1803.
was prepared to tolerate. John Walton and Thomas Pope, Joseph Underwood’s assigned servants, were constantly ‘disturbing the peace and harmony of their master’s domicile with their midnight brawls’ and were sent to the treadmill for seven days in 1827. In other households relations were amicable and cooperative. Elizabeth Taylor, who worked for Hugh MacDonald, the Quartermaster, said in 1815 she suspected something was amiss with her ‘fellow servant’ Thomas Cowup. He was surly, refused to ‘get on with the dinner’ as she asked, and distractedly cleaned the knives instead. She said that normally ‘he never refused to do his duty...he made no complaint to me...[He was usually] sober, though given to liquor’. Her observations of his disturbed state of mind were proven: he took his firelock out to the stable and shot himself in the head.

Occasionally convict servants, like everyone else, petitioned the Governor directly about their masters. Convict shoemaker James Cross’ complaint regarding his master, the Harrington Street shoemaker Thomas Ryan, was ironic in that it focused on the kind of behaviour more usually expected of convicts, not masters. He accused Ryan of ‘improper conduct’ since he and his wife, Jane Maxwell,

are so repeatedly in a state of inebriation quarrelling and fighting with everyone, myself having been beat and struck by him several times...which has been the cause of my having a black eye. I have met with and seen so much of their immoral conduct that I consider myself in danger...

He wanted ‘if possible to live with some Person Possessed of more decorum’ or to be allowed a Ticket of Leave. Cross’ allegations were probably well-founded. Thomas Ryan’s lodgers

105 SG 19 November 1827.

106 SG 18 April 1827.

107 Inquest on Thomas Cowup, 5 May 1815, CSC R6021 4/1819 p45.

108 James Cross, Memorial, 11 December 1822, CSC F3215 4/1864 p103. He arrived on the Atlas in 1819 and should not be confused with the butcher James Cross off the Ocean (1816) who married Rocks widow Elizabeth Rickers.
were Julia Bryan who was living as a prostitute by 1824, and Ellen Flaherty who later made her living running an illegal drinking house for sailors. Ryan himself was probably a prisoner at Port Macquarie by 1828, his wife and children had disappeared. The official response to Cross, though, was curt and unsympathetic. A note on the bottom reads ‘The man on being told he must go to Carter’s Barracks returned to his Master’.

Cross’ sensibilities may have been unusual for the Rocks, hence the authorities’ impatient brushing aside of his complaint. What is intriguing and important to note, then, is that, normally, Rocks masters and servants had a great deal in common. The majority of masters who lived on the Rocks proper were ex-convicts, usually publicans or tradesmen with their own concerns. Cultural mores and assumptions, backgrounds, experiences, outlooks and attitudes were very much shared between the earlier arrived master, and the more recently arrived assigned servant. They were both of the lower orders, and as a result, their relationships were very different from those of masters and servants of the higher and lower order respectively. These masters held no great rank superiority, and were not necessarily ‘morally’ superior. Their distinction from their servants lay in their longer inhabittance and their amassing of property and businesses, not in cultural or moral habits. So we find publican Mark Byfield, who had four government servants, yet was twice sent to gaol for receiving stolen goods. Elizabeth Porter had two government servants at her house in Prince Street, but, she and her defacto husband Bernard Farrell, were described in court as ‘persons of evil name and fame’. William Clarke and Esther (or Elizabeth) Jones, a Harrington Street couple, had a servant, but Esther was an alleged pickpocket and William once defied and menaced constables sent to his house to arrest him.109 The category ‘master’ cannot be simply

equated with 'respectability' or 'law-abiding', and it cannot be assumed that only the 'respectable' were allowed assigned servants.

The cultural commonality of many Rocks masters and servants explains the absence of strict authoritarian and confrontationist behaviour as well as strong evidence for sympathy, care, and familiarity in both the modern and original sense of the word. Rooms, tables, plates and glasses were often shared by master and servant, and some probably socialized together. George Howe complained in the Gazette in 1803 that masters were partly to blame for thefts because they 'suffer servants to frequent their houses as guests whom they may promiscuously entertain'.\textsuperscript{110} There was no sense here of separate ranks or keeping servants at arms' length. Christine Stansell described similar relationships between mistresses and servants in eighteenth century New York households. They had been 'help' rather than 'servants', and the relationship had been 'generally a more casual affair than it was to become in the Victorian era, certainly as toilsome, but less bound up in the rituals of class deference'.\textsuperscript{111} Elaborate distinctions had not yet developed, and, as on the Rocks, mistresses could come from the same background as servants. Rocks people who petitioned for assigned servants did put their requests in terms of 'help' needed for a specific task. Ann Chapman, widowed with ten children, desperately needed a man to help run her passage boat service in 1811.\textsuperscript{112} William Davis said he was crippled and wanted a carpenter to help finish his Charlotte Place house.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{SG} 11 September 1803.


\textsuperscript{112} Ann Chapman/Mash, Petition, 30 October 1811, CSC R6042 4/1723 p280.

\textsuperscript{113} William Davis, Petitions, October 1810, CSC R6042 4/1725 p330,332; and 1822, CSC R6056 4/1763 p161.
A certain degree of trust could be fostered between masters and servants. Daniel Paine, Master Boat Builder feared that his house would be robbed and left a pistol in the hands of his trusted servant David Lloyd for the defence of his household. Another servant, the newly arrived Mary Poole, waited up by the fire for Paine’s return from visiting Maurice Margarot. But that night, Lloyd used the pistol to fatally wound the drunken seaman who forced his way into the house and menaced Mary Poole. He was tried for murder, convicted of manslaughter, and his master was outraged. Paine tried to have the other seaman involved arrested, argued with the Judge Advocate, cross-examined the witnesses and court on behalf of Lloyd. When he heard the sentence of six hundred lashes brought down it ‘produced so great an emotion in me as to Cause me to Stamp my with my Foot’ and mutter that ‘five hundred of them are for me’. For this he was threatened with a charge of contempt of court by the Governor. The master’s feelings of responsibility and efforts notwithstanding, it was the servant who suffered the flogging. Lloyd, however, recovered, married, became a Rocks householder, carpenter, publican and later a landowner, and on one occasion caught a man trying to rob his house; the would-be thief went to the gallows.\footnote{114}{See Knight and Frost, \textit{Journal of Daniel Paine}, p23ff.}

Some masters would come to the aid of their servants with money or as guarantors. When Solomon Davis threatened to have William Kaley arrested for ‘robbing’ him unless he gave him ten pounds, Kaley

\begin{quote}
said that on account of my being a prisoner and he a freeman I would, and accordingly I sent for my Master and requested him to pay [Davis] the ten pounds and he gave him an order.\footnote{115}{Papers from trial of William Kaley (or Caley), 30 May 1821, CCJ R1975 p232 AONSW.}
\end{quote}

William Thurston knew that his convict servant might suffer punishment if the authorities believed Davis’ story, so agreed to pay off the latter’s extortionate demand to keep the matter
quiet. The words ‘I sent for my Master’ are also telling of the relationship between the two: reliance, trust, protection.

James Rampling, worried that his old servant Isaac Parker was gone too long with the barrowload of wheat, set off himself to look for him. He found that Parker had been waylaid by two thieves who bought him drinks at the Princess Charlotte hotel and then ran off with the flour. James Wilson’s master Mr Edgeworth also came looking for him, calling in at Elizabeth Porter’s ‘and asked if his old man was within’.116

Glimpses of care, sympathy and familiarity between servants and masters are also threaded through accounts of everyday life. Recall the young servant Mary Oakes assisting Mary Harris in her long, fruitless labour, then trying to bury the still-born child, as bidden. Richard Cheers came home one evening to find his wife Margaret Foggarty drunk again, sitting and drinking coffee with their servant Henry King. Perhaps King was trying to sober her a little, knowing her husband’s contempt, knowing they no longer shared a bed. Cheers barked ‘turn her out’, but when she tried to stand, she sank to the floor. Instead, King helped get her to her bed, holding the candle aloft in the dark room while her husband covered her up.117 At another inquest, a farming family of the Field of Mars said that they provided their servant with his favourite food (‘pig pudding’, or black pudding) ‘gratis, independent of his own meat’. When he complained of being unwell, they gave him mixtures of hot milk and ginger, and put warm bricks at his feet as he lay in bed.118

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116 Re Isaac Parker, see papers from trial of William Rolfe and Joseph Mead, 27 December 1823, CCJ R1981 p322 AONSW; re James Wilson, see his inquest, 11 December 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p729.

117 Inquest on Margaret Cheers (Foggarty), 23 August 1810, CSC R6021 4/1819 p77.

118 Inquest on Patrick Fanning, 21 July 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p199.
Other servants earned the esteem of their masters, and this was expressed in funeral and burial rites. The comfortably-off Rocks thespian watchmaker, John Sparrow, thought a great deal of his servant Francis MacNamara. The servant was bitten by a ‘white viper’ while out cutting a boat-load of timber in the bush, and went to bed uncomplaining. When Sparrow heard he was ill the following morning he was ‘alarmed’ and went straight in to see him, only to find him in a twitching stupor. He died at dawn the next morning, and Sparrow buried him ‘in a style of decency which argued the worth of the deceased, of whose fidelity too much cannot be said’.\textsuperscript{119}

But for all the care, assistance, sympathy, esteem, this was not a colony of fixed or even long-term stable relationships between masters and servants. Servants constantly moved on and out, went to other masters, found employers for their skills, struck out independently. The evidence for care, trust and sympathy denotes not so much lifelong loyalty within the fixed and forever unequal relationship of master and servant, as the commonality of outlook and humanity which made it possible for these relatively short relationships to be nevertheless meaningful as well as useful, and which mitigated against the disconnectedness of migration and mobility.

\textsuperscript{119} SG 2 and 9 August 1807.