for Margot, Eliza, Isabel
and Leo Earl
and
for Richard
ABSTRACT

This study explores the early history of Sydney's Rocks area at two levels. First, it provides a much-needed history of the city's earliest, oldest-surviving and best-known precinct, one which allows an investigation of popular beliefs about the Rocks' convict origins, and which challenges and qualifies its reputation for lowlife, vice and squalor.

Second, by examining fundamental aspects of everyday life - townscape, community and commonality, family life and work, human interaction and rites of passage - this study throws new light on the origins of Sydney from the perspective of the convict and ex-convict majority. Despite longstanding historical interest in Sydney's beginnings, the cultural identity, values, habits, beliefs of the convicts and ex-convicts remained largely hidden. The examination of such aspects reveals another Sydney altogether from that presented by governors, artists and mapmakers. Instead of an orderly outpost of empire, a gaol-town, or a 'gulag', the Sydney the Rocks represents was built and occupied largely according to the tastes, priorities and inclination of the people, with relatively little official regulation or interference. While the Rocks appeared 'disorderly' in the eyes of the elite, it nevertheless functioned according to cultural rules, those of the lower orders - the artisans, shopkeepers, publicans, labouring people, the majority of whom were convicts and ex-convicts.
The Rocks also reveals a Sydney bearing the hallmarks of a preindustrial society. It was divided not in terms of modern classes, but according to multitudinous ranks within two great orders, the higher and lower, and it functioned vertically according to notions and habits of deference and obligation, by personal dealings and negotiations, and by ties of family, friendship, ethnicity, community and generation. The attitudes and habits of Rocks people towards marriage and gender-roles, childbirth and childrearing, to sickness, growing old, dying and mourning the dead, to privacy, work, leisure, and to time itself, also took the older forms. They were little affected by new notions of gentility and respectability, emerging in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, notions which reshaped manners and outlooks in western societies.

Yet Rocks people were obviously also familiar with modern concepts of commercialism and consumerism which had already revolutionised sections of English society over the eighteenth century. They shared ideas of material improvement, of ‘getting and spending money’, amassing property by whatever means, and they desired and owned fine clothes, jewellery, and ceramics. Hence the material dimension also reveals convict Sydney in a dramatically different light from the images of poverty, misery and domination. Material life also bespeaks constant opportunistic strivings and struggles, set within the broader, uncontrollable external forces of fate and fortune. The tension and dynamics between the two, and the mentality required for each, lie at the heart of the behaviour and experience of early Rocks, and Sydney, people.
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# Abbreviations

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<td>Archives Office of New South Wales</td>
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<td>CCJ</td>
<td>Court of Criminal Jurisdiction</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea for this study germinated nearly a decade ago. I was commissioned to write a brief historical outline of a site between Cumberland and Gloucester Streets in the Rocks for the Department of Public Works. While the northern end was a vacant space, an ex-bus station littered with stored building materials, overgrown with creepers, at the southern end were rows of derelict nineteenth-century houses, boarded up (ineffectively) against squatters. But the rear spaces and structures of these houses were intact: laundries, lavatories, washing lines, paved yards and laneways; the whole simply left as it was, though quiet now, and weed-covered from disuse.

In researching that site, I discovered that, despite its billing as ‘birthplace of a nation’, a ‘historic village’ and suchlike, and the considerable sums invested in its restoration and preservation, the Rocks had no serious written history. At the time I was able to write an account from pictures and maps, directories and rate books, and the narratives of early twentieth century amateur historians. Yet the site remained a mystery, intriguing, an intimate glimpse of the forgotten urban world of the nineteenth century. What were these people like? What kinds of lives had they been able to make here? What individuals, families, communities existed here?

An Australian Postgraduate Research Scholarship awarded in 1991 gave me the opportunity to research and write the Rocks’ history on a full-time basis. Hence the first organizations to be acknowledged and thanked are the Department of Education, Employment and Training, and the Department of History at the University of Sydney. I had the good fortune to have
Professor Brian Fletcher as my supervisor. An historian of considerable standing, widely published, and also very busy, he provided enormous support in everything from the broader historical perspectives of colonial life, to the minutia of style and grammar, and well as never-failing encouragement. In the first years he provided sensible and tactful suggestions on keeping the subject under control. The thesis telescoped with astonishing rapidity from a complete history, down to a history to c1930; then it was to conclude with outbreak of Plague in 1900; and down once more to a history ending about 1860. Finally it became clear that a study using this methodology, range of fields and amount of detail should cover just the early colonial period, to c1830. Fortunately the shrinking process terminated there; else I should perhaps have written merely of ‘The Rock’.

For such seemingly obscure people, there exists a wealth of information, much of which is held by the Mitchell Library and the Archives Authority of New South Wales. No research of this kind could be carried out without the courteous and helpful people who staff these reading rooms, people who fetch the books, drag out trolleys of old volumes, copy the documents, maps and pictures. Mention should be made of the enlightened staff at the Archives who, confronted with my excited gibberish over having discovered the District Constables Notebooks, waived the ten-page limit on xerox copies and provided me with all eighty pages. The statistical and social analysis of streets, households, families and neighbours which was so important to this study was thus facilitated.

The Sydney Cove Authority also holds considerable resources for research, particularly in the form of maps and pictures. Here I acknowledge the help of past personnel, heritage architect Noni Boyd, archaeologists Jane Lydon and Nadia Iacono, and more recently, archaeologist
Wayne Johnson. The process of research and writing involved discussions and consultations with these people, who work with the Rocks' material culture, as well as with many other colleagues and friends in the disciplines of both history and archaeology. I was fortunate that Carol Liston was undertaking similar research on the people of Parramatta; many animated and fruitful comparative discussions (and late nights) ensued. Other historians - Rhys Isaac, Shane White, Stephen Garton, Julia Horne, Penny Russell, John Shields, Hilary Carey, Shirley Fitzgerald, Marian Quarly, Linda Young, Paul Ashton - have given great assistance, some by reading this and related work, and providing critical comment, others in less formal ways, with suggestions, data, references, contextual perspectives, encouragement, enthusiasm, a patient ear; and so on.

In 1994 I was given the opportunity to apply what I had learned about the Rocks and its people to the research design and planning, and then the progress and analysis, of a major archaeological investigation on the Rocks. The site was that same one I had investigated in 1986, between Cumberland and Gloucester Street; there is, of course, pleasing symmetry in this. The convergence of the two disciplines is a first for Sydney, and marks a new direction in the interpretation of urban historical archaeology here. The initiation and success of the project is largely due to the foresight and energy of archaeologist Richard Mackay, of the firm Godden Mackay, Heritage Consultants, who remained determined and committed despite considerable opposition from archaeologists representing academic and professional organizations. Some of the archaeological evidence used in this study comes directly from that site, via the skilled, thoughtful and dedicated team with whom I have had the good fortune to work over the past year - thank you to Graham Wilson, Martin Carney, Dominic Steele, Matthew Kelly, Kate Holmes, Nadia Iacono, Kevin Barnes and the indomitable Iain
Stuart. I am also grateful for the assistance of archaeologist Wendy Thorp, who has also written about the archaeology of the Rocks, and who shares my interest in getting past artefact catalogues towards the people who lost or threw away all those ‘small things forgotten’.

The ‘Big Dig’, as it became known, received a great deal of publicity and attracted thousands of visitors and volunteers. Among them were family historians, including Bob Failes, Val Garner, and Kate Wingrove and others, who are descended from Rocks people. I want to acknowledge their generosity in offering and providing me with painstakingly researched notes and family histories, and I hope this study and the one which follows will offer them something in return. Thanks similarly to Bob Bullivant, our accountant, who, as it turns out, is descended from Rocks publicans and dealers Charles Bullivant and Maria Ikin. Margaret and Bruce Williams helped me tame and harness the demon computer, and Margaret’s professional skills in proof-reading and word processing, as well as her talent and interest in history, were essential in the production of the work.

Which brings me to my own family. My parents Francine and Bill Karskens have given unquestioning support over the years that this study has entailed, and helped out in countless practical ways. The steadiest support over the long haul came, as it does in all things I do, from Richard Waterhouse. In our often seamless and felicitous blend of domestic and intellectual, he was sounding-board, critic, friend, he shared enthusiasm for the inspirational discoveries, and during the more mundane and time-consuming phases and tasks, offered the constant encouragement and understanding that only someone who shares the delights and torments of writing history can provide.
Introduction

The Rocks. A simple, direct, plain-speaking name for the part of Sydney which grew on and around the craggy rocks on the western slopes above the town from the earliest years of white settlement. The name, like the neighbourhood, survived attempts to remove it; the Rocks could not be subsumed into wider Sydney.

Today the area regarded as the Rocks stretches along George Street North from Grosvenor Street, under the Cahill Expressway, which forms a kind of modern gateway, northwards to Dawe’s Point, where George Street turns under the deep shadow and distant roar of the Harbour Bridge. The old Campbell’s Wharf area, with its row of gabled warehouses on the waterside to the north-east is considered part of the Rocks. To the west, the high concrete walls of the multi-laned approaches to the Harbour Bridge, running parallel to Cumberland Street, mark off the western boundary in a final and devastating way.

But these are modern boundaries, allotted to the Sydney Cove Authority as the area of its administration. In its early years, and until the late 1820s and 1830s, the Rocks was far less linear in shape. It extended from Church Hill (at present-day Grosvenor Street, still steep, still churched) in the south, to around Argyle Street to the north. Beyond to the north were a few houses, and the lands, the go-downs (or wharves), and the residence and business seat of the merchant Robert Campbell, who was never a resident of the Rocks. George Street itself was not part of the Rocks either at this stage, for the place was focused on the slopes above. These included, particularly, the areas behind the first provision stores in (present-day) Grosvenor Street, behind the first General Hospital, on the outcrops up along what is now Globe Street, and around Harrington and Gloucester Streets behind the modern Archives building. There were rows of houses, too, still further up in Cumberland and Princes Street, from which the spread of the harbour, slapping, winking below, could be scanned for ships.
Fig. 1: The Rocks and Sydney: location.

Fig. 2: The Rocks, Sydney: modern Sydney Cove Authority boundaries shown in red, and original location, 1788-c1830, shown by shaded area. Source: Based on extract from 'Parish of St Philip', 1968, AONSW.
Fig. 3: The Rocks in 1835, showing the original, characteristically irregular street configuration. Some streets were radically altered in the first decades of the twentieth century, producing the present-day alignments (Fig. 2). By 1835 some allotments had been granted and built over north of Argyle Street and at Millers Point, then known as Darling Harbour.

and their promise of news, goods, trading profits, new faces, old friends. Down to the west were the isolated rocky slopes of Cockle Bay.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Rocks became one of the most heavily populated urban areas in Australia, and it was reputed and feared as a slum by the 1880s. After an outbreak of Bubonic Plague in 1900, the whole peninsula was resumed by the government, the oldest and most decrepit buildings demolished, and the steady exodus of people began. But while Millers Point on the western side survived as an intact, functioning community,¹ the Rocks under the control of the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority since 1970, did not fare so well. Although it was preserved physically both by default through neglect, and by the active intervention of union Green Bans in the 1970s, the Authority discouraged the remaining residents and instead managed and developed the area as a historical tourist attraction.²

The sea still lies below, the wharves and warehouses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century still surround it, albeit along a radically reshaped shoreline. Visitors throng George Street, the Rocks' public face, with its array of Victorian and Edwardian shops and pubs repainted in heritage colours and reopened as souvenir and craft shops, galleries and cafes. Tourist buses lumber through the streets; on weekends especially crowds come to the Rocks to shop, eat, and stroll.

Higher up the slopes, along Harrington, Cambridge Gloucester and Cumberland Streets, and their connecting lanes, steep steps and footways, more of the genuine early townscape


survives. The close-built terraces of houses and shops include a few built plainly in the 1840s and 1850s, the stuccoed, more decorative Victorian rows, and the well-intentioned liver brick public housing of the early twentieth century. The step-and-shelf arrangement which marked the area's physical development along the lines of the rocks tiers, is still abundantly evident, although examples of the poorest type of housing for which the Rocks was notorious have for the main part vanished. Gone too are most of the pre-1830 houses built by convicts and ex-convicts and their children: exceptions include Reynolds cottage in Harrington Street (c1830), while the gutted shell of Cadman's cottage stands below in George Street (Fig. 5). On the other side of the ridge in Kent Street, the semidetached cottages built by Rocks stonemason and publican Thomas Glover in 1822 are also still extant (Fig. 4). The foundations of houses built in the 1810s, and the postholes of still earlier huts were exposed during the 1994 Cumberland/Gloucester Street archaeological excavation, but they have been re-interred, and their fate is undecided.3

From the many vantage points, the vistas over the Rocks, the great arch of the Bridge, and the city to the south change constantly, surprisingly. From Harrington Street the view down the narrow alley of the notorious 'Suez Canal' still reaches to the water, a rare remaining visual link. Otherwise you must climb up to the freeway to see the 'rich prospect over the Heads' so prized by the first Rocks inhabitants. The area is an anomalous, wonderful survivor on the northern edge of the city. Its early sins can be forgiven, or at least set aside under the mantle of the picturesque. It has great popular historical appeal as a remainder of a lost world, whose configuration and texture is so different to that of the modern city and suburb.

Fig. 4: Glover Cottages, Kent Street. These houses were built by the Rocks stonemason and publican Thomas Glover in about 1822. They were Sydney's oldest conjoined houses until the party wall was removed during 'restoration' in the 1980s.

(Photograph: G. Karskens 1994.)

Fig. 5: Cadman's Cottage, below George Street, in the late 1960s, before 'restoration' which gutted the inside and removed the garden. The house is thought to have been built in 1816 for the Government Coxswain John Cadman.

Source: Author's collection.
Thousands of words have been written about the Rocks in newspaper articles, glossy brochures, booklets and the like, and millions of dollars paid out to conserve it. Yet, in spite of the rich material heritage, and slogans such as 'the birthplace of a nation', there is no scholarly history of the Rocks. There are popular historical images and themes, mostly presented as picture books, with names of famous inhabitants and something about their doings, and there are numerous, but fragmented, studies of individual buildings and sites (my own among them).4 My conversations over the last few years with those who work with the physical heritage of the Rocks - conservation architects and planners, archaeologists and museum curators - often turned on the need for an overall history of the place, so that the mass of historical, architectural and archaeological data now available might be drawn together and understood. In the absence of overview, their work is frustrated, for the meanings of the tantalisingly intimate artefacts, from houses and street patterns to old shoes and broken crockery, remains elusive, inconclusive. The old names are faceless, the historical figures unknowable strangers.5


Fig. 6: Much of the modern Rocks combines early and modern textures and materials. The steps connecting Harrington with Gloucester Street are typical of the Rocks. They are rounded and worn, while new ashlar pavers form the footpath; new ashlar stonework sits above an early rock cutting. The 1844 Susannah Place terrace glimpsed at the top is now a museum.

(Photograph: G. Karskens 1994).

Fig. 7: A rare surviving glimpse of the water down the Suez Canal from Harrington Street.

(Photograph: G. Karskens 1994).
Ironically, the Sydney Cove Authority (the word ‘Redevelopment’ quietly dropped from its title only recently) appears to be distancing itself from the ‘history’ it is best known for, yet which is so little understood. ‘The historical aspect of The Rocks should not be oversold’ declared a recent document outlining a five-year marketing strategy, ‘It should be used as a backdrop’.\(^6\) Perhaps the ‘seedy, sick and sinful’ past is to be downplayed as an unfortunate sidelight; or perhaps history is too difficult and alien, and heritage too bothersome and limiting.

This study is thus pitched at two levels. One is to provide the first part of a much-needed history of the city’s earliest, oldest-surviving and best-known precinct. The temporal framework, 1788-1830, chosen for the methodological and broad historical/cultural reasons discussed below, allows for the investigation, verification or disproving of the many popular understandings, of the Rocks’ origin and reputation. What were the first settled areas? How old is its name? What did it look like? How was the environment altered? Was it the convicts’ side of the town, and if so, what kind of families and community did they create? How did they live? When was the Rocks’ reputation as the haunt of the town’s lowlife, (encompassing prostitution, drinking, gambling, violence, and a criminal underworld, as well as filth and poverty) established? Was there a basis in truth for this reputation? Was the Rocks comprised solely of low pubs and brothels, its people depraved, violent, almost inhuman?

These questions pre-empt the second level of enquiry: what can the Rocks tell us about the origins of Sydney? What kind of society was it? How did it function? How was it divided? What was the cultural identity of the convicts and ex-convicts who established and shaped the neighbourhood? Despite countless studies of the foundation of the convict colony, and

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more than two decades of urban social history, we still do not really know much about the vast majority of Sydney’s people as human beings. These people, who were regarded in their own time as ‘persons of no consequence’, have been portrayed variously as picturesque historical figures, paragons of female virtue, the faceless, indistinguished mass of the proletariat, victims of urban injustice and mismanagement, victims of sexual oppression. A close examination of the Rocks, a place well-defined physically, and in the mind, may allow the intimacy necessary for a deeper understanding.

What is known about the Rocks’ history? At a popular level, the name still conjures up a potent set of images among Sydneysiders. The Rocks was Sydney’s bad place, the haunt of lowlife, old filthy slums, twisted streets and blind alleys, bad air, poor health, plague and pestilence. The physical ills were symptomatic of moral degeneracy: fearful rookeries and low pubs were gathering places for thieves, prostitutes preyed on hapless sailors. Whatever basis in truth the area provided was fuelled and bloated over the nineteenth century by its critics, from the 1830 condemnation of Archdeacon Broughton, and Alexander Harris’ tales of brutish convicts and dying prostitutes in 1847, to the generations of newspaper journalists after a good story, journal scribblers hoping to publish, and preachers, charity workers and government officials with reform on their minds.\(^7\) The popular ‘history’ we have of the Rocks is a bundle of old social fears, literary conventions, moral and social crusades, fascination with other worlds.

It is curious that historians of Sydney have not investigated the Rocks, an area embedded so deeply in the city’s psyche. Perhaps it is so ‘well-known’, its reputation so widely accepted, no-one bothered to look more closely. The early twentieth century amateur historians, like

Walk the Wicked Waterfront

Spend two hours on a guided walk of Sydney's wicked waterfront

Crimes and crimes
Pubs and clubs
Opium dens, murders and mystery
Pox, plague and pestilence

Starting with refreshments at History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney.
11.00 am and 2.00 pm Sunday 7, Wednesday 10, Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 April, 1991.
Adults $10.00, Children $5.00. Bookings are essential: (02) 2578001.

Fig. 8: A flier for a historic walking tour beckons the reader to explore the 'seedy, sick and sinful' past of the Rocks and waterfront areas. Something of the nineteenth-century popular fascination yet revulsion for the 'other' side of Sydney clearly lingers.
J. M. Forde (‘Old Chum’), C. H. Berrie, J. H. Watson and William Freame walked the old streets, made notes and told tales of the ‘olden days’ in their newspaper columns, enthusiastically blending what they saw with facts and folklore, threaded through with the urgent understanding that the city was changing, and would never be the same again.\(^8\) Contributors to the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* also often wrote about early Sydney, delving into the land titles records and other official records.\(^9\) In 1966, Unk White produced a small booklet, *The Rocks, Sydney*, which became very popular. It set a brief historical account beside Olaf Ruhén’s exquisite sketches of the Rocks, not only picturesque old streetscapes and city rooftop views, but backyards strewn with the detritus of everyday life, steps worn and hollowed, cracked retaining walls, washing lines, with the modern city skyline a ghostly, slightly menacing backdrop. Somehow, the artist transformed these once-reviled images of ‘slum’ life into something charming in its irregularity; a modern, sanitised image of the Rocks was sealed.\(^10\)

Some of the general studies of convicts and convict life in early Sydney are essential for this study in terms of both suggesting models and providing the wider research context. Older studies tended to be obsessed with the moral standing of the convicts: what kind of human material were they? The argument swung over the decades from the oppressed and suffering

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Fig. 9: ‘From the Bridge Stairs’, one of Unk White’s 1966 drawings of Gloucester Street, depicting the picturesque detail, scale and arrangement of the Rocks streetscapes, while the modern city looms ominously behind.

convict, transported for the theft of a handkerchief or a loaf of bread, to the convicts as 'vile rabble' from a sinister criminal underclass of English society.¹¹

These negative images were particularly focussed on female convicts. Portia Robinson, in The Women of Botany Bay (1988, republished 1993) sought to investigate and disprove the old 'damned whores' image (ironically taken up, unquestioned, by feminist historians in the 1970s) and did much to flesh out, humanize and qualify the role of women in the early colony. At base, though the argument remains a moral one - were they good or bad? The Rocks is described as a kind of receptacle for the atypical, immoral 'street women'. Chapter 10 concludes with the assertion that the Rocks was where the 'street women' lived, the 'bad' women, as opposed to the 'respectable Women of Botany Bay'. This reliance on the well-known 'Rocks' stereotype, usually a brief reference in a larger narrative, is typical of most books dealing with early Sydney.¹²

Connell and Irving in Class Structure in Australian History outlining a general Marxist model, simply characterise convicts as a proletariat. Hence they assume that capitalism, the industrial revolution and a modern class system was not only fully formed in England by the 1780s, but


¹² Portia Robinson, The Women of Botany Bay: A reinterpretation of women in Australian society, fp 1988 Melbourne, Penguin, 1993, p214. Kay Daniels makes this point succinctly, writing of the 'long-established pattern in which historians when writing about women feel compelled before all things to sort the "good" woman from the bad, the prostitute from the respectable "family woman", and to establish the existence and then contrast the character and experience of these two "groups" of women'. See her 'Prostitution in Tasmania', in Daniels (ed.) So Much Hard Work: Women and Prostitution in Australia Sydney Fontana 1984 p22, 25. Michael Cannon's Who's Master? Who's Man (Melbourne, 1971) is another typical study where the Rocks makes a brief appearance, and only in terms of its traditional reputation for poverty and lowlife.
transplanted holus bolus to Botany Bay. Here the Rocks also rates a mention: it may have been an ‘attempt by working men and women to carve out their space for living from a highly repressive environment’. This remains an invitation to further research only; the cultural dimension of working lives is not further discussed.\textsuperscript{13}

Stephen Nicholas and his co-authors also took an economic direction in the debate, and examined the convicts, at least after 1817, as workers. Arguing from statistical evidence, rather than ideological stance, they concluded that ‘the proportion of convicts in the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupational categories was roughly the same as the percentages of each skill class for the English workforce’. The convicts thus were not unskilled ne’er-do-wells, but brought ‘useful skills’ with them, and three-quarters of the English convicts could read and/or write, ‘a significantly higher percentage than the average for all English workers (58%)’. In many cases the crimes were work-related - pilfering of goods, tools or material, stealing from masters - suggesting that many were actually in work when arrested.\textsuperscript{14} Deborah Oxley has extended and deepened the argument to recognize the many and valuable skills brought by female convicts.\textsuperscript{15}


\textsuperscript{15} Deborah Oxley, ‘Packing her (economic) bags: convict women workers’, \textit{Australian Historical Studies}, No 26 No 102 April 1994, 57-76.
There are also two scholarly studies dealing with the Rocks in the second half of the nineteenth century which deserve mention for their methodological approaches.

Max Kelly’s essay ‘Picturesque and Pestilential: The Sydney Slum Observed 1860-1900’, (1977) sought to recall, once more, the poor, overcrowded, insanitary conditions in which the city’s working classes were forced to live. This was the ugly truth behind those picturesque facades. Kelly’s study offered a timely critique of the old myths of Australian cities as ‘workers’ paradises’, and the new myths engendered by the restored and smartly painted heritage streetscapes.\(^{16}\)

In Alan Mayne’s *Representing the Slum: Popular journalism in a late nineteenth century city*, the newspaper reports about the Rocks and places like it in Sydney are re-read not so much as sources, but as documents about the minds of the journalists and, by extension, of their largely middle-class audiences. The reports are dissected and analysed for their literary themes and imagery. History becomes a play in which the slums are inhabited ‘not by socially credible individuals, but by theatrical types appropriate to the settings in which they appear’.

It is not Mayne’s purpose in this book to tell us anything new about the ‘socially credible individuals’, the real people of the Rocks, and his analysis of the texts is admirable. But in this avowedly post-modernist view, in which the only certainty is the existence of the text itself, the people become even more distant and submerged than the exploited figures in the social history of the 1970s and 1980s. Are they really utterly lost to us? Do the journalists

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ever unwittingly let something of the real past slip through their armoury of literary devices?17

The methodological issues and problems of urban histories to date are evident in the historiographic discussion above. With regard to the study of the Rocks itself, in most cases the existing studies are pitched at a level too broad to deal with individuals and communities, and simply fall back on convenient stereotypes. They are not intended as socio-cultural studies, and hence rarely question ‘givens’ such as class and gender, let alone culture. More specific studies of Sydney have tended to rely on official, easily accessible records, like government enquiries and reports. Strictly old-style Marxist interpretations tend to represent the people as constant, undifferentiated victims. In Mayne’s analysis, they disappear altogether. For the main part, however it may be observed that few historians have taken the time to collect and collate the scraps, the gleanings available about the lives of early Sydney people.

One of the exceptions is Portia Robinson. The Women of Botany Bay is empirically based on an enormous amount of research. The problem is that the net falls too widely, so that while many of Sydney’s early women fall into it at one time or another in their lives, most also quickly slip through it, leaving only a little of their experience for us to ponder. But it would be impossible to reconstruct the entire lives (in the fashion, for instance, that Babette Smith achieved in A Cargo of Women) of thousands of women.18 A better methodology, then, might include intensive, ethnographic-style research into a limited area which was both spatially and mentally well-defined. It is thus partly ‘community’ history, except that the pursuit of ‘community’ (whatever that might mean) is not the sole aim. Further, the means of assessing and interpreting the mass of available material is ethnographic as well as

17 Alan Mayne, Representing the Slum: Popular journalism in a late nineteenth century city, Melbourne, Melbourne University History Monograph Series, 1990, p103.

empirical. The sources, including documents, maps, pictures and material evidence, provide the bare ‘facts’ of time and place and so on, but they are also holograms of their times. They contain or suggest the myriad ‘vivid glimpses...of people doing things’, actions and gestures, both small and informal, or ritualised and public.\textsuperscript{19} All the ‘small things forgotten’ retrieved from archaeological excavation, the ‘slants and tangents’ unintentionally conveyed in the structures and words of the documents, the patterns and ambiguities of townscape configuration, are clues by which a cultural reconstruction may be built up, layer by layer.\textsuperscript{20} In this way, too, a new direction towards a cultural understanding of early Sydney is possible, for the ethnographic endeavour bypasses the moral pendulum, swinging endlessly between the search for ‘vice’ and ‘respectability’, ‘villainy’ and ‘blamelessness’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’. It opens a window on the way people considered themselves, what they thought was important, the way they interacted with one another, in the context of their locale and society as a whole. Rocks people begin to emerge as human beings: their struggles and feuds, personal relationships, love, loyalty and loathing are all in evidence, and are usually inextricably bound to the place where they live. An understanding of the spatial dimension is therefore vital.


As this study examines so many aspects of everyday life, there are many contextual studies, dealing with everything from townscape to child-rearing, which are useful and relevant as interpretive tools. These are discussed and cited in the text. On a broader level, the context provided by British and American social and cultural studies is essential for framing the underlying questions, and for comparative case studies in methodology. The broad area of enquiry concerns the impact of the industrial revolution, or lack thereof. This issue is essential to the more intimate study of the Rocks, for if the early colony cannot be termed a modern ‘class’ society, was the nature of its society and culture then preindustrial? To what extent? What were the signs?

Stuart Blumin in *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City 1760-1900*, recreated the preindustrial city of America as a backdrop to his exploration of the emergence of the new middle class during and after the industrial revolution. By focusing on changing social, economic, spatial and cultural patterns, he sketched out urban environments which were relatively small, where people of all ranks, from unskilled labourers to wealthy merchants and professional men lived in close proximity to one another and to their places of work. For artisans in particular, home and work were inseparable, as workshops were found in the homes. People lived close by the streets, they moved about on foot, and many everyday transactions occurred there. The city was, in short, ‘small in scale, small in the scale of its enterprises and largely lacking in the specialised area homogeneity that would later characterise large parts of the modern metropolis’, while the society might be described as ‘face-to-face’, with the frequent interaction of people of different social standing on a personal, though by no means egalitarian, basis.

The industrial revolution brought with it urban and social revolution. The newly expanded cities needed new means of production, management, distribution and transport. Blumin traces the evolution of the new middle class from the old middling folk, and the means of its
self assertion and self definition through work, consumption, residential location, formal and involuntary association and family organization and strategy. In each case there is clear evidence of the divergence of society and culture and the growth of separatism. The middle classes disassociated themselves from manual work by becoming entrepreneurs who bought, sold, distributed, insured, and so on, the products of other people’s work. They distinguished themselves physically from the old cities and from working people by building suburbs, apart from, yet still a part of the city. They adopted new outlooks and habits, or refashioned old ones, for practically every aspect of their lives, from carefully controlled and ritualized modes of social interaction to the manner in which the dead were mourned and buried.  

Historians of eighteenth century England agree that the century was one of remarkable changes, predating and precursing those that Blumin describes for nineteenth century American cities. What remains controversial is the extent to which the industrial revolution changed the structure of society (from rank to class), cultural identity, and the shape of the towns and cities. McKendrick argues convincingly that consumer/commercial revolution in England during the eighteenth century had already fostered the foundations of modern ideas about change and progress, gentility, fashion, bodily comfort and appearance. These had obvious ramifications for attitudes to material things as well as the growth of affect in personal and family relationships.  

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of heavy industries and the factory system emerging generally 'as a marked feature of British industrial activity after 1780'. But the latter changes were by no means all-encompassing, for business and manufacturing were, to a large extent, still carried on in old ways, employing preindustrial work, transport and power-source patterns.

Historians disagree about when precisely the social and cultural impact of the industrial revolution, in the sense of a new class system related to the means of production, and fostering mass class consciousness, emerged. E. P. Thompson argued in his seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* that the modern working class not only had early antecedents which predate the industrial revolution, but had emerged fully formed by 1830. Peter Linebaugh in his *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* presents evidence of urban working-class consciousness and action in London through his study of those 1,242 men and women hanged at Tyburn between 1703 and 1772. Yet, for the rest of the country, David Cannadine in his study of the invention of the traditions of the British monarchy in the nineteenth century argues that, at least until the 1870s, the uneven development of the economy and slow adoption of steam power meant that while Britain may have been the 'workshop of the world', the workshops were both small in size and relatively few in number. Engels' Manchester, with its massive mills and segregated suburbs, was the exception rather than the rule.

In 1851 agriculture was still the largest employer of labour, and 'country towns large and small...were still the norm, so far as urbanization in the mid-nineteenth century was

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concerned'.

Society, by and large, was still traditional in the sense of being a ‘localized, provincial, face-to-face world.’ Finally, Patrick Joyce in his *Visions of the People* has demonstrated that even in heavily industrialised Manchester, traditional regional and localized traits, dialects and attitudes, were still the dominant forces of everyday life there throughout the nineteenth century. The language of the emerging working class associations was not that of modern class struggle and antagonism, but was still focused on traditional concepts of universality, the common good of the organic society. Joyce argues that modern class did not really emerge until after the First World War.

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How might we describe the cultural identity of early Sydney, founded at a time when so many social, cultural and economic changes were underway in England? In June 1804 a Rocks woman named Mary Jones, most likely a First Fleet arrival, died ‘at a very advanced age’ and her funeral ‘was performed...with a *splendour* suited to her avocation during her latest years’. It comprised, wrote *Sydney Gazette* editor George Howe, employing his customary ironic twists, ‘from twelve to fifteen *spotless damsels* robed in white’ following the coffin down the Rocks and along the High Street towards the burial ground. The moral character of these Rocks women was thus, by reverse implication, considered ‘loose and disorderly’ and promiscuous. Their white robes (or were they fashionable gowns?) flying in

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the face of moral order and pompous ritual, they were presenting the 'world upside down', the traditional inversion of the festivals and fairs of Britain and Europe. The ancient grim humour of momentary, farcical reversal, the gestures of opposition acted out within the parameters of cultural reciprocity, had been transported intact to the straggling new colony.\textsuperscript{28}

The town through which they carried Mary Jones' body was, similarly, fundamentally preindustrial in social organization and physical shape. Socially it was divided not according to the three classes so familiar to us (upper or ruling, middle and working) but according to rank. Both elite and the plebeian ranks still commonly described and considered society as comprising two great orders, the higher and the lower, with no separate middle class as we know it. The artisans, small shopkeepers and a few clerks who began to appear were 'middling' people, part of the lower orders. One historian has described this eighteenth century social arrangement as 'a sort of disorderly cohesion', for the many, minutely divided ranks within the orders, constantly slipping and shifting over one another, appear from our own perspective to be disorderly. Yet its cohesion lay, not in the 'bonds of authority', but in the shared understanding of society and a particularly English sense of individual liberty. The ranks were understood to be interdependent, therefore having a common interest, and still bound by certain reciprocal rules of patronage and deference, or, at least, shows of deference. Hence it was a society which predates modern concepts of mass class antagonism,  

\textsuperscript{28} Sydney Gazette (hereafter SG) 3 June 1804. Juliet Peers (pers. com. 1994) has suggested that the white clothing worn by the women could have been white gowns of flimsy fabric so fashionable at the time. Worn by women of the lower orders, these too would have been signs of reversal through public display. Compare with Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850; John K. Walton and James Walvin (eds), Leisure in Britain 1780-1939, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1983; Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, London, Temple Smith, 1978.
the idea that people of different classes, dividing a society horizontally, could have conflicting economic interests.  

The society was also divided along the plane of gender. Men of both orders to some extent shared certain paradoxical views on what women should do, how they were supposed to behave, and what their role was in the early settlement. On one hand women were clearly regarded as the 'civilizers', those who would allow convict men the happiness of a settled domestic life and families. These households were the basic units of the patriarchal society, and essential to the colony's normality and progress. Women were thus allowed to live in the early houses quite independently, caring for their increasing numbers of children. To the annoyance of the Governors, they then made the houses their refuges, refused to come out, to go to work or attend church. Women, like men, enjoyed drinking, dancing and singing late into the night, they could be violent in their personal dealings, and were sexually uninhibited. They were frank in their search for economic security through permanent relationships, though the permanence of legal marriage was often not a viable option, and probably not entered into lightly. On the other hand women's 'independence' was tempered by the vulnerable position in which they stood, and the terrible and humiliating punishments meted out to those who were seen to transgress the ideal of womanhood. For, paradoxically, men also held deep-seated beliefs that women were naturally disorderly, sexually uninhibited, and hence the

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corruptors of society. Those well-known early accounts we have of convict women as ‘damned whores’ stem partly from these fears and expectations.31

Women responded to the paradoxical nature of their position in the colony by making the best of it. They suffered the punishments, remaining defiant, but they also took advantage of the freedom allowed them to set up households. Many women, like men, simply appropriated land on the Rocks, set up businesses, and brought up their children. Those who had successful defacto relationships worked as partners in business with their husbands. In terms of cultural identity and behaviour, however, they were not particularly quiet, sober, ‘moral’ or ‘respectable’ in the later middle-class sense, which is why they cannot be understood in these terms.

Culturally, as this study will explore, there is strong evidence for the continuity of pre-modern ways and mentalité. The town itself, although enlivened by modern attitudes to commerce and trade, still took a traditional form. Its ranks were to some extent integrated, with the official and business elite clustered in the centre, the middling and lower orders around them and then the ragged ‘no-mans land’ on the fringes.32 The division between urban and rural

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was not complete. Many Rocks people also owned small farms on the Cumberland Plain, visited them regularly, and were interested in rural matters and stories. The people were unused to being closely governned, and failed to observe orders; yet they had deep regard for the rule and execution of law. Courts were crowded with townspeople witnessing proceedings, and punishments were still carried out in public and focussed on atonement and retribution through physical pain, suffering and death.\textsuperscript{33} Work patterns were largely traditional: many people were illiterate and organized their work and businesses through personal dealing, word of mouth, mental arithmetic. Work time was not strictly observed, nor was it completely separated from home life and leisure.\textsuperscript{34} Attitudes to sex, marriage and children were largely unaffected by modern ideas of 'respectability'. In the face of life which could be brutal and easily cut short, they were utterly pragmatic in action and outlook. In terms of popular culture, both convicts and the small elite immediately established their traditional pastimes, which had at their core the notion of pleasure and entertainment for its own sake, for enjoyment.\textsuperscript{35} They had little time for formal religion, for regular church-going and pious behaviour; the Irish were said to be superstitious.\textsuperscript{36} Drinking alcohol was a normal and essential part of everyday life: before during and after work, for socializing, as medicine


\textsuperscript{34} Compare to E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', Past and Present, No 38, 1967, 56-97.


for the sick, and comfort for the dying. When disease or death struck, people largely adopted the traditional, stoic acceptance of fate.

Yet, there are strong traits of modernity too. Nicholas’ portrayal of convicts as workers, although it employs convict workers, rather flat economic terminology (convicts are ‘productive workers’, education is ‘human capital formation’) has important directions and clues for understanding their cultural identity. Those in work, particularly the skilled and semi-skilled artisans, and servants in the homes of the wealthy, were the ranks which McKendrick particularly noted as participants in the emerging consumer economy. On the Rocks we find a large proportion of the convict and ex-convict population from the skilled and employed parts of the lower orders of the urban areas of England and Ireland. They were tradesmen and tradeswomen, and domestic servants, people who had worked in the booming shipping industries on the ships and wharves. They came out of commercialised, though not yet industrialized, England and Ireland, and their actions show that they were quite familiar with the concepts of the early capitalist phase: commercialisation and consumerism.

Some were ambitious, energetic and had brought some capital with them. Those Rocks people who advertised in the newspaper, wrote memorials, were included on lists for leases, land and licences, were restless small-scale entrepreneurs who spent their lives in the colony in businesses and trades. These activities, well-described in books like The Sydney Traders, bespeak attitudes involving modern notions of change, the possibility of improvement through individual enterprise. They were eager to acquire land and goods, constantly on the lookout for opportunities, whether through patronage, business or marriage, legal or illegal, and strove constantly against others and external forces for material well-being. They preferred to live in the town and were avid consumers of material goods. They were interested in fashion and

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in seeing and learning new things, and in endowing their children with skills, good marriages and property. Some of those who became wealthy eventually made conscious public efforts to distinguish themselves from the labouring mass of the lower orders, to define themselves as respectable in their own terms. These were real inversions, possible in New South Wales, rather than dramatic, fictitious ones.

So Rocks people clearly cannot be described simply as some kind of medieval survivals, wholly untouched by those great eighteenth century changes. E. P. Thompson, ruminating on the difficulties of defining ‘traditional’ or ‘preindustrial’ plebeian culture, offers a fusion, the new overlaying the old:

It is not any ‘traditional’ culture but a rather peculiar one. It is not, for example, fatalistic, offering consolations and defences in the course of a lifetime which is utterly determined and constrained. It is, rather, picaresque, not only in the obvious sense that people are more mobile, go to sea, are carried off to wars...In more settled ambiences - in the growing areas of manufacture and of free labour-life [still] proceeds along a road whose hazards and accidents cannot be prescribed of avoided by forethought...Hence experience or opportunity is grabbed as occasion arises, with little thought of the consequence.38

These dynamics of opportunism and movement within the bounds of uncontrollable external events and forces also lie at the heart of the behaviour and experience of Rocks people.

The primary sources for this study include those early colonial records which mention, list, deal with or transcribe the words of Rocks people; and those which provide useful contextual or illuminating material about the town and society generally. The official correspondence in Historical Records of Australia was essential for the latter. Sources such as the Sydney

Gazette from 1803 to c1830 and the recently issued index to the Colonial Secretary’s correspondence (1788-1825) were also combed for material of all sorts, from information for the reassembly of personal and family histories, to general material about social structure and interaction, work practices, family life, crime and punishment, the developing townscape, material life, attitudes to health, disease and death; and so on. Perhaps the richest for ethnographic research and reflection were the Coroners’ reports and the court reports. Research through the court transcripts was guided by key names, references in the Gazette, related cases, by cases discussed in Paula Jane Byrne’s Criminal Law and the Colonial Subject; and by simply browsing. But the evidence has always to be treated with some caution, since witnesses and accused often had reasons to exaggerate or lie. 39 This is not so problematic in the Coroner’s inquest transcripts. Here people relate in their own words the everyday actions, journeys, observations, reflections and emotions surrounding the circumstances, witnessing or discovery of a death. Mostly they have little reason to lie. These records are among the most vivid and detailed we have about the colony’s first thirty years, and the events are retold from the perspective of the people. 40

Another useful and exciting discovery was the Constables’ Notebooks for 1822/23 in the Colonial Secretary’s correspondence. 41 These notebooks, completed in two phases, contain a house-by-house list of all the Rocks inhabitants, collected for the Census and probably also

39 Paula Jane Byrne, Criminal Law and the Colonial Subject: New South Wales 1810-1830, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p10. The court records referred to include committal and trial papers, depositions of the Court of Criminal Jurisdiction, and records of the Sydney Quarter Sessions, 1788-c1830, held in Archives Office of New South Wales (hereafter AONSW). Details of court proceeding were also often published in SG.

40 Coroner’s Inquest Reports, see Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence (hereafter CSC), 4/1819, Reel (hereafter R) 6021, Mitchell Library (hereafter ML); and Coroner’s Inquests 1788-1825, 2/8286-90, R2232-33, AONSW.

41 District Constables’ Notebooks, 1822 and 1823, in CSC 4/1218-9 R1254 AONSW.
as an initial attempt to survey the area and sort out the tangled claims to the allotments. As well as straightforward name-collection, the Constables wrote down each persons’ status, the ship they arrived on, the name of its captain (to help distinguish the different arrival dates of the same ship), the length of the person’s original sentence, and finally some remark on their occupation or employment.

Unlike alphabetized lists of names in the musters and censuses, or lists of household heads or ratepayers in later Ratebooks and directories, these lists, arranged according to household, street by street, allow us the luxury of information about the people of the Rocks at this one particular moment of its development. The well-known and obscure, new-born babies and old people who had come in the first fleets, the drifters and the settlers, servants and masters, landholders and lodgers, all are listed in the context of who they lived with, and amongst their neighbours. By reassembling the data alphabetically using a computer, a reasonably accurate estimation of its social profile has been possible, starting with basic breakdowns such as status (convict, ex-convict, free arrival, born in the colony) the proportions of men, women and children and so on. The list also offers insights into the nature of household formation and structure. A comparison of each name with the 1828 Census provides the important perspective of mobility and stasis, with related implications for the nature of the community.

42 Byrne (p77) has also carried out household analysis of the Notebooks for the whole of Sydney, and observes that the data is ‘by no means accurate nor to be regarded as such’. While this is certainly true for the town as a whole (many streets are missing), the lists for the Rocks area are fairly complete, including all streets and lanes. There do appear to be some unexplained omissions: Rocks people Mary Bryant/Eagan, Mary Redmond, Thomas Lynch and Arthur Martin are recorded as living there both before and after the survey, yet they are not listed. They may have been away at other settlements or at their farms at the time. Nevertheless, the Notebooks provide a good overall picture, in that most residents are listed, as well as reasonable samples for the more specific studies.

Patterns of occupation often demonstrate webs of family, ethnic and local interaction, and suggested avenues for further family research. As the list runs in street order, an analysis of the social character of each street has been possible, and certain clusters of households sharing trades or callings, or similar times of arrival, or Irishness became visible. By comparing the list with Harper’s detailed map of 1823, subsequent surveys and title information, it has been possible to pinpoint the location of the households of the best-known families, and have a fair idea of the location of the rest.

My interest in the everyday, and in family and household life led inevitably to family history. Dossiers have been collated on around four hundred individuals and families of the Rocks, from the sources listed above, and others, as well as the Mutch Index of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and similar sources. Published sources such as the Australian Dictionary of Biography, pioneer registers, and several individual family histories were also consulted; most valuable was Michael Flynn’s painstaking biographies of Second Fleet convicts.

The structure of this study reflects the important aspects of life on the Rocks and in Sydney during the early colonial period: townscape, community, family life and working life. The themes and questions raised above about the divisions and commonalities of Rocks society - rank, status, gender, age, authority and culture - are examined in each of these spheres of everyday life, partly to avoid an over-mechanistic analysis, and partly to try to recreate the Rocks as a whole, as it would have been experienced. The sheer bulk of the evidence, and the time and words it takes to collect, collate and interpret this material is one reason the

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44 Graeme Davison has collated a list of inhabitants for 1828 from the Census, but this material was unavailable for consultation. Pers. com. Graeme Davison, Monash University. The material was also unavailable from the Census editors, pers. com. Keith Johnson, 1993.

study is limited to the period before 1830. The other reason is that the 1830s mark the beginnings of significant cultural and social change in Sydney. Hence, the epilogue looks, briefly, forward to the end of transportation, the emergence of a middle class and the rise of respectable culture. These had deeply significant implications for the popular portrayal and understanding of the Rocks and its people over the next hundred and fifty years.
Section 1

Over the Water:
The Rocks and the Dialogue of Townscape

'Pass and I met close against the door of Mary Bryant’s house [in Gloucester Street]...we crossed over the water, over the mud to [Simeon Lord’s] warehouse.'

Evidence of William Howells
at an 1813 court trial

'John Murphy [of] Macquarie Street...directed them over the water...they all three went to Stephen Murphy’s [in Gloucester Street] and drank some spirits and some beer...'

Evidence from the inquest on
Callaghan Rierdon May 1816.
This Long & Wished-for Country

The people transported from England and Ireland to Sydney Cove after 1788 first saw the town from the decks of ships in the harbour. What they saw and later experienced there depended very much on who they were. For William Noah, and his convict shipmates, the last seven, dreamlike miles along the ‘wild and uncultivated’ shores of Port Jackson on the ‘death ship’ Hillsborough in 1799 were marked, not by foreboding and dread, as we might expect, but by joy and a sense of deliverance into a ‘long & wished-for country’. ‘Our hearts glad’ wrote Noah ‘to think that we should now be released from our unhappy & miserable situation, in every countenance it was easy to see the Happiness it created’. Those miseries of the voyage had been relentless and appalling - hunger, cold, filth, ugly diseases, the steady toll of deaths. A third of the convicts died, their bodies dumped unceremoniously in the vast, featureless sea. Noah, it seems, had some sense of history. He wanted to record in his journal the horrors and the deaths, by disease and neglect, suffered by the convicts. So, at the end of each day’s entries, he wrote ‘Departed this Life’ with the full names of those who had died, and at the end of the journal he collated lists of the survivors, and the victims, one hundred in all. By recording names, he tried to mitigate the indignity of anonymous death amongst large numbers of convicts who mattered little.

For the convicts of the Hillsborough, sighting Sydney Cove was sheer relief and delight. They first ‘had the pleasure of seeing the natives come off in their canoes infinitely naked’ and then heard the mournful sound of ‘the Boatswain blow his long wishful Call’ across the water. Its moan was also heard across the town, and it was the sign for the customary reception for newcomers to begin. Officially ‘we were now visited by the Gentlemen of the Town and our prison doors were set open & our irons knocked off’. The ‘Gentlemen’ represented government officials, while unofficially, ‘convicts and free people’ who had watched the Hillsborough’s slow progress down the harbour from their homes on the Rocks,
rowed out in their small craft, the ‘bum boats’ as Noah called them. They too clambered aboard, and ‘gave us a hearty welcome to this long & wished-for country & many gave us invitations to their habitations when we should come ashore’. Shouted greetings, introductions, delighted faces, hearty backslapping, hospitality, friends: it was almost as if they had come ‘home’.¹ Some of Noah’s convict shipmates - the butcher William Hutchinson, the clerk Richard Calcott, sawyer Tim Riordan, John Fitzgerald, Thomas Wood, James MacNeal, later made their homes, worked and lived with their families on the Rocks.

George Suttor, free settler, arrived in 1802 and might as well have been coming into a different place. Unlike Noah and other convicts, he was an outsider, a stranger and there were no welcome parties for him and his family. ‘I was shocked’ he wrote later ‘at the state of Sydney, I mean of the people and their hard features - Iron Gangs and low grog shops and generally with the degraded and vice-worn features of my countrymen and countrywomen’. The town which had been source of happiness and release to Noah seemed to Suttor a mere ragged ‘camp mixed with stumps and dead trees’. Its public buildings were old and dirty or small and mean, while the hospitable homes on the Rocks opened to the convict newcomers were merely nasty huts ‘thatched, the walls mostly of wattle and plaster, whitewashed within and without, a few were glazed, but most were not’. In short, Suttor saw what he expected to see: ‘it much resembled a large jail establishment’. Its unprepossessing appearance, its dangerous and threatening reputation, and the menacing faces of strangers, less well-nourished than his own, constituted small, mean, isolated and insignificant town. Suttor felt alienated and fearful, so the next day fled out to the rolling hills beyond Parramatta, where he remained for the rest of his life.²


Although they directly contradict one another, the accounts of these men well illustrate the fact that Sydney was literally a different town to different people, as a result of their experiences and background, their standpoints. This study seeks primarily to recall the perspective of the convicts and working people who lived on the Rocks, the mass of mainly obscure people of the lower orders of England and Ireland who formed the bulk of Sydney’s early population and made the Rocks their side of the town. Yet, because of the integral nature and structure of the largely pre-modern society they created, this perspective cannot be grasped without reference to other discourses: primarily that of authority and the attempts to order and control. The early Rocks, and Sydney, may be best understood as a dialogue between people and government, an ebb and flow of orders, responses, negotiations in which both parties knew the rules, and tried to extract as much gain as they could from them. This was most clearly expressed in the emergent townscape.
Little Edifices Quickly Multiplied

Many historians, academic, professional, and amateur, have written about Sydney’s history as if it was, rather, a monologue. The voice of government, through reports, orders and rules, which are so accessible through the documentary evidence, is the dominant if not the only voice. Similarly, when reviewing the origins of Sydney’s townscape, historians and architects understandably focus on the public buildings and structures - the Governor’s house, the houses of the civil and military authorities, the barracks, hospital, storehouses, the flagstaff, the ‘first road’ out to the observatory on Dawe’s Point. In the process of attempting to recover the place so far removed from, and obscured by the modern city, these are the obvious landmarks; their appearance, position and orientation have become familiar and comfortable. Through official records, logical sequences of construction, enlargement, and replacement may be created and equated with the ‘growth’ of the town, a town, it was true, beset by all kinds of difficulties, but nevertheless the ordered, logical foundation for a great city.3

The plethora of paintings and sketches of early Sydney are a rich and vital source for the recovery of this town. Gordon Bull observes of them that, in the tradition of eighteenth century topographical landscape painting, ‘the viewer is presented with an apparently full,

ordered and unambiguous landscape'. With their disarmingly straightforward simplicity, these pictures seem to tell the truth about the town. But in the careful, prominent depiction of the public buildings, and later of buildings and other structures denoting commerce, trading and shipping, the pictures draw the eye away from the other town, the shambling, seemingly disorganized and illogical town fashioned by the people. Here the appearance of neatness, permanence and lineal progress was chimerical for Sydney's early townscape was not full, not entirely ordered, and quite ambiguous.

The available maps of early Sydney tell a similar story, from Lieutenant Bradley's carefully colour-coded (grey for civil authority, red for military, yellow for convicts) but geographically vague plan of the camp in 1788, to Surveyor Meehan's 1807 plan showing the leases and grants of the town Figs 10-14, and Appendix 1). Public buildings and sites are invariably shown with accuracy, and together with the embryonic outlines of 'streets'. These provide sequence and continuity; they allow us, peering and poring, to 'recognize' the town. But consider Grime's 1800 'Plan of Sydney' which marks the position of thirty-seven leases and holdings (Fig. 12). How can this arrangement of lines on paper, representing the holdings, not necessarily the occupancy, of a tiny fraction of Sydney’s people, be a 'plan' of the town? It may be seen as a bizarre abstraction of what Sydney was in 1800. By telling us only about the leases, it hides the other 95% of occupancy: the houses, fences, yards, privies, paths.

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5 William Bradley, 'Sydney Cove, Port Jackson', March 1788, in his 'Journal 1786-92 including a voyage to New South Wales in HMS Sirius and the return in the Waaksaamheydt Transport', ML Safe 1/14; James Meehan, 'Plan of the Town of Sydney in New South Wales...' 1807, original lost, reproduced in Historical Records of New South Wales [hereafter HRNSW], Vol. 6, 1898, opp. 366; Charles Grimes, 'Plan of Sydney', 1800, facs. of original reproduced in HRNSW Vol 5 1897, opp. 838; these and other early maps are reproduced in McCormick, First Views.
Fig. 10: William Bradley, 'Sydney Cove Port Jackson', March 1788, the first plan of the settlement showing the huts and tents colour-coded according to civil status. The tents of the convict men and women (yellow) are shown near the head of the Cove, at the foot of the Rocks. A bakehouse stands on the shore opposite the hospital, further north. Two wells are also located near the hospital.

Source: ML Safe 1/4, reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 4 p38.
Fig. 11: Francis Fowkes (attrib.), 'Sketch and Description of the Settlement at Sydney Cove Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland taken by a transported Convict on the 16th of April 1788...'. The settlement is bisected by the stream; buildings appear along the rim of the Cove, sawpits are located higher up, at the south end of the Rocks.

Source: Published London R Cribb 1789; reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 3 p37.
Fig. 12: Charles Grimes, ‘Plan of Sydney’, 1800, showing leases granted. Although none are shown on the Rocks proper, Figs 16 and 17 show that the area was already well-occupied by the convicts’ and ex-convicts’ houses. The millwright John Baughan’s lease near Dawes Point is shown (no 36); in 1796 soldiers broke into and demolished his house here, attacked him, and then marched back down the High Street ‘as if something meritorious had been effected’. Butcher Richard Cheers’ first High Street lease is also shown (no 28).

Fig. 13: Charles Alexander Loqueur, 'Plan De La Ville de Sydney Capitale des Colonies Anglaises, Aux Terres Australes', 1802. The artist has made the Rocks appear more regular than it was, and with fewer houses. Note however the allotments marked out on the upper levels, but absent on the lower; and the irregular 'main avenue' ascending from High Street. Two gallows are shown on the outskirts of the town (middle and left).

Source: Published in Francis Peron, *Voyage de Decouvertes aux terres Australes... Historique... Atlas*, Paris, 1807.

Fig. 14: James Meehan, 'Plan of the Town of Sydney in New South Wales by Jas. Meehan Assistant Surveyor of Lands by Order of His Excellency Governor Bligh 31 October 1807'. Meehan combines leaseholders (numbered and listed) with permissive occupants, indicated by the black edgings along the streets. There are still very few official leases on the Rocks: Samuel Thorley holds one in the centre on Cambridge Street; a few more are located along Church Hill/Charlotte Place and in Windmill/Prince Street (see Appendix 1).
Source: ML M2 811.17/1807/1.
The pictures and maps, though, are at the same time most informative sources about the other side of the town, for beyond the obvious and striking objects in the foreground lies a subtext, intended only as an insignificant backdrop to the ‘real’ action. In the pictures, a disorderly collection of houses on the steep slopes appears across the stream, opposite the civil precinct, on the Rocks. Since topographical accuracy for this ‘background’ part of the town is unnecessary, even undesirable, the houses are exaggeratedly small, neutrally coloured, they vary wildly in numbers from one artist to another, their positions are obviously inaccurate, and the ‘sequence’ over time here is difficult and contradictory. Yet they are there, and it is possible to make out the spreading and shifting of this other side of the town into patterns of its own (Figs 15-19, 31).

The identification of the Rocks with convicts probably had its origins with earliest camp arrangements. While the Governor’s leaky canvas house was erected on the east side of the Cove, ‘on the west side was placed the main body of convicts’. The east side was officially named ‘Sydney’, while the convicts probably called the craggy west side ‘the rocks’ from this earliest period; officially the area was not even part of the establishment of the town proper.⁶ In the four years following they built for themselves small one or two roomed hipped-roofed huts from timber posts, wattles, clay and thatch. ‘Little edifices quickly multiplied on the ground allotted them to build on’ Watkin Tench wrote of these convict houses; Collins thought them ‘good hovels’, but a convict woman described them as ‘miserable huts’.⁷ The

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Fig. 15: William Bradley, 'Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, 1788'. The earliest view of the settlement; the tents and structures on the west side of the Cove are scattered among dense trees, which most likely originally covered the Rocks.

Source: Copy made after 1801, Mitchell Library Safe 1/14;
Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 5 p39.

Fig. 16: Anon., 'A View of Sydney Cove - Port Jackson March 7th 1792'. Here the 'little edifices quickly multiplied' amongst stumps, dead and dying trees and ragged garden plots. They spread northwards from the rear of the three Government stores built step-wise up Church Hill (centre-right).

Source: British Museum (Natural History), Watling Collection 21.
Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 19 p53.
Fig. 17: Edward Dayes, ‘Western view of Sydney Cove, 1797’ c1796. Uneven rows of small houses, all facing the water, have spread over the Rocks towards, but not yet reaching, the rear of the hospital (right). Thirteen houses already stand on the horizon; they constitute Windmill Row.


Fig. 18: Edward Dayes, ‘Eastern View of Sydney’ c1796. This view is taken from the top of Church Hill looking northeast. The earliest huts/houses of the upper rows of the Rocks stretch off to the left; one is under construction, and the paling fences are already in evidence around some yards. The growing civil centre, including the first Government House is shown on the opposite side, with views over the harbour beyond.

Rocks was ‘over the water’, as the common expression went, from the designated civil centre on the east, where the first pared-down Palladian Governor’s house was gradually joined by the row of relatively substantial houses built for high civil servants.  

The present-day location of the first Rocks houses was around Grosvenor and Essex Streets, clustered close to the early grog and salt provisions stores, built in stepped formation up the early path up to Church Hill. They were scattered haphazardly, some set in irregular garden patches, amidst dead and dying trees on the slopes rising above Sergeant Majors Row, ‘interspersed at pleasure...amongst the Rocks without any kind of Regularity whatever’. Elizabeth MacArthur found little in these early huts to please her eye, for by 1790 the Rocks after rain was ‘a sink of evil and already more like a gypsy encampment than a part of a town...the stumps and fallen trees and the boggy tracks wending their way around rock and precipice’. While her description of other part of the settlement were equally gloomy (‘filthy ships’, ‘rude lines of sodden barracks’ the ‘oozy Tank Stream’), notice the early association of the Rocks with moral degeneracy in the minds of the genteel.

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8 For the view over the Cove from the Rocks, see McCormick First Views Plate 21, Thomas Watling (attrib.) ‘West View of Sydney-Cove taken from the Rocks, at the rear of the General Hospital’, 1793-94, compare with Plate 20, a similar view from Dawes Point, 1793-94, and views from the Rocks in 1802, c1803, and 1808, Plates 76, 77, 79, 96 and 97; re first Government House see Irving, ‘Georgian Australian’ p39 and Helen Proudfoot, Anne Bickford, Brian Egloff and Robyn Stocks, Australia’s First Government House, Sydney, Department of Planning and Allen and Unwin, 1991.

9 John Harris Papers, letter from Sydney, 20 March 1791, ML A1597. He said Sydney was ‘the most miserable place I ever beheld’. The earliest houses on the Rocks appear in Anon., ‘A View of Sydney Cove’, 1792, watercolour, see McCormick, First Views, Plate 19; Fernando Brambila’s ‘Vista de la Colonia Inglesa de Sydney en la Nueva Gales Meridional’ 1793, and Juan Ravenet’s ‘Borador del Resivimiento de los Oficiales en baía Botanica’, 1793, (Plates 15 and 16) show the area around present-day George, Grosvenor and Jamison Streets and Church Hill, including the Lieutenant-Governor’s house and the grog and salt provisions stores.

Rob Jordan has recently discovered that the fabled first theatre of Sydney, with Rocksmen John Sparrow among its convict actors, was located in this early Rocks area, behind the stores, from about 1794. It had probably been preceded by a short-lived forerunner set up at the other disorderly part of Sydney, the Brickfields. Governor Hunter ordered its closure in 1798 as a ‘corrupting influence’, since people paid their admission with the meat, flour and spirits, and were as a result ‘unable to pursue their labours with proper energy’. Thieves, observing patrons who entered the theatre, then proceeded to rob their houses. The theatre on the Rocks was nevertheless rebuilt in 1798, and was still located on the Rocks in 1800.\textsuperscript{11}

The area northwards along the steep rocky headland, above the hospital complex and the various surgeons’ residences, had been the site only for some early saw pits to cut the unreliable timbers. Wells were also noted there on Fowkes’ 1788 map, though archaeological evidence suggests that these were probably small basins, about a metre across and 60cm deep, cut into live rock with various run-off channels feeding rainwater and surface drainage into them (Fig. 29). Deep wells cut through the rock appeared in the 1800s and 1810s. A few perishable huts appeared here and there, but for the main part it was wooded, rocky and wild, a favourite spot for the colony’s artists to climb. From the Rocks they could take an appropriate ‘prospect’ of the real town across the water.\textsuperscript{12}

By about 1792 four houses stood on the town’s western horizon high above the hospital, undoubtedly commanding the best views over the harbour; by 1796 there were thirteen (Fig.


\textsuperscript{12} Godden Mackay Pty Ltd, Grace Karskens et. al., ‘Report on the Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street Archaeological Investigation’, in prep. 1994-1995. See Francis Fowkes, ‘Sketch and Description of the Settlement at Sydney Cove Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland taken...on the 16th of April 1788’, map reproduced in McCormick, First Views, Plate 3.
17). More houses had been built on a similar alignment further south along what became Windmill Row (later Prince Street, now the approach to the Harbour Bridge). It was a streetless part of town; instead, webs of footpaths led from door to door and between the rock ledges and outcrops. By 1796, the artists were also fond of depicting the north-easterly view of the town, taken from the summit of Church Hill (Figs 18, 19, 28). From here, two rows of houses run northwards in a regular fashion along the ridge of the upper Rocks northwards. Below, the early jumble of houses on the slopes has also grown; some artists include them, others choose not to.13

At this early stage, then, two distinctive townscape patterns had already emerged on the Rocks: the houses on the higher levels are regularly spaced and aligned, set on large separate allotments in rows, the upper one leading to a new windmill, completed in 1797. Below, congregated for the main part above and to the south of the hospital precinct, was the hugger-mugger riot of houses and huts set above, below and behind one another; here, regular allotments, gardens and fences are difficult to discern. William Noah wrote about the town to a sibling after his 1799 arrival, and described the Rocks as ‘a great part of the Town’ which was situated on a large Rock Commanding a Delightful Prospect of the Entrance of the River & at the Top there is a level you may see all the Part thats Cultivated and a

13 See Thomas Watling (attrib.), ‘A View of the west side of Sydney Cove taken from Too-bay-ulee, or Bannellongs Point’, 1792-94, in McCormick, First Views, Plate 23; this is the first known view of the west side of the cove. The rapid growth of the Rocks is evidenced by a comparison with Edward Dayes’ ‘Western view of Sydney Cove’, c1796 (Plate 40) and with Anon., ‘Sydney’, 1798-99, (Plate 53). The pattern of orderly rows above and more chaotic arrangement of houses below may be discerned by comparing views of the Rocks from the south-east in 1792-94 (Plate 24), and in 1796 (Plate 44); from the top of Church Hill in 1793-95 (Plate 26), in ca1796 (Plates 38 and 39) and in c1800 (Plates 50, 51, 52); and from Dawes Point, and Sergeant Majors Row in 1793-95 (Plates 30 and 32), in 1795-96 (Plates 34, 35, 36, 37), and also in Lesueur’s ‘Plan de la Ville de Sydney Capitale des colonies Anglaises Aux Terre Australes’, 1802, (Plate 62).
Fig. 19: Attrib. Thomas Watling, ‘View of the Town of Sydney’ c1800; a later view over the town from Church Hill. The Rocks houses (left) appear to be whitewashed and thatched, though some were probably shingled. One resident, perhaps William Fielder, has hung out a sign, probably for a licensed house (far left).

Source: Private Collection. Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 50 p84.

Fig. 20: Louis de Sainson, ‘George Street’, 1826. A later picture, taken from modern Grosvenor Street, which shows the walled gaol (centre-left) still in the town’s heart in George Street opposite the Hospital wharf. By the 1820s hangings were carried out behind these walls, but people gathered nonetheless in Cambridge Street behind to watch. The fine house opposite (centre-right) was that of shipbuilder and merchant James Underwood. The Main Guard, with sentries, stands on the left. Source: Published 1830, reproduced from S. de Vries-Evans, Historic Sydney as seen by its early artists, Plate 31 p43.
Long way up the River... 14

Note the absence of the moral dimension in this convict’s account. To Noah, the Rocks was a focus of the town, characterised by its connection with the waters.

An 1800 aquatint of the town taken from Dawe’s Point, probably based on a sketch by Thomas Watling for Surgeon Thomson, was accompanied by a skeleton sketch which laid out and numbered the features of the growing town, as if pointing them out to a stranger (Figs 21 and 22). The hazy rows of houses high on the Rocks to the right were specifically labelled as ‘convicts’ houses’, unlike the east side of the town where they were identified by street or ‘Row’ names. The view downwards from the nameless rows and clusters of houses on the Rocks encompassed the mean-windowed hospital and its growing number of ancillary buildings spread along Sergeant Major’s Row and up the rising ground at the foot of the Rocks. Opposite the hospital was the small, rather rickety wharf, where small craft loaded with wheat, vegetables, fruit and meat from the farms upriver arrived and unloaded directly onto the market place there. Vendors set up their stalls or sold directly from their boats to the people who gathered from the earliest morning hours. 15 In later years the wharf would draw around it numerous hotels, in readiness for the seamen and others who clambered ashore there. Between the hospital and the old grog stores stood the new gaol, already described as ‘dirty’ and ‘old’ by Sutor in 1802. It replaced the first one, built of logs and burnt down by miscreants without regard for the twenty ironed prisoners inside in 1799. Beside the gaol was


15 Anon., ‘A View of Sydney Cove, New South Wales’, c1800, thought to be based on a drawing by Thomas Watling, and ‘Explanatory Description of the Publick Buildings &c of the Town of Sydney, Port Jackson; as express’d in the View engraved under the inspection of Mr Thomson late acting Chief Surgeon to the Settlement’, c1800, in McCormick, First Views, Plates 54 and 55. See the regular accounts of arrivals at the wharf and prices of fruit and vegetables in SG from 1803, for example 10 and 31 August 1806.
Figs 21 and 22: Attrib. Thomas Watling?/Edward Dayes, 'A View of Sydney Cove, New South Wales' and 'Explanatory Description of the Publick Buildings &c of the Town of Sydney, Port Jackson;' c1800. The houses high on the Rocks (right) are specifically labelled 'convict houses'. They overlook the hospital buildings, Robert Campbell’s bungalow house, his ship-building operations and the Government Dockyard.

Source: Published F Jukes London 1804. Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plates 54 and 55.
a public house, run by the gaoler, supplying spirits to householders, prisoners and sailors alike.\(^{16}\)

The view down over the cove in 1800 also included several new buildings of another important type: the substantial and impressive homes, together with yards, warehouses and storerooms of merchants, traders, ship-builders and sea captains. At the northern end of the western shore stood the exotic colonnaded bungalow of the merchant Robert Campbell. Stone wharves and warehouses were soon added. The area about Hospital Wharf had already attracted keen-eyed emancipist speculators, publicans and traders like Isaac Nichols, Edward Redmond, Daniel McKay, Edward and Sarah Wills, while at the mouth and about the slopes of the stream, ex-convict traders and shipbuilders Simeon Lord and James Underwood erected large, fashionable houses. In several early views, such houses, and those of the officials, render the convicts’ dwellings impossibly tiny. A remarkable and common feature, though, is that all these houses face, not onto streets, but out over the water from both sides of the cove, and it appears from pictorial and archaeological evidence that this seaward orientation remained common throughout the early decades. Together with the new Naval Dockyard next to the wharf, and the boats and ships under construction, this orientation was striking evidence that here was a maritime town, a port town, with a population whose eyes strained perpetually seawards for the glance of sunlight on a sail.\(^{17}\)

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17 These buildings are depicted in the sequence of pictures in McCormick, First Views, Plates 52, 53, 55, 57, 65, 67 and 69, and many later views. Views of the Naval Dockyard include Charles Lesueur’s ‘Vue d’un quartier de Port-Jackson’, 1802, (Plate 66), and John Lancashire’s ‘View of Sydney Port Jackson, New South Wales taken from y/e Rocks on the Western Side of the Cove’, (Plate 79). The allotments of some the waterside leaseholders are shown on Meehan’s ‘Plan of the Town’, 1807, others give their addresses in advertisements in the Sydney Gazette. For a description and analysis of the ‘emancipists’ stylish designs’, see Irving, ‘Georgian Australia’, p46ff. Wendy Thorp, ‘Report on Lilyvale’, account of the Chandler house in Cumberland Street.
Fig. 23: Attrib. George William Evans, 'Sydney from the West side of the Cove', 1802. This vantage point, from the rear of the first hospital in High Street, was favoured among the early artists for taking the view of the civil side of the town. The picture suggests that both Aboriginal and white people wandered freely into the hospital grounds, and met one another there.


Fig. 24: John W. Lancashire, 'View of Sydney Port Jackson, New South Wales taken from ye Rocks on the Western Side of the Cove', 1803, showing the paled-in hospital garden, the dockyard, and Isaac Peyton's bridge over the Tank Stream, which later fell down. Lancashire himself was living on the Rocks at this time.

Source: Dixson Galleries DG SV1/60. Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 79 p113.
By 1803, when the *Sydney Gazette* first appeared, the Rocks was well-populated, and firmly entrenched in the local mind as a particular, separate neighbourhood. (The upper case ‘R’ for ‘Rocks’ had been in use from at least 1790, although clerks still occasionally used the lower case in the 1820s; the upper case ‘T’ for ‘The’ seems to be a modern affliction). The *Gazette* made much of the steepness of the Rocks, usually humorously linked with drinking and drunkenness: ‘The Rocks’ the editor George Howe chortled in 1803 ‘would certainly be a choice spot for a TUMBLING Academy’, for sailors commonly fell down the slopes and a party of Scots at a ‘highland Gala’ where the ‘MULL and MUTCHKIN equally predominated’ afterwards ‘REELED down the Rocks with incredible velocity’.

For all its populousness, the Rocks was not easily accessible, and remained so. There was no direct access to the uppermost rows, only a ‘rank and slippery’ goat-track scrambled up along the palings south of the hospital towards the houses of the lower Rocks. This was rather grandly named in advertisements ‘the main avenue leading onto the Rocks’, and later became Macquarie’s Surry Lane. It now lies below the line of the Cahill expressway. Steep as it was, this ‘avenue’ and its intersections with the Rocks ‘rows’, was the early focus for the establishment of houses and businesses, particularly bakeries and pubs. Before the Rocks was connected to Cockle Bay and Millers Point by the Argyle Cut in the 1850s, the only alternative to it was a long walk by the church to the south; or a footpath snaking around the lonely headland from the end of Sergeant Major’s Row and rising abruptly from Cockle Bay to the windmill on the ridge (Fig. 13).

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18 *SG* 18 January 1804; see also 12 March 1803, 2 September 1804.

19 *SG* 5 August, 4 Nov 1804, Lesueur, ‘Plan de la Ville’, 1802. Surry Lane was occasionally called Sussex Lane by 1828, and later became Essex Lane. Surveyor Meehan reported that there was still no ‘regular line of communication with the streets that now form the Rocks’ in 1820. Evidence of James Meehan, in J.T. Bigge, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry on the Colony of New South Wales*, London, 1822, Appendix, Bonwick Transcripts [hereafter BT] Box 5 pp2237-38. CSC 4/1765 R6056.
Who lived on the Rocks? A mixture, it seems, of artisans, small traders, shopkeepers, and labourers, married and unmarried couples, scores of children, women householders with some property, single men with government posts and small farms in the country, itinerant labourers lodging in skillions and kitchens, licensed publicans, keepers of low drinking houses, prostitutes, thieves and their associates. The great majority were convicts and ex-convicts.20 Among the earliest few who were granted leases were the steady blacksmith, later publican Thomas Prior, the bakers Thomas and Mary Saunders, and publicans and ship owners Samuel and Agnes Thorley. In the 1790s their many non-leaseholding neighbours included shoemaker George Legg and Ann Armsden, the highwayman-turned-constable William Thorn, and probably the Irish stonemason Richard Byrne and his wife Margaret Kelly.

There were also many on the Rocks whose lives were bound up with the sea: navvies on whose backs the cargoes of arriving ships were unloaded, shipwrights and their apprentices, ship’s carpenters, a few ship’s captains and masters, watermen ferrying people to and from ships, day and night, watchmen for the wharf, Government Coxswains, clerks to the Naval Office, members of the Row Guard, wharfingers, fledgling traders with ships of their own. And the waves of seamen, English, French, Spanish, American, Lascars, Fijians, ‘Asiatic Seamen of the Mahometan faith’,21 who rowed in ‘jolly’ boats from their ships to the Hospital Wharf, and made their way in groups to the hotels and houses of the Rocks.

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20 This account of the early population of the Rocks is based on the dossiers collated on individuals and families known to have lived in the Rocks, around the Hospital Wharf, and north towards Dawe’s Point, between the 1790s and 1830. The information was collected from a complete reading of the Sydney Gazette between 1803 and 1810, and of Historical Records of Australia between 1788 and 1810, and an index-guided search of these two sources to c1830; the Mutch Index to Births, Deaths and Marriages, ML; the Colonial Secretary’s Correspondence 1788-1825, Coroner’s Inquests c1788-1825, and relevant Court of Criminal Jurisdiction Proceedings, 1788-c1825, the catalogues of Mitchell library, as well as other miscellaneous sources.

21 SG 16 March 1806.
Figs. 25 and 26: John William Lewin, 'Sydney Cove 1808', views to the west and east of the Cove. Lewin seems to depict the Rocks houses (top left) more realistically than other artists: they sit higgledy-piggledy on the various rocky tiers and outcrops. 

Source: Mitchell Library ML 60 and ML 50.
By the time Suttor looked around the town in 1802 there were already some substantial houses of stone, weatherboard and shingles on the Rocks, as well as the older thatched wattle and daub huts he described (Fig. 27). The stone for the more substantial houses was often cut in situ, so houses were probably flanked by stepped and benched quarries carved from the Rocks. Stone was roughly hewn, laid in coarse rubble work and plastered, so that the walls had a knobby texture. The silvery shingled roofs replaced thatch and the pale orange clay roof tiles which had absorbed so much water that they caved in upon the posts and wattles below. Some of the Rocks' shingled roofs were still in use in the 1880s.  

Some houses were set apart with a garden at the front bisected by a path, according to the pattern described by observers of Sydney from the early 1800s to the 1820s. Those keen to assert a claim over the land they occupied fenced these gardens in with the pointed palings commonly depicted in the paintings. They had highly practical reasons for doing so: the fences kept out roaming packs of half-wild dogs, goats and pigs. At the house of James Phelan, pigs pushed their way in through a gap in the paling into the yard where he lay sleeping. People passing by saw him and rushed in to assist, but he was so drunk that when they shook him awake he did not realize the animals had torn off his nose. The stout fences were also signs to others that the land had been appropriated, not by deed, grant or lease, but by defacto occupation. They symbolised Sydney's early spirit of possessive individualism, the race against one another to grab the land.

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22 Godden Mackay, Karskens et al ‘Report on Cumberland/Gloucester Street’; series of advertisements offering Rocks houses for sale in SG 1803 to 1810. Evidence of James Meehan in Bigge, Report, Appendix. Isaac Peyton advertised his stone house for sale together with ‘beautiful cut stone’ in 1807. Margaret Quin advertised her Gloucester Street house in 1826 as having 'a yard with sufficient stone, when quarried, for building another house'; SG 5 July 1807; 8 November 1826.

23 SG 14 April 1810; Phelan was appointed a constable later in 1810, was granted a lease on the Rocks in 1809 and land in 1816, see CSC SZ758 pp151-2, 9/2652 p28 and 9/2731 p234.
Fig. 27: John Eyre, 'View of Sydney from the West Side of the Cove', 1810. This view, facing south from behind the hospital (left), shows the Rocks' rudimentary paths and pointed paling fences, with craggy outcrops of rock in the foreground. The older row-huts, however, are being replaced by larger, more substantial stone houses with shingled roofs; one is under construction in the foreground.

Fig. 28: John Eyre, ‘View of Part of the River of Sydney in New South Wales Taken from St Philip’s Church Yard’, c1812. The lines of Rocks streets - Cumberland, Gloucester, Cambridge and Harrington - are apparent on the left. The house and garden on the lower left may have been that of William and Sarah Fielder, who farmed behind the stores (centre-right) from the 1790s. Absalom West, the publisher of this and other Eyre views, lived in Cambridge Street at the northern end of the Rocks.

Source: A. West, Publisher, in Views of New South Wales, First Series, Sydney, 1813. Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 122 p158.

Fig. 29: A hand-cut pit with channels and a post hole, dating from the 1790s was located during the 1994 excavation of the Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street site on the Rocks. These ‘wells’ served to catch and store water in the earliest settlement phase.

(Photograph: G. Karskens).
Some people cultivated gardens, though these were not primarily decorative, but pragmatic, to ‘support a family’. They carted in soil to enrich the rocky, sandy ground, grew vegetables, and fruit trees, especially peaches, were bowed down with fruit in summer. The better houses had their own wells of good water; these were often left uncovered, a menace to small children and drunks. They kept fowls and pigs, which the more responsible, like the tailor John Mollet, kept in pens. William and Sarah Fielder were among the earliest settlers on land at the back of the stores, possibly as early as 1792. By 1810 they occupied a ‘neat American built house’ surrounded by a flourishing vegetable garden and an orchard of over a hundred orange, lemon and other fruit trees (Fig. 28). Their house had been among the earliest to be licensed, so the Fielders, along with Sarah Bird, must also be among the Rocks’ first publicans.  

Other people ignored the Governor’s encouragement and orders to cultivate gardens and confine their animals; their houses were probably not paled in, merely trampled ground scattered with human and animal detritus. As archaeologist Wendy Thorp has observed from the excavation of the Lilyvale site in 1989–92, ‘Everywhere scraps and fragments of European life were trodden into the soil; small pieces of broken plates, fragments of glass, ends of smoking pipes and other cast-offs...’, bones and other food remains, no doubt. The streets of the Rocks remained a constant source of complaint well into the 1840s. Cumberland Street was so uneven in 1826 that ‘a carriage can only pass with much peril’ and ‘one false step in the darkness of night is liable to precipitate the unwary passenger down some precipice’. The public spaces of the streets were also rank with the stench of blood and rotting entrails, since butchers in the early years commonly slaughtered beasts there, and left the remains where

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24 SG 16 March, 21 June, 10 and 31 August 1806. John Mollet also had a ‘capital well affording an abundant supply in the driest seasons’ and ‘a garden well-cropped’, SG 1 January 1809. The Fielders were among those who settled behind the first stores on the oldest part of the Rocks in about 1790. One of their two sons, William junior, still lived on the Rocks with his family in 1828. See SG 26 May 1810 and Flynn, Second Fleet, entry for William Fielder.
they fell. The practice of leaving the bodies of dead animals about the streets to putrefy was still commonplace in the late 1820s.\(^\text{25}\)

There does appear to be some correlation between the upper/lower Rocks patterns of townscape outlined above, and the kinds of people who lived in the two parts. Those on the upper levels, in Windmill Row and the row that Macquarie later named Cumberland Street, tended in the 1800s to be artisans, tradesmen and householders of some means and relatively steady character and habits. The millwright and miller John Davis who built the first windmill and was later crippled by its millstone, continued to live on Windmill Row in a house and garden which were ‘an aid towards his support’.\(^\text{26}\) His neighbours included bakers Thomas and Elizabeth Saunders, who owned two houses; a ships’ carpenter Charles Griffin who became the Master Boat Builder in 1809 and Edward Quin, Deputy Marshall to the Vice-Admiralty Court, and his wife Sarah.\(^\text{27}\) The stonemason Isaac Peyton also lived in Windmill Row for about twenty years, and built several substantial stone houses there. He was forced to sell one of them when the bridge he was contracted to build over the Tank Stream

\(^{25}\) SG 29 July, 11 November 1826; Australian 16 November 1842; Thorp, 'Report on Lilyvale'; SG 23 February 1803; In May 1828 the Gazette reported that ‘The putrefying carcasses of dogs, pigs &c which, of late, have more than usually been suffered to lie about the streets, create an extremely offensive, not to say dangerous, nuisance’, 23 May 1828.

\(^{26}\) Memorial of John Davis (arrived c1796), 5 February 1810, CSC 4/1821 No 83b.

\(^{27}\) The Saunders held 30 acres at Mulgrave Place in 1796, but lived on the Rocks from at least 1803, SG 17 July 1803. Their two houses near Fort Phillip were taken down in 1815, see Wentworth Papers, ML A763 p143c, after which they appear to have moved to their land near Prospect. James McKane (arrived 1800) had a workshop at the Dockyard. His house in Prince Street was taken down in 1812; see Wentworth Papers, ML A761 p33 and his petition for mitigation of sentence, 13 February 1810 CSC 4/1847 p144. Charles Griffin arrived in 1802 and was appointed Master Boat Builder 1809, see CSC SZ993 pp172-3 and SG 11 October 1809 and 10 November 1810. Re Edward Quin (arrived 1801) see Index to CSC; his memorial for confirmation of lease on the Rocks, January 1810, CSC 4/1822 No 269, and SG 21 Jan 1810.
promptly fell down. In later years these elevated spots and early stone houses would be favoured by sea captains, landowners, and the few clergy who lived on the Rocks. But there were also some poor huts in these upper areas. Several were removed under Macquarie’s direction from around Fort Phillip, which had been built on the site of the first windmill in 1804. Irish hairdresser Charles Bryan was compensated with spirits worth only £5.50 for his house in 1812.

The houses of women who had managed to amass property and possessions were also found high on the Rocks. Elizabeth Rafferty was an Irish dealer who bought a good house overlooking the water worth over a hundred pounds from a sea Captain, and furnished it luxuriously. Among those on the lower Rocks, Sarah Reynolds resided in a house behind the hospital she bought for herself after she left her husband Edward, and Elizabeth Mack traded in goods and provisions from her house. On the lower parts, too, there were houses occupied by women who stole from their neighbours and pilfered from the store. Mary Long, for example, told Michael Cooney and Dan Gilmore of the goods owned by her opposite neighbour Elizabeth Jones. Then, standing at her front door, she loudly sang “'Hot Bunbury Cakes” as if to the infant in her arms’, distracting the attention of passers-by while they broke into Elizabeth’s house. Couples like Jane Jones and Thomas Shirley, Cornelia

28 Isaac Peyton (arrived 1798) see SG 11 December 1803, 23 November 1806, 8 February 1807, 30 July 1809. Peyton was still living in Prince Street in 1823, see District Constables’ Notebooks, CSC.

29 See Wentworth Family Papers, ML A761 p33.

30 Re Elizabeth Rafferty, see SG 10 April, 10 July, 4 Sept 1803, 16 June 1805, 10 August 1806, 15 March, 21 June 1807; re Sarah Reynolds see SG 4 September, 2 October 1810; re Elizabeth Mack see SG 17 September 1809, 21 July 1810 (beer, ale and porter licence granted). The Account Book of William Hobart Mansell, 1809-1812, lists regular purchases made by Elizabeth Mack (or ‘Smack’), ML A2111.

31 SG 26 May 1805. Mary Long still lived in the Rocks in 1822, see District Constables’ Notebooks, CSC. ‘Hot Bunbury (or Banbury) Cakes’ was apparently a Cockney street-sellers’ cry, still called in Sydney streets in 1829; see Geoffrey Scott, Sydney’s Highways of History, Melbourne, Georgian House, 1958, p232.
Cochrane and Arthur Martin, Frances Gallaghan and John Montgomery, used their houses to hide stolen goods. When caught they stood trial together, and were flogged, or transported, or hanged.\textsuperscript{32} John Kenny, a baker who married Eleanor Gallacher in 1803, had a neat furnished house, and started a short-lived school with his brother James at no 8 the Rocks. His chance at a comfortable, decent life was destroyed by his ugly, violent temper. Some years later, at Parramatta a ‘decent, inoffensive woman’ named Mary Smith had the temerity to demand the return of clothing he had stolen from her. He murdered her and tried to burn her body in a ditch. Kenny was hanged at Sydney and his body taken to Parramatta and left to rot in chains near the spot where he killed her.\textsuperscript{33}

The ex-convict thespian watchmaker John Sparrow lived in another decent house on ‘the best part of the Rocks’. He had amongst his possessions bedsteads, feather beds, dining, card and tea tables, mahogany chairs, a bureau, mirrors, pictures, goblets, tumblers and wine glasses.\textsuperscript{34} His house, in what became Cambridge Street, was purchased in 1810 by the baker-turned-dealer Andrew Frazier, who began selling foodstuffs and fabric it, and then acquired spirits, bakers and cart licences. Frazier was highly respected in the town, and by 1824 had accumulated ‘a large capital as well in property as money’. By then his desire was ‘to remain and end his days in the colony’ which he did, though not in the happiest of personal circumstances.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{32} Re Jane Jones and Thomas Shirley, SG 20 May, 30 June 1805, 27 April 1806 (regarding Jones' thefts from Elizabeth Rafferty). Re Arthur Martin (arrived 1792) and Cornelia Cochrane, SG 19 June 1808. Re Frances Gallaghan and John Montgomery, SG 26 May, 30 June 1805, re receiving goods stolen from Elizabeth Jones, also of the Rocks.

\textsuperscript{33} SG 26 March, 2 April, 14 August 1803, 6 October 1805, 18 and 25 January 1807. Kenny had been sent to government labour at Parramatta before 1801 for ‘having treated the court with great contempt'; see CSC R6037 SZ988 p56.

\textsuperscript{34} SG 15 January 1803, 2, 23 and 30 August 1807.

\textsuperscript{35} SG 2 July 1809, 21 July 1810; Memorial, CSIL 4/1837A No 358 p395.
In the yards, women hung or laid out washing to dry, picked vegetables and fruit, killed and plucked fowls for dinner. Children played, alone or in groups, at their own games and those they copied from adults' activities. They liked to wander in the town, especially about the wharf and market place. In the rudimentary streets, on the paths and steps, men and women were about from the earliest hours, going to work, strolling down in the morning sunlight to bathe naked in the sea, making their way down to the boats to go out oystering, fishing or gathering timber, collecting water from the public well, setting off to buy food or provisions, or beginning journeys out to their farms. They exchanged greetings or a few words, and commonly called in at the houses of friends to light a pipe, drink, yarn and gossip.

The night brought other pastimes, other dangers. In some houses families slept, or gathered around a table in one of the front rooms with a few friends, sharing a meal and some grog, talking and singing. In other houses women dressed in the most colourful, flashy, fashionable garments the colony had to offer, drank, and danced and sang throughout the night with their friends and lovers, or with sailors and strangers. The raucous laughter floated down the slope into the darkness, and later the parties risked life and limb staggering down the Rocks in the black morning hours. Thieves made their stealthy way up to bury or secrete their stolen goods - watches, jewellery, money, teaspoons, fabric, clothing - in bundles between the rocks on the uninhabited parts or over on the western side; or they knocked quietly at the door of people who would hide the stuff. As the sun rose they made their way to their lodgings, and slept. At a house on the highest parts at the northern end, the black ferryman William Blue, and his wife were awoken by the shrieks of the feeble-minded woman next door. Her husband had beaten her and locked her out again. A watchman arrived, and the quarrelling turned abruptly to bursts of merriment. In a bloodied pool of water nearby lay the body of
a seaman, a stranger, his forehead gaping with a wound. He was discovered in the morning, but his murderer was not.\textsuperscript{36}

The character of the Rocks as the resort of convicts was consolidated during the 1810s. Before Macquarie managed to coax and bribe the male convicts into his barracks, they were told by their superintendents simply to go away and 'provide yourselves with lodgings where you can' just as labourers did in English and Irish towns and cities. Usually they went to the Rocks, it drew them in.\textsuperscript{37} By 1813 it was the 'most populous part of the town', still crazed by crooked, unlevel streets, its houses spreading northwards, and increasingly crowded together. An exasperated Commissioner Bigge, trying to ascertain how such a place had come about in a convict colony, eventually extracted the truth from a mildly spoken Surveyor Meehan during his inquiry of 1820. The small Rocks houses, said Meehan, were originally built 'upon and occupancy generally, and have been sold or let as the proprietors chose'. The land was held, as another commentator more forcefully put it, 'by naked possession'.\textsuperscript{38}

The early Rocks, then: a town built, arranged and occupied by convicts and ex-convicts of widely differing fortunes and ambitions - artisans, traders, labourers - who lived close by one another. The upper levels expressed something of a stake in the colony, the chance of a decent, comfortable life grasped; the lower levels were, in part, a 'foreign country' of streetless disorder, of hidden connections and networks, familiar only those who were of it. The Rocks was a place where people got on with their business largely unhindered, making their lives as they could, honestly or dishonestly, many thirsting for success in trade, all

\textsuperscript{36} See for example inquest on Edward Ryan, 13 September 1813, CSC R6021 4/1819 p621ff; SG 15 May, 11 December 1803; 17 June, 15 July, 12 August 1804.


\textsuperscript{38} Bigge, \textit{Report}, Appendix, Evidence of James Meehan 1820.
looking out for themselves, watching one another. Bigge's question is worth repeating: how, in a convict prison-colony, supposedly regulated, patrolled, and guarded, had this kind of neighbourhood taken root and thrived?
The Preindustrial Town

Mark Girouard, in Cities and People, outlines the shapes of European medieval towns and cities. They had at their centres the buildings housing civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and the great houses of nobles and wealthy merchants. Meanwhile, the artisans, shopkeepers, labourers were found ‘where they could afford to live, and where the nature of their work suggested’ on the periphery, often in neighbourhoods according to trade or type of business. In the early years of medieval cities, too, ‘freestanding houses were the norm’. Separate buildings, each on its own little plot, was the usual arrangement in any new settlement.39

These were precisely the outlines inscribed on the shores of Sydney Cove. Initially, an embryonic civil centre was established on the east side of the Tank stream, with the tiny elite settled about the focus of Government house, while the convict lower orders occupied the next band. They were housed first in tents, and then in their small huts, a few southward on the east side, but most on the Rocks. Beyond the last straggling rows on both sides of the Cove lay the ‘skirts’ of the town, the wilderness on the east, the Governor’s domain, haunt of thieves. Correspondingly, on the west were the steep slopes to deserted Cockle Bay, where victims were often lured to be assaulted, raped or robbed, where thieves hid stolen goods, where runaways concealed themselves between the rocks. Those who were mentally disturbed, and those who wanted to end their lives also found their way to Cockle Bay.

The lineaments of this townscape, arranged like concentric circles, reflected the rank ordering of society. At a broad level, the elite, those of wealth and power clustered at the core, while the various ranks of the lower orders, the convicts, settled in the next encircling band, most notably on the Rocks. There, in the manner then natural to the formation of towns, and

39 Girouard, Cities and People, Chapters 1-4, pp.35ff., 69ff. See also Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, p20ff for eighteenth century American cities; and Graeme Aplin, ‘Models of Urban Change’.
society itself, they were left much to their own devices, to establish their own part of town. Beyond them lay the badlands, visited and used by outcasts and outlaws, those on the ragged edges of society.

By the 1800s the face of the town had changed somewhat, its spatial ordering reprioritized by the rise of trade, commerce and shipping. The traders jostled for the best positions on the shoreline and at the wharf, their new houses, warehouses, and shipyards overlapping the older civil core. The shopkeepers and artisans jockeyed for the next-best locations - the Lower Rocks, for example, around the hospital and the nearby wharf, and also Lower Pitt Street. They sold a great array of foodstuffs, fabrics, hardware, furnishings, utensils, as well as purely frivolous items from the front rooms of their houses. In Sydney, then, the impulse towards profit through trade, retailing, shipbuilding, sealing ventures, early house-based manufacturing industries, and so on, meant that its townscape was one of struggle and at times desperate competition, between individuals for those sites which were 'undeniably situate for trade', or as Rocks baker William O'Neal put it 'in one of the first trading neighbourhoods in the colony' 40

While rank was the broad delineator of the town as a whole, the early Rocks reflected the lack of real separation between the ranks within lower orders, from well-off dealer and skilled artisan to unskilled labourer. This, too, was typical of the preindustrial towns and cities of Europe and America, and also reflects the undifferentiated way in which the lower orders were considered generally in civil society. 41 Unlike the later upper and middle class desire for spatial separations from the working classes, expressed in the suburb, the self-proclaimed respectable and propertied ranks of the Rocks had little or no aversion to living in a

40 Sydney Gazette advertisements for the sale of houses commonly include this phrase; see also Hainsworth, The Sydney Traders.

41 Discussed in Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, Chapter 2.
neighbourhood with ex-convicts of indifferent character, poor convict labourers and servants, or houses where sailors came in pursuit of their pleasures.
The Governors' Town 1788-1809

There are widely differing interpretations of Sydney's townscape. The architectural historian Max Freeland saw early Sydney as a vision thwarted, the tragedy of Phillip's fine town plan cast aside by expediency, and the 'self-interest and avarice that were to plague the colony'.⁴² Jim Sait writes of the early town plan as exhibiting a rather sinister hidden agenda. The convicts were segregated by a kind of banishment to the Rocks, where their docility and oppression was ensured by the menacing guns of Fort Phillip to the north and the soldiers' barracks to the south.⁴³ Helen Proudfoot sees the eighteenth century quest for order, permanence and fixedness successfully imposed on the 'savage shore', even from the first arrangement of the rude camp. Although opposed, each of these interpretations nevertheless describes Sydney as the Governors' town, a town shaped by authority.

Paul Carter's The Road to Botany Bay, is significant in that it alerts us to the other 'reality', the convicts' conception and interpretation of the colony's spaces, the vast 'underside' of history which goes unacknowledged in these and other accounts of the early settlement. The imaginings of convicts were mostly spatially conceived; they provided escape routes, destinations, other places, which made the idea of escape possible.⁴⁷ Carter suggests the possibility of returning to Botany Bay reflectively, and by interpreting the accounts of the First Fleet journalists spatially, we can recover from the Enlightenment logic of cause and effect something of what that logic suppressed...the dimension of the convict's existence


⁴³ Sait, 'Public Building and Planning', p16.
which imprisonment and transportation were specifically designed to exclude: his occupation of a historical space.\footnote{Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*, London, Faber and Faber, 1987 pp295-296ff.}

He argues that story-telling, tales of gold finds, the mythical country of leisure and plenty on the other side of the mountains, the non-existent, yet conceptually real road to Botany Bay, and so on, were potent and effective means employed by convicts to confound, confuse, challenge or ignore authority. They open for us the world conceived by the convicts. But the convicts’ world was not merely one of stories and fantasy, their efforts were not largely devoted to destabilizing the ‘myth’ of spatial logic with which their gaolers imprisoned and the historians dehumanized them. The exploration of townscape reveals action. They built houses, bakeries, huts and fences, they dug wells and privies, their feet shaped paths marking their ways of going about their town. They made love, bore children, eagerly sought one another’s company, formed friendships, pursued their own habits at work and leisure. They bought and sold goods, and they created a whole material world, partly overlapping and dependent on officialdom. This world not only extended well beyond the realms of imagination, but of authority and oppression.

Carter also recruits the concept of Panopticon, Bentham’s new prison in which inmates were arranged around a central all-seeing ‘eye’ which observed them constantly, thus enforcing punishment and reform without resort to whips, chains, stocks or pillories. ‘In a sense’ he observes, ‘Phillip was showing [in his account] that Botany Bay, too was a place where nothing was invisible, where no-one could escape’.\footnote{Ibid., p306.} Foucault uses the panopticon as an analogy for the immense political power extracted from the process, ascendant in the early nineteenth century, of dividing and fixing bodies into separate spaces, of watching people constantly and of keeping meticulous records about them. These are the origins of ‘modern’
means of imposing order and ensuring docility, and this concept of division lies at the roots of modern institutions.⁴⁶

In Sydney there were repeated orders to muster, to count people, to record their names, hence to fix them permanently on the pages. Attempts were made to number and record houses and boats. The town was repeatedly divided into quarters and patrolled regularly by constables who were ordered to collect information about the householders and reported it to their superiors. All of these certainly suggest the germ of a modern bureaucracy, as described by Foucault.⁴⁷ But this was not a one-way process, the sinister and inescapable bearing down of an all-seeing government on the people. For every attempt to order, muster, count and fix, there were contrary movements, evasions, aliases, constant shiftings, orders obeyed for a few days, then ignored or forgotten. Sydney’s material and social development emerged by means of a constant, contrapositional dialogue between authority and people.

For example, little came of the grand town plan Phillip devised for the straggling group of tents, half-built huts and newly beaten-out tracks, only five months after the first landing. He was most concerned about public health; his selection of the site of Sydney Cove had been based not only on the run of fresh water there, but on its dry ‘healthy’ aspect, compared with the spongy swamps of Botany Bay.⁴⁸ The imagined town had avenues 200 feet wide ‘for the free circulation of air’, its allotments would be a considerable 60 feet by 150 feet deep, and their owners bound by covenant not to erect more than one house on each (Fig.30). He cited the ground south of the civil precinct as most suitable for this type of occupation because it

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⁴⁶ Foucault, Discipline and Punish. Chapter 3.

⁴⁷ For example, see Phillip’s 1789 orders to divide and patrol the town, HRA, Phillip to Sydney, 1 February 1790, and Enclosure No 1, Vol 1 134ff.

⁴⁸ F.M.L. Thompson observed that for ‘Englishmen, the towns in the past had been the graves of mankind’, because the close aggregation of people meant disease and death; Rise of Respectable Society. p178. HRA, Phillip to Sydney, 15 May 1788, Vol 1 17-18.
Fig. 30: William Dawes/Captain Hunter, 'Sketch of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, In the County of Cumberland, New South Wales July 1788'. Phillip's 'vision' for the town, superimposing the lines of grand and regular avenues over the struggling tents and huts. The latter, however, proved resilient, and this plan did not eventuate.

was level and would allow for uniformity, while the Rocks area might be suitable for well-sinking, to provide water for the future barracks on the western side. Hence there was no mention of any sort of settlement there. The hospital was thus deliberately set ‘clear of the town’ on the west side of the Cove.\footnote{HRA, Phillip to Sydney, 9 July 1788, Vol 1 46; see also ‘Sketch of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson in the County of Cumberland, New South Wales, July 1788’, in Arthur Phillip, The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay, London, 1789, p123.}

Sydney, however, had a life of its own. Phillip’s plan showed dots and dashes representing ‘temporary’ buildings, following the line of the stream, and contrary to the imagined avenues. These obstinate marks were difficult to erase, and the momentum of their existence prevailed. The plan was devised to avoid the disorderly growth of an unwatchable, inaccessible town, of precisely the sort which emerged on the Rocks. The hospital, instead of remaining ‘clear of the town’ became a kind of diseased heart, as houses clustered around and above it to be close to the wharf and marketplace. Subsequent Governors also made attempts to shape the town, but the result was a compromise between these efforts and the town that simply grew.

Phillip did what he could to keep the town small, discouraging its growth, by dispersing settlement, in the hope of avoiding urban disorder and perhaps even reforming souls through good honest agrarian work. When it became apparent that Sydney could not be the centre of such an agricultural society, Parramatta was founded instead, receiving the healthy, able-bodied convicts off the transports, while the frail and sick remained in Sydney.\footnote{HRA, Phillip to Grenville, 17 July 1790 Vol 1 196-198; Phillip to Sydney, 10 July 1788 Vol 1 65; 30 October 1788, Vol 1 97; David Collins, Account of the English Colony Vol 1 pp125, 212.} Tench wrote cheerfully in 1790 ‘Except building, sawing and brickmaking, nothing of consequence is carried on here. The number of convicts diminishes everyday’.\footnote{Tench, First Four Years, p192.} For a short time it was thought, or hoped, that Sydney, with its already wayward buildings and paths, its lack of
fertile ground, might wither and die in the face of the more orderly, appropriately rural centre of Parramatta.

But the convicts preferred town life, and so a place like the Rocks grew quickly, tenaciously, as did Sydney as a whole. Phillip lamented that very few of the ex-convicts 'are desirous of becoming settlers in this country' because on the isolated farms they were 'so entirely cut off from the gratification in which most of them have always placed their happiness'.52 Sydney, limited, ramshackle and rough as it was, became the place to acquire longed-for 'articles', to escape the poor, dreary, lonely and often dangerous life on the distant farms, to live close by friends and others of like mind, to share the excitement when the ships arrived. Sydney, in short, turned the entire idea of an agricultural, reforming, penal colony, ordered and planned from above, on its head.

By 1796, Governor Hunter felt the town had run out of control. Sydney's people, he wrote, were of 'very disorderly conduct and frequent disgraceful breaches of the peace', and the town itself a 'mere sink of every species of infamy'.53 Earlier orders concerning division of the town into districts were repeated, with a register of each dwelling and its inhabitants compiled. Watchmen were charged with the apprehension of 'all night-walkers, all disorderly and suspicious persons' and with 'informing themselves of all strangers who come to reside within their divisions'. They were also to call out the hour of the night while on patrol, prevent people from going to the Hawkesbury or Parramatta without permission, and from loitering idly when they should be at work. The Sabbath was to be treated with reverence, and they were to stop people from 'idly strolling about during divine service'.

52 HRA, Phillip to Nepean, 15 April 1790, Vol 1 p171; Phillip to Dundas, 19 March 1792, Vol 1 338-339.

53 HRA, Hunter to Portland, 12 November 1796, Vol 1 676; Government and General Orders, 9 November 1796, Vol 1 701.
If these orders are read in the obverse, they suggest the common behaviour of the townspeople - a shifting population, moving constantly between the towns and settlements, unheeding of regular working hours, fond of gaming, fighting and drink, and uninterested in formal religion. Over the first three decades, these same orders, concerning the control and modification of the behaviour and movement of people were repeated time and time again. The mere fact of their repetition suggests that they were only partly effective. Collins, as Judge Advocate, concluded also that the convicts simply ‘had not been accustomed to live in situations where their conduct was to be regulated by written orders’; in short, they were not used to being governed. They pleaded that ‘they had never before heard’ of the orders they had breached, and they lacked the understanding of orders as permanent, ‘many of them seeming to think it issued merely for the purpose of the moment’.

House numbering was first ordered in 1789 and repeated in 1796, 1803 and in 1811. In 1803 the Sydney Gazette smirked, in spite of official censorship:

However numerous the houses in town may be yet one moral certainty exists: that they are no longer numberless. On Wednesday the artist perfected the laborious toil and now regrets he did not figure away in water instead of oil. He found it no easy task to reduce the Rocks to ORDER, though no single avenue went unexplored. But how much use was numbering when many Rocks houses were not located one after the other in a logical fashion, but, as this report suggests, one up, one down, here and there on perches and odd angles on the rocky slopes? And when more dwellings appeared in between, or spread further north, as they soon did, the numbers were rendered nonsensical and had to

54 Collins, Vol 2 p44: see also p47: the convicts are not ‘thinking beings’. King, reissuing orders in 1800, felt bound to point out that ‘As this is a repetition of several Orders that have formerly been given to the same effect, and have been as often disregarded as observed, it is to be understood...that after an Order is once issued it is to be constantly obeyed until revoked by the same authority that gives it’. HRA, King to Portland, 10 March 1801, Vol 3 44-45.

55 SG 16 October 1803.
be started all over again. Similarly, any register of addresses compiled was hopelessly out of date even before it was finished. Ships brought constant waves of new faces, convicts and seamen. Numbers of labourers drifted between the towns, lodging in the skillions and bakeries of the householders. Women and men won and lost one another’s affection, and consequently moved in and out of one another’s houses regularly. Many of the rapid succession of births and deaths went unreported. The early attempts to order the town were thus cyclical, they had to be repeated time and time again. In reality, Sydney could not be fitted into the model of linear, inevitable progress inherent in the rhetoric of the course of empire, though there were progressions of other kinds.  

In the face of the poverty of public buildings, the Governors, ironically, cited the private houses of the traders and the convicts as evidence of material progress and good order. King drew this picture of domestic bliss in 1804:

Among the convicts victualled by the Crown, there are but few and those are of the worst description, who have not comfortable little dwellings at the places they are stationed, many have the convenience of small ovens, or iron pots they bake under; and not a few have their wives and their families of children, whom they maintain by their labour when their government work is finished, with the help of small pieces of ground around their dwellings.  

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57 HRA. King to Hobart, 1 March 1804 Vol 4 468. There is much evidence for the crudeness and impermanence of public buildings in the sequence of official correspondence 1788-1805 in HRA, for example Phillip to Grenville, 17 July 1790, Vol 1 194; Hunter to Portland, 12 November 1796, Vol 1 675, and Bligh to Windham, 25 January 1807, ‘Statement of Government Buildings in Sydney, August 13th 1806’, Vol 6 98.
The extensive houses of the emancipist traders were built in audaciously sophisticated neoclassical and palladian styles on sites which were not only most useful for trade, but highly visible in the town. They made the crop-roofed, blank-faced houses built by government for civil servants look crude and old-fashioned. They too were adopted as signals of the colony’s success, and so they were, although they represented the kind of development which had not been foreseen or planned. Bligh wrote of the towns’ houses as ‘the pride of their inhabitants; poor as they are yet they are neat, and the Town altogether is become what has not been seen before in this country’.  

But the role of the convicts’ houses town on the Rocks was ambiguous. They sheltered and protected, they allowed men and women to rebuild their lives, to have families, and support themselves, thereby taking themselves off government stores, and out of government hands. Herein lay the loosening of controls. Townscape, while being a boon and a reward to the industrious, could also be the refuge for a menacing population, and houses were hidden spaces where authority might be undermined. Compare these orders, proclaimed in the same issue of the Sydney Gazette in 1806. In the first, houses are a means of control, for in case of ‘fire or commotion’, people were to stay in their houses when they heard the drums beat to arms or the ‘Alarum bells’. But in the second, houses were sources of disorder, for it warned against ‘Unlawful Meetings’ held in them, a reiteration of the 1802 regulation declaring it illegal for groups of twelve people or more to meet.  

While Bligh was initially impressed by the private houses of Sydney, he soon became annoyed with what they represented about the balance of control over the town. He considered that the leases which had been given to individuals like John Macarthur, Garnham Blaxcell and many others, had the potential to ‘confine government in any arrangement it may

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58 HRA, Bligh to Windham, 30 September 1807, Vol 6 137.

59 SG 18 May 1806; HRA, King’s Proclamation, 2 April 1802, Vol 3 618-619.
think proper to make for its use and ornament of the town’.\textsuperscript{60} They challenged the rightful ascendancy of Governor over subject in shaping the town. Bligh had evidently learnt nothing from his experience on the \textit{Bounty}; once again he employed ‘bad language’ and the dialogue over townscape broke down. He planned to ‘clear two large spaces: one around Government House, the other around St Philip’s church’, and so he revoked the leases and warned holders that ‘whatever they erect will be at their own risk’.\textsuperscript{61} This caused great unease in the town, for although it was focused on those of rank and wealth, Bligh by extension threatened all leaseholders, and also those who had built on ground according to the unwritten rules of permissive occupancy. Sarah Wills wrote to her mother from her house near the wharf at the foot of the Rocks:

He [Bligh] had not been here long when he took shameful advantage of those that lay in his power. From some he took good houses and gave them bad ones. From others he took houses and turned them into the street without compensation. Some he stopped building, others he made make improvements against their inclination, in his endeavour to crush every person as much as possible.\textsuperscript{62}

Her words bespoke the anxiety of Sydney’s householders, large and small. John Macarthur made a public, symbolic attempt to erect a fence on his lease near St Philip’s, in defiance of Bligh’s orders. He recounted:

Thinking it necessary this should be decided, I immediately fixed one of the posts myself. The superintendent then alighted from his horse, pulled down the post,

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{HRA}, Bligh to Windham, 31 October 1807, Vol 6 156.


\textsuperscript{62} Sarah Wills, Letter to her mother, cited in Frank Clune, \textit{Bound for Botany Bay, Narrative of a Voyage in 1798 Aboard the Death Ship Hillsborough}, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1964, p103.
declared that he did it by the order of the Governor, and added, in a very emphatic tone, 'When the axe is laid to the root, the tree must fall'\textsuperscript{63}

As Atkinson points out, this piece of drama was probably observed by the assembled townspeople. 'Macarthur thus demonstrated, in a most public way, the power which the Governor had assumed [or reclaimed?], even over the property of the rich'. Bligh was deposed two weeks later, and the leading townspeople, no doubt including Sarah and Edward Wills, met at the church to give thanks for their 'deliverance', and agreed to 'reward' the officers with gifts.\textsuperscript{64}

The leases were reissued the following year by Acting-Governor Foveaux, and the number of new leases swelled to a great rush at the close of 1809, just before the arrival of Lachlan Macquarie. At least thirty-six of these leases, most for fourteen years, were made out for various parts of the Rocks, to people who had occupied and built on land for some years (see Appendix 2, compare to Appendix 1).\textsuperscript{65} They were a last-minute official ratification of the townscape which had been allowed to grow unhindered since the beginning. The 'Rum Rebellion' may well be interpreted as a 'vindication of private property rights', or even those of mere de facto occupancy. It marked, or simply recognized, the shifting of possession 'from the hands of government to those of merchants, tradesmen and the mass of common householders'.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63} Macarthur, cited in Atkinson, 'Taking possession', p85.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid. pp86-7.

\textsuperscript{65} List of All Grants and Leases of Town Allotments Registered in the Colonial Secretary's Office, CSC Fiche [hereafter F] 3268 9/2731.

\textsuperscript{66} Atkinson, 'Taking Possession', p87.
Macquarie's Town 1810-22

Upon his arrival, Macquarie, nominally at least, cancelled all the leases and the pardons given during the interregnum, demanding that each recipient submit a memorial as to why they should be regranted. His office was inundated with hundred of petitions, phrased in the most flattering and deferential terms, and invariably claiming the good character, industriousness, sobriety, and familial responsibilities, in short the moral standing of anxious petitioners. Irish stonemason Richard Byrne's was typical, referring meekly to his 'small allotment situate on the Rocks', his usefulness and 'hard work' on Norfolk Island, and 'good conduct since he came to Sydney'. He pointed out the 'vast expense' he had gone to in building his house, 'and likewise being possessed of a large family most humbly solicits sanction [for] the said grant'.

These extravagant shows of deference were precisely what Macquarie wanted. He had no intention of resuming peoples' houses and allotments, he was far too canny to attempt what Bligh had done with such dangerous results. But he wanted it to appear, on paper at least, that the people were there by the favour, or 'indulgence' of the Governor as representative of the King. It must be remembered also, that while Richard Byrne's self-assessment was fairly accurate, the memorials on the whole contain possibly the largest collection of half-truths, carefully selected and stitched 'facts', and straightforward lies in the State Archives. Macquarie was probably well aware of that, too.

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67 See series of memorials to Macquarie 1810 CSC, microfiche copies ML. Richard Byrne, Memorial, 1810, CSC F3002 4/1821 no 49.

68 This observation is based on the comparison of what petitioners claim to be and the often contrary profiles which emerge from the reconstructions of their lives in the colony.
Fig. 31: John Eyre, 'View of Part of Sydney, the Capital of New South Wales. Taken from Bene Long's Point' 1812. The picture is dominated by ships, while the new Commissariat Stores, dockyards, and the wharves, houses and stores of merchants and shipbuilders line the western side of the Cove. The Rocks, clustered on the heights behind, form the backdrop. The artist depicts some impressive two-storey houses there, and Fort Phillip sits on the ridgeline above.

Source: A. West, Publisher, in Views of New South Wales, First Series, Sydney, 1813, ML.
Macquarie imposed a veneer of order and deference in other ways. In October 1810 he officially renamed all the streets and squares of Sydney and subsequently had a few of them ‘made’ and straightened. Instead of the local and common-usage names like ‘Back Row’ ‘High Street’ ‘Church Street’ ‘Windmill Row’ ‘Sergeant Major’s Row’ and ‘the Rocks’, Macquarie bestowed a grand English name with regal or vice-regal connotations upon each crooked row of houses, each dusty expanse and each precipitous footpad. Hence the main street became George Street, and, in descending order from the highest ridge of the Rocks, he proclaimed Prince Street (Windmill Row), Cumberland Street (Church Row), Cambridge Street, Gloucester Street, and Harrington Street. For the series of cross paths scrambling westwards up the Rocks from George Street he listed Middlesex Lane (now Essex Street) and Surry Lane. Further north three succeeding paths became Essex, Suffolk and Cornwall Lanes, names which were never used in these contexts. Argyle Street was the most northerly cross-path, leading through the ‘termination of Cambridge Street...to Prince Street’. It was a steep track with only four houses in 1822. Macquarie ordered that ‘Posts and Fingerboards are accordingly to be immediately put up, and the streets are henceforth to be known and called only by the new Names now given them’. 69

Macquarie knew the importance of naming places and spaces in the quest for ordering them through knowing them. His names for Rocks streets were eventually adopted and still stand as his legacy. But the effect was by no means immediate, nor straightforward. People went on saying they simply lived ‘on the Rocks’, with no particular street name, for another two decades. When they did use the new names they often mistook them and interchanged them, as if they really did not matter very much; hence Cumberland Street was often given as Prince Street and so on. The fact that many people’s allotments reached from one street to the next behind meant that they were often listed in both streets, and cared little for uniform

69 SQ 6 and 27 October 1810.
addresses. The address of the cooper Edward Ewins in 1824 was still simply ‘Back Windmill, Church Hill’.  

The wild and disorderly nature of both natural landscape and the configuration of houses played havoc with ideals of orderly succession. While the rocky level ledges of ‘Cambridge’, ‘Gloucester’ and ‘Harrington’ Streets were discernible at the less-inhabited northern end around Argyle Street, they converged in a hopeless muddle in the area further south. Successive surveyors, like Meehan in 1807 and Harper in 1823 were stumped, marking the ‘streets’ with apologetic lines of dots that refused to join up, and petered out. Or they left the spaces between the houses tactfully unnamed for the reader to puzzle over (see Figs 14, 33). The most dreadful mix-up (especially for historians) concerned Cambridge and Gloucester Streets. While Cambridge Street was originally the one below Cumberland, and remained known as such until the early 1830s, Cambridge and Gloucester Streets became intertwined, and difficult to separate at the southern end. The granting of freehold titles and new surveys in the 1830s finally solved the confusion by reversing the street names to their present arrangement, with Cambridge the lower and Gloucester the higher.

The surveyors also abandoned the official names of the lanes, marking down instead those used by the people: Cribb’s Lane, Frazier’s Lane, Long’s Lane (for adjacent publicans and property owners) or, later, Brown Bear Lane and Maori Lane, and Globe Street for pubs and those who frequented them. The name Surry Lane was used at least until 1822; by 1828 some residents said they lived in ‘Sussex Lane’ and later it became simply Essex Lane. ‘Middlesex Lane’ was already known as Essex Street in 1823.  

It is clear, then, that naming

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70 Colonial Secretary to Edward Ewins, 22 July 1824, CSC R6013 4/3512 p43.

71 District Constables Notebooks, CSC AONSW; Census 1828; see also the detailed series of later nineteenth century maps prepared by the Metropolitan Board of Water Sewerage and Drainage (1850s, 1860s an 1880s) and those by Percy Dove, copies held in collection of the Sydney Cove Authority. Incidental references are common in trial papers, for example, of James Bryan and Thomas Kinsela in April 1821 for stealing from a convict named Henry Wells of Frazier’s Lane - this lane was named for Andrew Frazier; CCJ R1975 p215 AONSW.
and knowing places is not only imposed from above, but also rises up, shifting and changing with the generations, from below. The name ‘the Rocks’, given and used by the people, would itself later resist all efforts to expunge it, to subsume it into the larger city.

Macquarie, in the early years of his governorship, was skilled in the dialogue between authority and people, and in the interplay between gestures of patronage and deference. It was because of these actions that the ageing ex-convicts could write such things as ‘when I lost Macquarie I lost a friend’. When he wanted to widen and regularize the upper streets of the Rocks, and increase the curtilage of Fort Phillip, he did not simply issue orders for the defacto owners to leave, as Bligh might have done. Instead he commissioned ‘architects and builders’ Nathaniel Lucas and John A’Hearne, - themselves Rocks leaseholders - to survey the houses which Meehan pointed out to them, and provide a valuation. At least fifteen owners were paid between five and ninety pounds for their houses, without a murmur of opposition. Many, including Robert Shreives, Charles Bryan, William Welsh, Nathaniel Lloyd, Robert Fopp and William Wale took up leases on other parts of the Rocks.  

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72 John Pendergrass, Memorial, 18 January 1825 in CSC R6063 4/1785 p41.

73 See CSC R6004 4/3493 p499; and Wentworth Family Papers - Treasury Orders etc 1812-25, ML A763 pp33, 137-151.
Legitimising Occupancy 1822-1830s

Macquarie's tacit recognition of the defacto rights of permissive occupants in the fast-growing town left a legacy of endless confusion and increasing litigation. Much of it concerned boundaries, which were often vague and ill-defined, frequently challenged, and a great source of bad feelings between neighbours. King had foreseen the problems arising from non-legal, unrecorded land ownership, often transferred by verbal agreement, as early as 1802. But it was not until 1822 that Brisbane, in an effort to sort out the confusion, commissioned a survey of the towns with a view to officially defining and leasing allotments (Fig 33). By September 1823 Sydney had still not 'been reduced to order', although a circular was issued to a number of settlers later that year giving them permission to take up whatever leases were not yet occupied. The Rocks land, however, had already been appropriated, by one means or another, and none of the grantees appear to have taken up leases there.

The legitimization of occupation was not really effected until Darling decided to begin the long process of granting freehold titles in 1829. There followed more than two decades of slow painstaking surveys and investigations to untangle the rights of claimants to the land (Fig. 32). One such claimant was Irish ex-convict Margaret Kelly, of Cumberland Street. She was the wife of stonemason Richard Byrne and had brought up a family of six children in their four-roomed timber and shingle house in Cumberland Street. The Byrnes' house and land was the subject of a freehold title enquiry in 1834. Three neighbours from Cumberland Street, including the shoemaker James Templeton who was also a long-time Rocks resident, gave sworn evidence that Margaret Kelly had lived on the site since about 1807. A note in the inquiry said she had 'no writings or documents to support claim of possession of 20

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74 HRA, Proclamation, 9 April 1802, in King to Hobart, 9 November 1802, Vol 3 620.

75 HRA, Brisbane to Bathurst, 3 September 1823, Vol 11 121; Circular letter 'granting bearer any vacant allotment of their choosing, the survey of Sydney being complete' and list of grantees, 1823 CSC R6012 4/3510 pp580-1.
years’. Writing, paper, documents were now ascendant, and Margaret Kelly, possessing none, and relying on the spoken words of her neighbours, was someone from an earlier age, colliding with modernity. The title was granted to her nevertheless.\footnote{See series of Memorials forwarded by the Commissioner of Claims 1832-42 (2/1777-93, 2/1839-1842A on R1234-1235, R1201-1208) and Reports of the Commissioner of Claims c1835-55 (2/1752-75 on R1209-1226) CSC AONSW; Memorial of Margaret Byrne 20 March 1834 No 211, 2/1783, R1201.}

The contrast between these memorials and those submitted to the newly arrived Macquarie in 1810 illustrates other fundamental changes in the relationship between government and people on the Rocks, and in attitudes to space and the ownership of land. The earlier memorials were personal statements (true, half-true, or untrue) of the \textit{moral worth} of the claimant, submitted deferentially for Macquarie’s personal consideration and decision. The descriptions of the allotments had been extremely vague (‘a small portion on the Rocks’). Nominally at least, people occupied land at vice-regal pleasure. But by the 1830s, when many of the Rocks claims were ratified, the claims had nothing at all to do with the moral character of the person. They relied instead on individual right through length of occupancy, or proof of ownership via evidence of purchase. Claimants had their memorials drawn up by lawyers in official, impersonal legal language, the location and measurement of the allotments were precise, and the matter was decided not by a Governor, but by a court of law. The old patriarchal government was gone, and a modern bureaucratic one stood in its place.
Fig. 32: Robert Russell, ‘Section No 62, Town of Sydney, Parish of Saint Philip’, 1835. One of the section surveys prepared in the 1830s for the granting of freehold titles. Here the surveyor makes order from earlier rather disorderly building and allotment lines.

Source: AONSW AO Map No. 5435(b).
Townscape, Public Culture and the Panopticon Within

The public welcome for Macquarie in 1810 included visual displays, as a few of the wealthy inhabitants illuminated their homes in his honour. One of them was Garnham Blaxcell, free arrival, civil servant and landowner, who had bought a substantial stone house from Isaac Peyton on the Rocks heights in Windmill Row. The doors and windows were lit with a portrait of the King, a ship encircled with ears of wheat 'jointly emblematic of Commerce and Agriculture' (though Blaxcell was largely only interested in the first) and other symbols of 'Loyalty and Unanimity', while the verandah was ablaze with arches and festoons of lights. Besides establishing Blaxcell's wealth and position in the colony, the house shining out over the town that night was a visual statement written in the symbolic language of empire, a seemingly 'unanimous' public and popular display to impress both Macquarie and the townspeople. Yet, as with the petitions, deferential language did not necessarily represent sentiment. The gesture would also have, perhaps purposely, diverted attention away from Blaxcell's actively pro-Johnston stand during the 1808 rebellion.\textsuperscript{77}

This may be interpreted, once more, as a small instance of the negotiations, sometimes aggressive, occasionally violent, other times smooth and complementary, between people and authority. It is temptingly simple to polarise the latter dichotomy, to see only the constant struggle of one against the other. But that does not tell the whole story either, for governor and governed, higher and lower orders, wealthy and poor did not inhabit entirely separate worlds in early Sydney. The early townscape also signifies a society also bound by certain shared beliefs, underlying cultural commonalities that broached the ranks and bound them together.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{77} SG 30 July 1809, 21 January 1810; Australian Dictionary of Biography [hereafter ADB], entry for Garnham Blaxcell.

Much culture was public culture. The streets (perhaps that is too refined a word for the rough undrained spaces between the houses) were the stages for vengeful blows, made in public, between feuding military officers, military personnel and townsfolk, and street fights between plebeian men and women; all drew enthusiastic audiences. Certain spaces were given over to the public punishment and humiliation of transgressors; hence the stocks and pillory where the bloody floggings took place stood in front of the early stores, where the people commonly gathered. When Macquarie moved the markets northwards to Market street, the stocks went with them, and the drunk and riotous were exposed there on the busy market days.\textsuperscript{79}

Since printed orders were not readily disseminated among a populace whose culture was still in large part orally based, Macquarie also appointed a town crier to take his orders into the streets themselves ‘in order that none may pretend ignorance of them’\textsuperscript{80} Old John Pendergrass, of Gloucester Street, held the position of town crier and bellman, and his cries were joined by the rolling beat of the tattoo drums to summon people to work, and mark the end of each day, bells tolling (mostly in vain) to draw to them to church and ‘announce our days of festival...celebrated in a manner consonant to national customs’; and the boatswain’s horn, echoing across the town from the harbour, announcing the arrival of every ship. Public

\textsuperscript{79} Stocks, pillories and floggings are commonly mentioned in HRA and SG; for example SG 9 Oct 1803, 1 Jan 1804, 5 April 1807. Collins noted in 1788 that runaways were tied up ‘in front of the provision store and punished (for example’s sake) in the presence of all the convicts’; Account of the English Colony, Vol 1 p47. Obed West recalled of Sydney on the 1810s: ‘At the south end of the Market was a large wooden pillory made to accommodate two persons at a time, and in the Market Place were four stocks, one fronting George Street, another York Street and two about the middle of the square...the stocks were placed on a frame raised about eight feet above the surrounding space...’ Edward West Marriot (ed.), Memoirs of Obed West: A Portrait of Early Sydney, Bowral, Barcom Press 1988 p30, fp Sydney Morning Herald [hereafter SMH] 1882.

\textsuperscript{80} SG 26 May 1810.
clocks set in towers and gables divided the days, the constables bawling out the hour divided the nights.\textsuperscript{81}

Although Phillip originally placed the hospital 'outside' the town for health's sake, its dangers and sights proved no deterrent to the people who in subsequent years built houses and coveted sites alongside and behind it, since it stood opposite other important gathering places, the wharf and marketplace. The first hospital itself was ramshackle and dirty, and admittance to it was avoided if at all possible. Similarly the gaol, noisy, filthy, crowded with murderers, thieves, drunks and debtors, whose food and drink was brought in for them by friends and family, stood in Sergeant Major's Row only metres south of the hospital, a constant, visible warning of sure detection and punishment, set in the midst of the earlier dwellings (Fig. 20).

Death was banished to the south periphery of the town. The gallows stood near the scrubby end of present-day Elizabeth and Castlereagh Streets, near what later became Hyde Park (Fig. 13). This allowed the condemned to be publicly carted through the streets, across the whole town, and to amass a mob of spectators.\textsuperscript{82} On the opposite side of the town's southern fringe lay the burial ground, the early destination of the town's main avenue. Again, funeral processions, the white robed all-female entourage which accompanied old Mary Jones, or the solemn files of soldiers, arms reversed in honour of one of their number, moved slowly from the house of the deceased through the town, the rank and status of the dead person announced

\textsuperscript{81} John Pendergrass, Memorial, 18 January 1825, CSC R6063 4/1785 p41. HRA has numerous references to the drums and bells; Noah, 'A Voyage'; SG 16 August 1807, 29 December 1810. In 1833 a waterman recalled the time of day by referring to 'Reveille's beat in the morning', see Papers on the trial of John Stephen junior, Governors' Despatches, 1834, ML A1267-18.

\textsuperscript{82} See Lesueur, 'Plan de la Ville', 1802, and accounts of executions in the Sydney Gazette, for example 26 March, 17 April 1803, 26 February, 26 August 1804, 2 November 1806.
visually by the meticulous arrangement of the participants. But the burial ground itself was bleak, unkempt and rank. Visiting Surgeon Joseph Arnold observed that although 'some of the stones are well-cut, and there are many respectable-looking altar tombs', the ground there was 'of hardest clay'. Hence, 'in wet weather the place is very offensive from the stench arising from the bodies, some of which apparently are not far underground'. The paling fence was carried off for firewood, and roaming pigs and cattle scavenged among the graves. Lying on the outskirts, it also became the haunt of thieves who used tombs to hide stolen goods, and did not hesitate to dig up the fresh grave of an infant to see if it was someone else's 'plant'.

Shared spaces created their own opposing dynamics. Not all the people possessed the appropriate mentalité for private property-holding and enclosure: respect, observance, avoidance of trespass. Herein lay one of the tensions between old assumptions and new pursuits. Property holders like Ann Mash/Chapman grew annoyed by the way that sawyers and others simply brought their boats onto her premises near the wharf and made use of her sawpits there. She advertised to prohibit this, claiming she would insist on payment. Isaac Nichols also objected to the way people blithely used his yard as a through way to the wharf. Stones which fell from his wharfside building, were promptly 'taken away by diverse Boatmen and others for ballast', and people commonly tied their boats to the rails, posts and rings of his buildings. Although people found their way around by the position of houses, their sense of physical exclusion from private property, and the concept of invisible boundaries and closed-off areas, was not yet deeply embedded in their outlooks and


85 SQ 27 November 1813; 23 June 1805, 1 June 1806, 28 June 1807.
behaviour. Hence the paling fences were also necessary as insistent visual reminders to deter wanderers and casual borrowers as well as thieves. The authorities had the same problems of people wandering in and out of public buildings and grounds, whenever they pleased and for their own, often nefarious, purposes. Over the years high stone walls and iron palisades rose around the gaol, dockyard, orphanage, burial grounds and the Governor’s Domain.86

There is another important level of public culture evident in the meaning of townscape. Official attempts at creating a Panopticon were intermittent and only partly effective. But people were watched, all the same, by one another. They watched each other constantly, sharp-eyed and suspicious, for gestures of anger, friendship, sexual attraction, a show of superiority or deference, they noted the manner of dress, which announced rank, taste and aspirations. They searched the faces of suspected murderers for evidence of guilt, the sick for signs of death, the bereaved for their emotional and mental state, strangers for their intentions. They knew who associated with low characters, who was respectable in their connections, who was industrious, who was idle. They looked out for likely thieves, for opportunities to thieve, for anything that might be turned to advantage. In this ‘face-to-face’ society, although perennially awash with new arrivals, the difference between friend, acquaintance, and stranger was immediately known. In this sense there was no such thing as the anonymity which characterised big cities of the later period.

86 See Wentworth Family Papers, Treasury Orders etc., 1812-1825, A763 p3, Francis Cox’s account for erecting a palisade around the County Gaol 1812; Bigge, Report, Appendix, evidence of Major Druitt 1819: ‘I found the Dock Yard...open to depredation and in consequence I caused a high stone wall to surround it 9 feet high’, Box 1 p8; and re burial grounds p16; evidence of D’Arcy Wentworth and Mr Murray on trespassers onto the Governor’s Domain Box 2 pp601, 629; both reported that people had torn down part of the stone wall around the Domain to gain access. SG 23 June 1805, calling tenders for a ‘rough stone wall around the Orphan House 18 inches thick and 8 feet high’. 
But to know a stranger from a friend, or a thief from an honest householder, one had to know whether he or she was at their proper business, near their own house, or in their own neighbourhood. Useful observations could only be made if the delineation and details of the townscape were thoroughly familiar. For John Macarthur’s confrontationist action of striking a post into the ground to be meaningful as public drama, the audience of townspeople had to know that the lease on that particular spot near St Philip’s was his. In the smaller performance of Mary Long, shrilling ‘Hot Bunbury Cakes’ to her child in the street while her cohorts robbed the house opposite, was the knowledge that she had to divert the attention of those passing by, to turn their normally watching eyes away from Elizabeth Jones’ house towards her own. When Lieutenant Kent presented a defence of the well-known Isaac Nichols during the latter’s trial for receiving stolen tobacco, he based his argument on the common knowledge about the foreshores of Sydney Cove and the watchful habits of the people:

At five o’clock in the morning at such a season of the year at this place it is daylight. The dockyard is between the houses of Nichols’ and Mr Moore’s [the Master Shipwright] and the fence of the dockyard runs into the water over rocks on that side of Sydney Cove...so that there is no way of passing from Nichol’s house to the two rocks where the tobacco was found but on the main road, by the hospital and other private and public buildings, along which many people must have been passing and repassing. I therefore say it was utterly impossible for a person of Nichol’s respectable appearance...to carry so bulky an article as a basket of brazil tobacco along the road without being particularly observed.\(^7\)

The movement of such a person as Isaac Nichols in daylight along Sergeant Major’s Row could not have gone unnoticed in this town; therefore it could not have occurred.

\(^7\) HRA. Papers from the trial of Isaac Nichols, Observations of Lieutenant Kent, February 1799, Vol 2, 337.
This sense of place pervades the written evidence of this period, it was integral to conversations, instructions, court hearings and coronial evidence. The imposed logic of external ordering - north, south, east, west, left, right, sequences of numbers, precisely measured distances - played no role in this shared, intimate knowledge of townscape. Instead, the place was marked out in the minds of people by real things, familiar, prosaic objects and spaces. They spoke to one another of houses, palings, wells, rows, yards, corners, particular rocks or trees, public spaces and buildings, in spatial relationships such as ‘along’, ‘near’, ‘beside’, ‘below’, and ‘opposite’. Such directions were vague and unlocatable to an outsider, but understood instantly by the listener or audience of the town. This common knowledge of townscape, by providing the essential context, made sense of the people’s careful and constant observation of one another.\footnote{For example, the 1813 court evidence of the thief William Howells is typical. He recounted of his movement from Simeon Lord’s warehouse ‘across the water...by Barney Williams...up the Rocks by Mr [Daniel] Cubitt’s, near the watchhouse by George Phillips’; he and his accomplice arranged to met ‘at the back of one Woods house at the back of the Rocks entirely’ where they divided up the loot as day was breaking. David Garrioch noted the same phenomena in the close-bound neighbourhoods of Paris in the eighteenth century, see Neighbourhood and community in Paris 1740-1790, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986 p27ff.}
Section II

Community and Commonality:
The Growth of the Rocks as a Locale

'A report of the infant's death was shortly afterwards circulated throughout the neighbourhood.'

-Report in Sydney Gazette
1808 on the death of a child in Cambridge Street.
Patterns of Occupation

The Rocks rapidly became a densely populated quarter of the town. By 1822 over twelve hundred people lived there, including the now ageing first fleeters, their children and servants, and successions of later arrivals, most ex-convict, at various stages of their careers. The most recently arrived were usually male assigned servants or labourers lodging with masters, mistresses or landladies. Socially and spatially, the Rocks and its immediate surroundings were vaguely arranged along the lines of rank and wealth. The minority of well-established wealthy merchants and dealers (both emancipists and free arrivals) lived around the wharf opposite the hospital in George Street. Free capitalist arrivals and hopeful entrepreneurs chose the northern extremities of George Street, and also Charlotte Place (now Grosvenor Street) to the south of the Rocks. A few sea-captains and merchants, landholders, clerks and clerics lived in the larger houses along the ridge in Prince Street, and a few more in Cumberland Street below.

But this separation was not complete. There were people of the poorest and humblest ranks also living in Prince and Cumberland Streets, particularly at the northern extremities, and also interspersed between the better houses in George Street and Charlotte Square (Fig. 40). The proximity of wealthy and poor suggests a ‘face-to-face’ society, involving not a kind of ‘democratic rubbing of shoulders’, but one in which all ranks could still observe each other in the street and were familiar with one anothers’ houses, dress and public behaviour.¹

¹ Karskens, Analysis of District Constable’s Notebooks; Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, pp24-25.
Fig. 33: Extract from Harper, ‘Plan of the Allotments or Ground in Sydney’ 1823. Known as ‘Harper’s Map of Sydney’, this map was produced at about the same time as the constables undertook their house-by-house survey. Gloucester and Cambridge Streets are marked in their present-day locations, suggesting that they were marked in later, since the names had not yet been reversed in 1823. The map shows the pattern of houses and streets running along the natural rock features in the lower streets. Source: AONSW Map No. SZ469.
Figs 34 and 35: Major James Taylor, 'The Entrance of Port Jackson, and Part of the Town of Sydney, New South Wales', and 'The Town of Sydney in New South Wales' 1821, two panels of a panorama of three (see Fig. 36) taken from points above and overlooking the Rocks, facing east.

Fig. 36: Major James Taylor, 'Part of the Harbour of Port Jackson, and the country between Sydney and the Blue Mountains' 1821, the third view in the panorama of Sydney (Figs 34 and 35), showing the largely still-wild rocky slopes down to Cockle Bay, and John Leighton's (alias Jack-the-Miller) windmills on the point.

Source: Published London, Messrs Colnaghi & Co, 1823.
Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 169 p207.

Fig. 37: Major James Taylor, 'Parramatta River Sydney Harbour', c1819. This is the fourth, unpublished panel from the Taylor panorama, showing Fort Phillip and one of the windmills overlooking the Rocks. McCormick notes that 'it is believed...that the Fort never reached this stage of completion'.

From a distance, and at a quick glance, though, the Rocks had remained the 'other' side from the official, elite town, especially after Macquarie's embellishments on the east.\textsuperscript{2} Within the Rocks proper, the social profile had not changed markedly from the earlier years, though those who had not fallen victim to the 1810s depression, sickness or marital strife were now more comfortably settled. It was remarkably homogenous in that most inhabitants were convicts and ex-convicts. Those who had best succeeded among the various lower orders were the skilled men and women of steady marriages who had managed to secure licences and open hotels. Dealers and skilled artisans also prospered, while the Rocks continued to draw in labourers and tradesmen who moved about in search of work, and those in maritime callings. There were also large numbers in government employ, though for the main part in the lower official positions: constables, shipwrights, carpenters, stonemasons, quarrymen, a few clerks. The hangman, Thomas Hughes, detested by all, lived for a time in Essex Street.

Apart from an outcast like Hughes, though, there is little evidence that people within the lower orders sought to separate themselves spatially according to social standing. The comfortably established, respectable tradesman and his family had no qualms about residing next door to a man or woman of poor reputation who was constantly before the magistrate for drunkenness, fighting or thieving. Yet there were nevertheless patterns of association. People with similar experiences lived close together, like the group of freely-arrived settlers, including the Boultons and Hanceys in Cumberland Street, or some survivors of the *Hillsborough* voyage of 1799. These connections were overlaid by the time-of-arrival factor, for the occupation patterns show 'oases' of early arrivals in their generally detached houses, particularly in those first settled areas behind the hospital and south of Surry Lane back towards Church Hill. There was some clustering, too, of households of different types:

families, married couples, single women. A man’s trade or business or employment sometimes led him to reside alongside others in the same line. Hence constables, particularly long-serving ones, were neighbours, and butchers grouped together in Cumberland Street around Surry Lane. Irish households also clustered about the Surry Lane, the oldest road on the Rocks.

Physically, the Rocks had generally become more substantial. The earliest huts had been steadily replaced by houses of weatherboard, stone and brick, and shingled roofs with glass windows and proper fireplaces. Some of the new houses were generally aligned with the ‘line’ of the street while the older houses tended to be set back at odd angles, according to natural declivity or the owners’ fancy, or aligned more with one another (see Fig. 33). Many still maintained a watch over the water, facing east or north-east. Peter Cunningham thought the detached houses to be ‘the better sort’ describing them as ‘of white freestone, or of brick plastered and whitewashed, one or two stories high, with verandas in front and enclosed by a neat wooden paling’. Some houses and hotels fronted streets directly, others still had a front garden of vegetable beds, peach trees and wells, and a central path running from the front door to the paling fence. 3

Significantly, the more recent houses did not differ stylistically from the earlier huts. Their facades were still symmetrically arranged, door in the middle, windows on either side, the house flanked by chimneys, and usually of two rooms (though ranging from one to four), sometimes with a central hall, and a skillion at the back. Conjoined houses (called tenements) were often built by earlier arrivals near their own houses specifically for letting. They were similarly neat and plain, with an orderly procession of door-window-door and with the

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3 Cunningham, Two Years, p31. At the Coroner’s inquest on Russerk, a ‘Native of India’, a witness named Sarah Pleasant said she ‘heard some groans and went up her garden and look[ed] through the palings’, 13 August 1810 4/1819 R2061 pp609, 614-16. In 1817 publican Andrew Frazier horsewhipped a man out of his house ‘to his gate’, Frazier, trial papers, 27 October 1817, CCJ COD 440 p133 AONSW.
Fig. 38: Reynolds’ Cottage, 28-30 Harrington Street c1830, elevation and plans. Named for the Irish ex-convict blacksmith William Reynolds, who is thought to have built the first four-room two-storey dwelling, the houses have been recently investigated and restored by the Sydney Cove Authority. Like the Glover cottages (Fig. 4) they demonstrate continuity of style in Rocks architecture over the colonial period to the 1830s. They would have originally stood alongside William Hawkins’ house (Fig. 51).

profusion of cropped, steeply pitched hipped or gabled roofs that had characterised the Rocks from its earliest settlement (Fig. 38).

Yet there were still many open spaces on the Rocks, for streets widened and narrowed according to the position of the houses and gardens. A broad open space on a hill in Gloucester (now Cambridge) Street was the favourite gathering spot for Sydney people on days when hangings took place in the Gaol yard just below. Robbed of public executions and processions by the relocation of the gallows behind the closed doors of the gaol, people nevertheless eagerly came to watch and jeer from their own ground on the Rocks; the spot became known as 'Gallows Hill'.⁴ The houses thinned in number to the north past Argyle Street, and beyond them lay the lands of Merchant Campbell, with a steep and rocky descent to his Go-downs (Fig. 46).

⁴ SG 18 April 1829.
The Constables' Notebooks

For some days in May 1822 one of Sydney's constables trudged northwards along George Street and then around the streets and lanes of the Rocks above, as far as Surry Lane, knocking at each door and writing down the names of all who lived within. For some reason he did not finish the census of the Rocks beyond Surry Lane, the main east-west dividing street of the Rocks. It was completed by another constable up to Charlotte Place nine months later, in August or September 1823.

The list is an invitation to explore a thousand or so human stories, often interwoven along the lines of marriage, calling, generation, and locale. We may gain a fleeting but intimate impression of the households by following the constables in their duty about the streets. The first constable began his task in George St just north of the old Gaol, at the corner of Surry Lane. George Street below the Rocks had remained the mercantile heart of the town, and was still a desirable place for the wealthy, well-off and well-known to live. Most of them were still in residence when they filled out the forms for the next census, in 1828. The widows Mary Reibey and Sarah Wills, once rivals in business, lived in the row of handsome two-storey houses facing onto George Street where it broadened in memory of the old marketplace near the Hospital wharf (Fig. 39). Reibey, whose wealth had allowed her to adopt and display habits of gentility, lived in a house that had been occupied by the failed dealer Michael Hayes. Sarah Wills was twice widowed, her second husband George Howe dead only a year before. She still lived with her sons in the house she and Edward Wills had bought, next door to her stepsons Robert and George Terry Howe. Opposite was the home of merchant Joseph Underwood and his young wife Elizabeth. The newly arrived

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Fig. 39: John Carmichael, "George Street from the Wharf" 1829, the early hub of the town around the wharf, showing the handsome two-storied townhouses of wealthy and successful merchants Isaac Nichols, Mary Reibey and Sarah Wills. Mary Reibey’s house was earlier occupied by Michael Hayes and his family.

Source: Reproduced in S. de Vries-Evans, Historic Sydney as seen by its early artists, Plate 40 p54.

Fig. 40: H. Stuart Wilson, ‘Cumberland Street’, c1880. A later view recording a little-changed streetscape, and illustrating the socially integrated nature of the early Rocks. The large mansion in the background was that of the wealthy Captain Joseph Moore and his wife Ann and family. They lived in Cumberland Street in this vicinity in 1822, and probably built this house soon after. It stands next to the street-facing cottages (c1810s?) of much humbler folk.

Source: Reproduced in S. de Vries-Evans, Historic Sydney as seen by its early artists, Plate 21 p30.
entrepreneurs Alexander Berry and Edward Wollstonecraft shared a house nearby, and pardoned architect Francis Greenway, his wife Mary and six children occupied the old house that had been built for the surgeon of the first hospital. Successful Irish publicans and traders Edward Redmond and his wife Winifred Dowling lived at their hotel, the ‘tactfully named’ Harp and Crown. Below the still fairly isolated, rocky northern end of George St, Merchant Campbell and his wife, the painter Sophia Campbell, and their seven children still occupied their 1800 bungalow house, its ‘gardens full of flowers and fruit trees’ near his wharf and storehouse. They remained there until Sophia’s death in 1833.\(^6\)

From Robert Campbell’s household the Constable turned back past the Dockyard, and then west, climbing up the Rocks to the northern end of thickly populated Cambridge (now Gloucester) Street, and made his way back towards Surry Lane. Two separate houses at what was already known as ‘Bunker’s Hill’, a newly emerging, more genteel residential area, were occupied by the Wharfinger George Panton, later the Post Master, and the then Master Attendant of the Dockyard, John Nicholson. The Pantons and Nicholsons had much in common: both arrived free four and five years before, both had entered the growing civil service, and between them they had nine children of similar ages. But there was evidently suspicion and acrimony between them, for in 1823, Panton accused Nicholson of involvement

in smuggling, much to the latter's outrage. By 1828, both had moved away from Bunker's Hill and each other, the Nicholsons to Darling Harbour, the Pantons to Cumberland Street.7

Their neighbours to the immediate south and across Argyle Street were more typical of the earlier population of the Rocks. There were small groups of single women, clustered together. Some had children, many took in lodgers, usually young single men. The majority were free by servitude or held pardons or tickets, while a few were still under sentence, though living independently. There were small families of mother, father and child, and numerous childless couples, some of whom shared a name and many who did not. The midwife Ann Jones, herself with no children, lived here with Laurence Farrell. She and several of her female neighbours were at the same address six years later, although their husbands had died or gone away. Most of the others listed themselves as laundresses.

Irish Publicans Andrew Coss and Charlotte Belton of the Punch Bowl hotel were typical of the more stable Rocks people, anchored by a business, leases and the house where they brought up their three children (Fig. 59). Further along was a substantial L-shaped house, a small shop and a hotel built in a row by the much-married butcher George Cribb. He had been on the Rocks since about 1808 and had married the Rocks widow Sophia Blundell. She and her first husband Stafford Lett had built the low, plain, whitewashed Punchbowl hotel and sold it to the Coss's in the early 1820s. By 1828 Sophia was dead, her five children dispersed, and George had vanished. Their premises had been long lost in a court case, and the house sold to newcomers.

At the back of his property, on Cumberland Street, George Cribb had built and let some houses. His tenants were the sorts of people the puritanical young Gazette editor Robert

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7 See John Nicholson to Colonial Secretary, 1823, CSC R6057 p33a-b; HRA, Memorial of Mrs G Panton, 20 August 1829, Enclosure in Darling to Murray, 26 August 1829, Vol 15 p146-7.
Howe had in mind when he launched his tirades on the Rocks’ immorality and loose living. They included Mary Massagorra, separated from her husband John after she eloped with their servant. Her house was alleged to have been ‘frequented by infamous characters’. Another was John Seabrook, a conditionally pardoned waterman (arrived 1813), whose wife Mary had come out free to join him in 1817. They had no children, although a ten year old girl, Charlotte Byfield, lodged with them. By 1827 they had moved to Harrington Street below and ‘harboured a very young girl’, fifteen year old Charlotte Biggs (possibly Charlotte Byfield) and ‘encouraged her to habits of prostitution’ for their own profit. They also kept an unlicensed drinking house and were fined for harbouring runaway convicts. By 1828 they were living in George Street, John still in possession of his pardon in spite of their conduct.  

There were some old hands scattered along Cambridge Street, like the Irish barber Charles Bryan, who arrived in 1791, the constable and waterman George Atkinson, a First Fleeter, and baker George Talbot and Anne Armsden who both arrived in 1790. Ann had lived here with her first husband George Legg since about 1795. After he drowned in 1807 she married Talbot, another Rocks man, and they built a pair of simple semidetached stone houses at the corner of Cribb’s lane. In the house adjoining lived the blacksmith Edward Chanhells and his freely-arrived wife Mary. There daughter Honor had recently married, had a child and was living in a house directly behind her parents in Cumberland Street. Closer to the southern end there was a more pronounced group of earlier arrivals living close together. They included Hugh and Mary McAvoy (1803), the warring couple Thomas Crump (1794) and Mary Johnson and their eight children, Thomas Bristow (1798) and his lodger or partner Mary Long/Ward (1790) and many others. The well-known wealthy Scots publican, dealer and baker Andrew Frazier who had arrived in 1803, presided over a large household of fourteen persons, nine of them servants, one of whom, Ann Jones, was his lover. His

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8 John Massagorra, Memorials, 1820 and 1823, CSC F3025, 4/1824B pp823, 826; and R6059, 4/1773 p119-120c. John Seabrook, Petition for Mitigation of Sentence, December 1817 CSC F3180 p292; SG 2 February, 6, 31 March 1827, 21 April 1828.
landmark Governor King Hotel stood at the corner of Cambridge Street and Surry Lane. Nearby, south and north, were smaller houses occupied by families, sailors and lodgers, some of them owned by Frazier.

The constables must have heard a great cacophony of accents and dialects on his survey, broad and flat, clipped and short, the lilting, singsong, raucous voices of provincial England and Ireland. So, in some houses he wrote down what he heard. Sarah Cloths of Prince St became Sarah ‘Clowes’, the way ‘clothes’ would have been pronounced. Winifred Dowling, the wife of Edward Redmond spoke her name with her Irish accent: the Constable wrote down ‘Develin’. Cumberland Street shoemaker Joseph Fenton became ‘Fanton’, similarly George Shirley in Prince Street was listed as ‘Sharley’. Searching for them in the 1828 census, we too are forced to speak their names out loud, as they did, to have some idea where they might be among the names of more standard spelling.

The first constable climbed down to Gloucester Street (now Cambridge Street), another fairly clearly defined street on the next rocky tier. The social and townscape configuration was similar, although there were fewer houses and people than in either Cambridge or Cumberland Street above. About a third of Gloucester Street’s women were Irish and most of them lived close together north and south of Cribb’s Lane, with another smaller group clustered near the northern end of the street. Patrick and Margaret Downey had three children, but by 1828 they and two children had vanished, probably dead, and two remaining children had been taken in by other Irish Rocks people, Elizabeth Porter of Gloucester Street, and publicans James and Sarah Byrne in Cambridge Street.

Other houses were shared among groups of men and women, such as the house near Surry Lane shared by convict servants William Green and Edward Abel, for some reason exempted from confinement to the Barracks. A group of six mainly ex-convict men lived near Cribb’s
Lane, and sailors on leave were found at lodging houses, again usually near hotels. As in Cambridge Street, the earliest arrivals tended to be grouped together in the southern portion, and more scattered along the northern side. At the southern end near Charlotte Place the Catholic blacksmith, publican and landowner William Davis (1802) and Thomas Prior (1788) were among the earliest Rocks grantees. They and their wives, and their neighbour the clerk Richard Calcott (arrived 1799) were a long-settled group still in residence in 1828. Calcott, like bucklemaker James MacNeale and dealer Thomas Wood, also of Gloucester Street, had arrived aboard the Hillsborough, and survived the horrors of that voyage as recorded by his shipmate William Noah. He held a beer licence from 1811, worked briefly as a constable, and acquired the licence to the ‘Good Woman’ public house from 1817. His two daughters Harriet and Louisa and various grandchildren lived in the Gloucester Street house with him. The daughters went on living on this land, later in separate houses, after his death until at least 1835.⁹

Further north were the houses of the District Constable William Thorn (arrived 1790) who at the age of about 56 had married for the third time. Sarah Roberts, a young colonial born woman of twenty six, bore him two daughters, but had vanished by 1828, and his young daughters were boarding with grandparents and friends.¹⁰ He lived close by his colleague, Constable James Wilbow, another 1790s arrival. Bridget Nowland, nearby, was one of the first Irish women to arrive in the colony, and although she lost her husband in a drowning accident, she managed to remain on the Rocks with her two sons. Her neighbours in 1822 were Andrew and Elizabeth Johnston, also Catholic, and their four children. Andrew was free by servitude, Elizabeth local-born. But by 1828 Andrew was in a road gang, serving a

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⁹ Richard Calcott, Memorial, CSC F3002 4/1821 No 51; see Index to CSC 1788-1825, ML; Mutch Index; Robert Russell ‘Section 63, Parish of St Philip’ c1835, copy held in SCA collection.

¹⁰ Flynn, Second Fleet, entry for William Thorn; Thorn, Memorial, 1810, CSC F3009 4/1822 No 308.
Fig. 41: Joseph Fowles' drawings of Harrington and Jamieson Streets in 1848. This was the only part of the Rocks which Fowles included in his *Sydney in 1848*, perhaps simply because he himself lived in Harrington Street. On the corner of Harrington Street is the low, verandah'd house of the wealthy Catholic emancipist William Davis and his wife Catherine; St Patrick's Catholic Church, sketched in, was built on his land in 1840. The two hip-roofed cottages closer to the northern end belonged to Harriet and Louisa Calcott, the native-born daughters of Richard Calcott, a *Hillsborough* survivor, whose lease extended from Cambridge Street down to Harrington Street. The house begun by free settlers Thomas and Grace Boulton in the 1810s (see Fig. 42) stands in Jamieson Street.

Source: Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*. 
sentence for theft. His family, now with five young children, had been taken in by Bridget Nowland. Elizabeth worked as a laundress to support them.\footnote{Bridget Nowland, Memorial, 1810, CSC F3007 4/1822 No 246; SG 29 May 1808; Robinson, Women of Botany Bay, pp91-92. She was listed as a dealer in 1828. Re the Johnstons, SG 18 April 1827, Australian, 20 July 1827.}

It is difficult to imagine what Argyle Street must have looked like before it was eventually cut deep into the live rock by convict gangs in the 1840s and 1850s. Doubling back along Gloucester Street, the constable visited the group of only four houses perched at the summit near the intersection of Cumberland St. The people, two couples and two families, were all fairly recent arrivals (most between 1814 and 1821). Four were convicts still under sentence, who were permitted to live independently. Edward Clowder and Elizabeth Winfield were both convicts; he was Robert Campbell’s assigned servant. James Church, who arrived in about 1820 was assigned to his wife Dinah, as was Robert Woodley to his wife, Elizabeth. The Woodleys’ household comprised four male convict and ex-convict servants and lodgers as well as their own three children. By 1828 Edward Clowder and Elizabeth Winfield had moved to the better settled Cambridge St, and the Woodleys, who were bakers, lived in Pitt Street. These patterns and proportions are typical of the less-settled, less desirable parts of the Rocks. They were places where a convict/came free couple could quietly serve out a sentence, or where the recent arrivals who aspired to a business and a house in the town, in spite of their convict status, could gain a foothold in that increasingly difficult endeavour. They were the places, too, were the most obscure people lived, those who appear perhaps once or twice in written records and then move on and vanish without a trace.

Scrambling back down the rocky path, the constable turned down the ill-defined spaces of Harrington Street. It had grown haphazardly from the huts and houses that sprang up ‘behind the hospital’, that is, beyond the hospital’s rear garden, during the 1800s. Some of the ground here was open, sloping ground directly onto George Street, and hence some of its inhabitants
gave their address as 'George Street'. Further south, behind the gaol, were rocky, uninhabitable precipices where the lines of Harrington and Gloucester Streets became intertwined. For the survey purposes, Harrington Street seemed to terminate at the none-too-secure gaol wall. The first constable thus recorded all thirty households in the street.

Here again the pattern of occupation was dominated by families comprising parents and children, with a few couples. There were no lodging houses, although three houses were shared. Thomas and Ann Whittaker's hotel, the Labour in Vain was at the centre of the row of houses, and future publican George Pashley Junior, son of the Rocks tailor George Pashley, lived next door with his Irish convict wife Joanna Barrett. Behind the old hospital site, in close proximity to the dockyards, wharf and the water, were the houses of harbour-men including long-time residents Daniel Cubitt and Maria Ann Cooke, and some of their twelve children. Cubitt, a former Gaoler and also publican of the Cat and Fiddle, had been Master of the Row Guard since 1820. His son Daniel worked alongside him in the Guard, but, being of aggressive and unreliable, he was soon dismissed. The shipwright Nathaniel Lloyd lived with wife Catherine Williams next door and the fisherman Charles King two doors up. All of them were long-time residents and all were still living there in 1828, a stable centre of the street, for by then almost everyone else had moved away. The other end of Harrington Street near the Gaol seemed, by contrast, to be a place for people who had fallen on hard times, or experienced some trauma in their lives. Here lived the ill-fated Irish Catholic dealer Michael Hayes with his colonial-born wife Elizabeth and their eight children. Next door was the widow Ann Holness who in 1813 had seen her husband William beaten to death by drunken officers in Pitt Street. She now lived with currier Joseph Salmon and in 1828 she was listed as Anne Salmon, with yet another man, labourer George Trants in Sussex Street. At the northern extremity of the street lived Elizabeth Tilley, an old woman who probably arrived
on the *Lady Juliana* in 1790. She could not remember any such details for the constable, and by 1828 had been placed in the Benevolent Asylum, still recorded by her name alone.\(^{12}\)

When people spoke of the Rocks being the most 'populous part of Sydney', they were probably thinking largely of both Cambridge and Cumberland Streets. The constables recorded 66 households and the names of 263 people in the latter. Cambridge and Cumberland streets together housed 511 people in 126 households, almost 40% of the total Rocks population. Cumberland Street had a considerable variety of social ranks represented, including unskilled labourers and laundresses, several publicans, many butchers, shoemakers, and stonemasons. Many were established tradesmen with good businesses, comfortable houses and large families, and farms out on the Cumberland Plain. A schoolmaster named Daniel Thurston, whose publican brother William lived below in Cambridge Street, kept a little boarding school, and there were also a few clerks. Friends and shipmates, and people who arrived at similar times and from similar places and backgrounds tended to group as neighbours.

At the southern end, opposite the squat, stone St Philip's (for which Cumberland Street was earlier known as Church Row) and up to Long's Lane, were older style separate houses on large allotments. Some of the residents held leases from 1809, others lived here well before that - the house of ex-convict labouring plasterer Joseph Prosser and his old and crippled wife dated from before 1804. Waterman George Phillips (arrived 1801) and his wife, publican Frances Jackson (arrived 1804), had lived on the Rocks since at least 1806 and by 1822 shared the house with three adolescent children, one of them adopted. Thomas Dunne, another *Hillsborough* man, a long-serving constable, his wife Rose and their six children were

held in some esteem by the constable, who gave their names prefixes ‘Mr’ and ‘Mrs’ and ‘Miss’. They were probably well-regarded in the community, except by those, like young Daniel Cubitt, who loathed the Irish. Further along the street another Hillsborough man, mariner William Sibley and his headstrong wife Elizabeth lived at Geranium Cottage, a neat, pretty house built as a result of William’s careful perseverance. The marriage was over by 1828, and the house sold off.\(^\text{13}\)

Next door to the Sibleys was the home of Jane Chandler and her family. She had been a widow with numerous children when her house here burnt to the ground in August 1814. Five months later she married the ex-convict stonemason William Chandler, and they built a new stone house, which comprised a single large room. Its front door was set on the north facade, facing the water.\(^\text{14}\) Another group of early arrivals shared one house at the street’s northern end. Waterman William Vaughan, Elizabeth Bickford, and tailor George Pashley and Louisa Kirby were among the ageing early arrivals, long settled on the Rocks. They had with them nine year old ‘orphan’ Thomas Condon whose mother was dead, and whose father, Rocksman Thomas Condon, had most likely been transported for attempted murder. Like other Rocks children, Thomas was not sent to the orphanage, but taken in by local people.

On the corner of Essex Street lived the two Lantaff sisters, Elizabeth and Ann, who had stood trial and were transported together in 1815, and now lived next door to one another on the Rocks. Elizabeth had married a successful butcher, James Thompson, and Ann a Catholic named Ambrose Bryan. These marriages seemed to have then propelled them apart. By 1828 Elizabeth had prospered: she was still with James, three children and numerous servants, but

\(^{13}\) Re the Prossers see SG 1, 8 April 1804. The Sibleys’ Geranium Cottage was excavated in 1988, see Thorp, ‘Report on Lilyvale’.

\(^{14}\) Anne Gammon was also known as ‘Gabbage’ and ‘Gammage’; see SG 20 August 1814, and Mutch Index. The house is described in Thorp, ‘Report on Lilyvale’.
her brother-in-law was labouring out at Sutton Forest alone, for her sister and their two children had vanished.\textsuperscript{15}

The Thompsons had with them an assigned servant, a butcher named James Cross. By 1828 Cross was their neighbour, for he married Elizabeth Rickers, a widow with six children who lived opposite the Thompsons. James Thompson had also taken one of Elizabeth’s sons as an apprentice. Another son, John, was also apprenticed to a butcher, Thomas Ceeney, who had married his sister Elizabeth. They too lived in Cumberland Street. Their siblings still lived in their mother’s house in Cumberland Street, but in 1828 James Cross was listed as the household head, not Elizabeth Rickers. It was in this way, through the meshing of neighbours, families, children and parents, old with new arrivals, through marriage, friendship, apprenticeships and so on, that the Rocks community grew. Yet, these important connections were completely masked in the 1828 Census, when many women took their husband’s names, while their own children were often listed as lodgers in their stepfather’s households.

Again, as in Gloucester Street, Irish people tended to lived around Surry Lane, north and south, while another group lived at the northern extremity of the street.\textsuperscript{16} North of Cribb’s Lane were the houses of well-established trades and business people and their families: Thomas Boulton, a stonemason, like his father and his wife Elizabeth; carpenter Michael Hancey and his wife Hannah; another stonemason Richard Byrne (the constable spelt his name ‘Buine’) and his wife Margaret Kelly, and publican Judith Simpson and her adolescent sons, named for their different fathers.

\textsuperscript{15} Robinson, Women of Botany Bay, p299

\textsuperscript{16} The Irish households around Surry Lane included cooper John Murphy and his wife Frances, laundress Catherine Hinchey, Margaret Campbell, Margaret Doherty, and Ann Kennovan.
Boulton and Hancey had both arrived as part of a group of free settlers aboard the Minorca in 1801, Boulton as a sixteen year old with his parents Thomas and Grace Boulton. The family built an elegant and handsome stone house in Charlotte Place, said to have been designed by Francis Greenway, which was sold to Sir John Jamison after the senior Boultons’ death in 1817 (Figs 41, 42). Thomas junior had married the daughter of a convict, Elizabeth Sandlands, and they and their fast increasing family moved to Cumberland Street next to Michael and Hannah Hancey. Both the Boultons and the Hanceys (Michael arrived with a brother, John) had been granted land in the district of Baulkham Hills, and they continued to be Rocks neighbours at least until 1828.\(^7\) Their part of the neighbourhood included five households of people who had either come free or were native-born, clustered together around Cribb’s Lane.

Prince Street was the highest and last major street before the constable turned his attention to the straggling houses on the shores of Cockle Bay to the west. Here the mixture of long-established and well-known tradesmen, long-serving constables, some unskilled men and women, and some recent arrivals, echoed the general Rocks pattern. At the Charlotte Place end, though, there were more ships’ Captains and their families, a large landholder, and recently arrived free settlers and public servants not found in the lower streets of the Rocks. Prince Street still boasted the row of detached houses standing on the ridgeline, silhouetted each day at sunset. One third of the residents were still living there six years later, a larger proportion than in other streets; Prince Street had fewer of the town’s drifters. The long-term residents included Thomas Colebrook and Elizabeth Wade and their five, originally six, children; one was drowned in their own well in 1820. Thomas was Constable in the district long enough to earn a pension for his old age, when he claimed, his body was ‘ruptured’ by

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\(^7\) Boulton Family History, unpublished typescript courtesy of Bob Failes; see CSC Index 1788-1825; Thomas Boulton, Memorial, 1810, CSC F3001 4/1821 No 30; SG 18 January, 1 March 1817, 26 September, 28 November 1818; Mutch Index. For Boultons’ and Hanceys’ land grants, see Hills District Historical Society, The Beginnings of the Hills District, pp6, 62-64.
Fig. 42: John Hoskin, ‘Jamieson House, Jamieson Street, Aug. 1934’, a house of considerable architectural style begun for or by the free settlers Thomas and Grace Boulton. Boulton and his son Thomas Boulton junior were stonemasons, but the senior Boultons died in 1817, leaving the house unfinished. It was bought and completed by Sir John Jamieson, while Thomas Boulton junior and his large family lived in Cumberland Street.

Source: Mitchell Library.
Figs 43, 44 and 45: Evolution of a streetscape: Prince Street in 1826, c1850 and 1853. A walled yard in the centre of the first view becomes the site for a three-storey terrace under construction in the second, and complete in the third. The new terraces of a modern city stand alongside detached and semi-detached cottages of the earlier period. Note the appearance of a paved footpath in the last view, and the contrasting looseness and undefined road spaces in the earlier views.

the strains of clambering on and off boats. They lived next door to another long-serving constable Alexander Campbell.

Isaac Peyton still lived in Prince Street, with his daughter and son-in-law Andrew and Mary Goodwin at the corner of Charlotte Place. Peyton was a difficult man, given to schemes and litigation to profit by his neighbours and son-in-law. Despite his prospects, he had made a bizarre attempt to escape the colony in 1807 probably as a result of debts. His first wife Susannah Harrison left the colony in 1810 and never returned, and his second wife Ann Bligh simply left him. By 1828 his children had put him in the Benevolent Asylum, while they went on living in the house he had built in Prince Street.

Charlotte Place running downhill from St Phillips was rather like George Street in its social makeup. Relatively wealthy free immigrants, and well-off emancipists who had become well-respected in Sydney lived alongside households of assigned convicts. Importers J. Browne and Thomas Aspinall (both marked ‘Esq.’) were recent free arrivals, shared a house with their three servants, and operated business here at least until 1826. By contrast, two doors down a house was shared by four male servants, three assigned to a Mr McIntosh, while next door two single women shared the house with two single men, all of them convict servants of Mr Wemys. The eloquent emancipist teacher, storekeeper and brewer Richard Archbold and his family, had also settled here. For him Charlotte Place, like George Street, and to some extent Prince Street above, was a ‘good address’.

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That left only the steep transverse connecting lanes to record. These were transient places, for few of these people still lived here six years later. In Surry Lane and only five of the thirteen householders were even traceable. Two of those, Sarah Bird and Ann Paul had both moved to Cambridge Street nearby. The second constable almost forgot Essex Street, and surveyed it after he had completed several streets in other parts of Sydney. It had only ten households, all occupied by convicts and ex-convicts. They were mostly couples who had arrived during the 1810s, but of the ten pairs, only one was still together in 1828; again, none were still living in Essex Street. Interestingly, at least three, and possibly six or seven were Scots people, yet another regional group living, if only temporarily, close by one another on the Rocks.
A Statistical Profile

The constables had knocked at about 299 doors and written down the details of 1,290 people (Tables 1 and 2).\(^{20}\) It is no straightforward matter to estimate what proportion of the town this number constituted. Reverend Cowper thought Sydney had about a thousand houses and five thousand people in 1820; he was excluding the military and the convicts in the barracks. Bigge’s 1820 count of the population of Sydney was much larger at 12,079, although 4,457 of these were convicts. The figure without the convicts (8,422) was still larger than Cowper’s estimate because it included the ‘districts immediately adjoining’ Sydney, and may have also included the military. The Rocks thus may be said to have housed between an eighth and a quarter of the population of the town proper, probably closer to the larger proportion; and it boasted perhaps a quarter of its houses.\(^{21}\) It was also a well-defined place, contained and set apart by its location and topography and its knots of long-established houses and long-settled householders. But do the latter typify the Rocks? Or was the Rocks more characterised as the haunt of newly arrived convicts, the low, lawless place that Major Druitt described in 1819 and others usually assumed it to be?

In fact men and women still under sentence did make up over a third of the Rocks’ adult population. Nearly 20% of these were assigned servants but they lived mainly in the larger houses of their masters and mistresses in George and Prince Streets. Far fewer assigned

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\(^{20}\) The number of households include 291 listed in street order, in addition to eight belonging to ordinary constables, who were listed separately; hence their addresses are unknown and their households have not been included in the street-by-street analysis of household types and individual status (Tables 5-11). This population figure (1,290) includes the constables but excludes those who moved from the north to the south part of the Rocks in the nine months between the first and second stages of the survey. This total has also been adjusted for the street-by-street analyses in order to include all known households; hence the total of 1,280 shown in Table 6 includes the duplicated names, but excludes the address-less constables and their families.

\(^{21}\) Bigge, Report, p80; and Appendix, Reverend Cowper to Wylde, 16 February 1820, BT Box 21 p3944.
Fig. 46: Sophia Campbell, 'Sydney in All its Glory', 1817. The artist was the wife of the merchant Robert Campbell and she depicted the family residence at Campbell Cove in the foreground of this picture. Note the steep rocky slopes on the left.

servants were found in the streets of the Rocks proper, although some were servants to Rocks publicans and tradesman, especially in Cambridge Street. The few who lived neither with masters, nor in the convict barracks near Hyde Park, lived independently as lodgers in Rocks households, or in shared houses alongside the recently freed, seaman and a few native born. But these convict households were a small proportion of the whole, only 28 out of 299. Other non-assigned convicts still under sentence were allowed to live independently (7.3%), often with spouses who had arrived free with them, and to whom they were sometimes assigned. Others held tickets of leave which, similarly, allowed them to live in households usually with wives and families, and practice their trades or work for masters. These convicts lived much as their free and freed neighbours did, and, although their number were relatively small, they made up around 20% of Rocks householders (Tables 2 and 4).

**TABLE 1. HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION BY STREET* 1822/23**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No. of People</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Average Persons Per Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Street</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester Street</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland Street</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington Street</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Street</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Place</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Lane</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex Street</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyle Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>291</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>1280†</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td><strong>4.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Cambridge Street is now Gloucester Street  
Gloucester Street is now Cambridge Street  
Prince Street is now the approach to the Harbour Bridge  
Charlotte Place is now Grosvenor Street  
Surry Lane is now the Cahill Expressway  
† This total differs from the overall total (See Table 2) because the Constables, whose addresses are unknown, have been omitted; and duplicated names included in order to count households in each street.
TABLE 2. ROCKS PEOPLE BY CIVIL STATUS 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convict</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket of Leave</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardoned (Absolute/Conditional)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free by Servitude</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came Free</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Colony</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This count includes the Constables and their families who are listed separately, not under street headings; it excludes names which were duplicated as a result of people moving from the north side to the south side of the Rocks in the interval between the Constables’ survey.

The largest group among the adult population by civil status were the ex-convicts. Those who were free by servitude or pardoned made up 41.5% of the Rocks’ adult people, and half the householders (Table 4). Of the roughly 20% of adults who had arrived free, over half, most women, had followed a convict spouse to the colony. Thus civil status masks social rank: those who came free were often from the same social background, the lower orders, as the convicts.

TABLE 3. ROCKS PEOPLE BY AGE GROUPS 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adults</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Adults:</strong></td>
<td>832</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescents &amp; Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents (13-19)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (0-12)</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Adolescents &amp; Children:</strong></td>
<td>458</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 4. ROCKS ADULTS BY CIVIL STATUS 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convict/Government Servant</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convict/Living Independently</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding Ticket of Leave</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardoned (Absolute/Conditional)</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free by Servitude</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came Free</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Colony</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>832</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The newly-arrived settlers, the would-be pastoralists and landowners, the merchants, the sea-captains who decided to settle, and the sprinkling of higher civil servants, churchmen, men of law, made up only around 10% of the adult population and they tended to live in the larger, better houses about the rim of the Rocks, along George Street, Charlotte Place, and parts of sea-breezed Prince Street. They were thus exceptional in a population dominated by those who either were or had been convicts, or were part of convicts' families. So, in a way, the Rocks did continue to be the 'resort of convicts' although by 1822 most had served their time, and no longer considered themselves as such. Further, the designation 'convict' was used indiscriminately by the higher orders for bond and freed, old hand and new arrival, well-off emancipist householder and his or her lowly assigned servant. The term is thus too blunt to be of much further use, for it cloaks those significant distinctions. It will be seen too, that convict status generally had far less impact on the careers and fates of Rocks people than other factors: gender, rank, trade, patronage, inclination, and temperament.
TABLE 5. ROCKS HOUSEHOLD TYPES BY STREET 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Two Parent Family</td>
<td>including mother, father and children*†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Single Parent Family</td>
<td>including mother or father and children*†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Couples</td>
<td>husband, wife, no children*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Lodging Houses</td>
<td>more than two lodgers with landlord/landlady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Shared Houses</td>
<td>houses shared by men and/or women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Single person</td>
<td>unmarried/unpartnered householder*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Households may also have servants and lodgers.
† Families may be ‘blended’ - i.e., include children of previous relationships, fostered and orphaned children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Street</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester Street</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland Street</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington Street</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Street</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Place</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Lane</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyle Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>139</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other striking feature of the Rocks’ population was the large number of children, and hence, young families. There were 458 children and adolescents living on the Rocks in 1822 and they made up 35% of the total population; children under 13 made up 28% (Table 3). Cumberland Street alone was home to 105 children, almost half its residents. Most of the
Rocks' children were colonial born to convict and ex-convict parents, so that while the native-born proportion of the total population was over a third, only a small proportion of these were adults. Only around 7% (37) of Rocks householders had been born in the colony (Table 7). The Rocks' houses, streets and yards were full of babies, toddlers and older children, who lived mainly in family groups, usually with a mother and father. Almost half the total number of households took this form of mother-father-children, while another 9% were single-parent families (almost always a mother with children). Meanwhile, a substantial proportion of houses (20%) were occupied by couples with no children. Very few people lived entirely alone; those without partners (10% of households) often took in lodgers or servants. Only a relatively small number of houses (less than 10%) were shared by servants and unattached men and women, and there were only five lodging houses, two in Cambridge Street, and one each in George, Gloucester and Harrington Streets (Table 5).

**TABLE 6. ROCKS PEOPLE BY HOUSEHOLD STATUS 1822/23**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Householders: Men</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householders: Women</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live-in Servants</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodgers</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the population can also as characterized in terms of independent householders who made up 41%, their children, who made up 36%, and relatively small numbers of live-in servants (9.5%) and lodgers (13%). Women may be considered a strong presence on the Rocks, still making their homes there as they had done from the earliest years. They made up 38% of the adult population, but this proportion is relatively large considering that women only made up 11% of the convicts sent to New South Wales.22 Furthermore, although Rocks

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men outnumbered women at a rate of about 5 to 3 (515 men, 317 women), there were proportionally more female householders than male, for 85% of the Rocks’ women lived as independent householders, with husbands or without, rather than as servants or lodgers, compared to only 50% of men (Tables 6, 7 and 8).

TABLE 7. CIVIL STATUS OF ROCKS HOUSEHOLDERS BY STREET 1822/23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET</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>Unknown</th>
<th>Total Householders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George St</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge St</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester St</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland St</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington St</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince St</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Pl</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Ln</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex St</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyle St</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Totals:</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A list drawn by Bigge in about 1820 showing all those who were ‘settled upon property of their own’ gives some indication of the proportion of Rocks people who ‘owned’ their property through purchase, lease or, very rarely, by grant. There were 92 such householders on the Rocks and in George Street below; thus they probably constituted about a third of the total number of households (Table 9 and Appendix 3). This was a higher proportion than estimated by Meehan, who reckoned that ‘nearly four-fifths of the whole are permissive occupancies’. The great majority were men (77 or 83%), of whom 55 were married. Despite
the high number of female independent householders on the Rocks, only fifteen women, four of them married, had secured such property rights in their own name.23

**TABLE 8. CIVIL STATUS OF HOUSEHOLDERS COMPARED TO CIVIL STATUS AS A WHOLE IN PERCENTAGES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of Householders</th>
<th>% of Rocks Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convict</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket of Leave</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardoned</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free by Servitude</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came Free</td>
<td>21.1*</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Colony</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Among the freely arrived householders, over half had followed convict spouses to the colony.

**TABLE 9. COMPARISON OF HOUSEHOLD OCCUPATION NUMBERS 1822/23 WITH HOUSEHOLD ‘OWNERSHIP’* NUMBERS c1820**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Households on Bigge’s List</th>
<th>Households on Constables’ List</th>
<th>% ‘Owned’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Street</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester Street</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland Street</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington Street</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Street</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Place</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>269†</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes occupants who had grants, leases or had purchased their properties

† This total excludes houses in Surry Lane, Essex Street and Argyle Street which were not included in Bigge’s list.

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23 See Bigge, *Report*, Appendix, ‘A Return of the Number and Names of Persons...residing and settled upon property of their own...’ ML A2131; and ‘Evidence of James Meehan’, BT Box 5 p2236.
Reputation and Representation

These broad outlines, characterised by a majority of independent householders, mainly families and couples, hundreds of children, small numbers of lodgers and servants, certainly suggest a Rocks far removed from its contemporary, and historical, image as the resort of vice and corruption. When Commissioner Bigge asked Major Druitt where convicts had lived before Macquarie’s barracks were opened, he replied immediately ‘They usually lodged on a part called the rocks’, adding that it was ‘a place of resort for a very bad description of persons’. Druitt, like others, thus considered it still an unsavoury part of the town, despite the confinement of unmarried male convicts to barracks. Should we then, armed with our numbers and percentages, our ‘facts’, simply dismiss Major Druitt and his ilk as hopelessly biased against convicts, and hence unreliable witnesses? This, too, would be unwise. The dysfunction between historical image and what we can ascertain of reality invites closer investigation.

Let us first examine the emergence and characteristics of the Rocks’ reputation for vice and corruption. Elizabeth MacArthur was probably expressing the distaste of the elite generally when she described the Rocks as ‘like a gypsy encampment’ and a ‘sink of evil’ as early as 1790. But as the Rocks grew, portrayals of it tended to be more matter of fact. George Howe, the Gazette’s first editor generally presented the area in a humorous way, particularly in terms of the drinking and fighting, the chaotic houses and streets, and its perilous steepness. But there was no sense here that the Rocks was unnatural, diseased or corrupt, or that it should not exist. Drinking and brawling were widely regarded as normal and natural parts of everyday life, and the Rocks was a ‘quarter’ of the town, essential to its wholeness.

24 Bigge, Report, Appendix, Evidence of Major Druitt, BT Box 1, pp23-36.
Peter Cunningham in his 1827 account wrote in this same, older, vein:

The portion of the town to the right [of Sydney Cove] is best known by the name of The Rocks, from the ridge whereon it is built being nothing more than a bare mass of white sandstone, often rising in successive layers (like steps of stairs) from the bottom to the top of the ridge. This is considered the ‘St Giles’, and the division of the town to the left the ‘St James’, portion of Sydney; most of the superior citizens inhabiting the latter, and the lower classes chiefly the former, thought the Rocks can undoubtedly boast of many handsome houses with highly respectable inmates.\(^{25}\)

Interestingly, Cunningham could still interpret the townscape as falling broadly into two sides, the old division of east and west, reflecting the overreaching social division of higher and lower orders. And he correctly noted those ‘handsome houses’ and ‘highly respectable inmates’ although the word ‘undoubtedly’ is meant to suggest that he himself was not familiar with them. His references to ‘St Giles’ and ‘St James’, well-known parishes of London, were literary shorthand, quickly sketching out Sydney’s oppositional social character (St James signified ‘urbane respectability’, St Giles ‘dens of rascality and iniquity’).

The tone of the Gazette and its representation of the Rocks were in many ways reversed when George Howe’s son, Robert, became editor in 1821. Robert had arrived free as a child in 1800 and grew up in the town. He was ‘dissipated as a young man’ and fathered an illegitimate child in 1819, but in 1821 underwent a radical religious conversion. Thereafter much of his writing in the Gazette was stamped by fervent, sometimes pompous, evangelical Christianity, as well as signs of new affiliations and tastes in broader cultural terms. Although he knew and respected certain Rocks individuals, such as Andrew Frazier and others, he set about singling out the Rocks, in moral terms, as a den of depravity and vice. He was obsessed, for example, by the number of unlicensed drinking houses in ‘that Alsatia’

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\(^{25}\) Cunningham, Two Years, p29.
as he referred to it. Drinking itself he considered a moral disease which not only ‘consumes
the body, but effectually destroys the soul’.26

The observations of Commissioner Bigge were similar. In his Report...on the Judiciary
(1825), he claimed that the Sydney generally was marked by the ‘tranquillity of the
streets...instances of open or public outrage were not frequent’. The Rocks was specifically
mentioned as the exception to this, being ‘chiefly inhabited by the most profligate and
depraved part of the population’, its disorderly character encouraged by the granting of
‘permission for dances to be held at houses that were not licenced’.27 Archdeacon
Broughton’s 1830 tirade against the people of Sydney has been another major source of
historical reputation. Here, however, the Rocks was held up as a typical example of the low
morals of the lower orders generally. Having been resident in Sydney for some months, he
concluded that ‘The degraded state of morals...unhappily characterizes too great a proportion
of the Inhabitants of this town’, in other words, the lower orders. He had lived close to the
Rocks, described as the ‘most vicious and degraded parts of the community’ and this had
afforded me ample opportunity of observing the extent to which vice and profligacy
prevail in that Class, by which the District called the Rocks is chiefly inhabited. The
scenes, which fall under my notice, convince me that the greatest proportion of these
persons are living in ignorance or disregard of all religion whatever; that prostitution,
adultery, drunkenness and theft are their habitual occupations, and the only
difference...between the Sabbath and other days is that, the people being then all at home
and unemployed, there is a greater prevalence than ordinary of all sorts of disorder and
wickedness...

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26 ADB, entries for George and Robert Howe; SG 31 March, October 15 1827, 12
September 1828, 14 February 1829; report on death of Rocks woman Susan Sullivan
24 March 1825 after a drinking bout. ‘And yet’ observed Howe severely ‘people
delight in the pleasures of drunkenness’.

27 Bigge, Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry on the Judicial Establishments of New
South Wales, London, 1825, pp62, 70.
And so on for another two pages. Yet it is clear that at least some of these 'vices' were merely older, often pragmatic and widely accepted cultural habits practised by the lower orders. They had been transformed into wickedness, and the neighbourhood with them, by the perspective of evangelical Christianity.28

What was the response of Rocks people themselves to such charges? In May 1826 the Gazette reported that the Kellys, a couple who kept an unlicensed drinking house, were arrested for harbouring runaway servants, assaulting constables, being constantly drinking and riotous, and keeping a 'mere child' for the purposes of prostitution. Kelly was 'ordered to find security to keep the peace' while his wife ordered to the third class of the factory. But in his haste, Robert Howe had got it wrong; he assumed and reported (perhaps intentionally?) that the Kellys’ house was on the Rocks. The next day he received a curt note from William Kelly of Cumberland Street:

Sir, a statement...respecting a person of the name of Kelly, a resident on the Rocks, being convicted of disgraceful conduct, and as there is no person of that name besides myself on the Rocks, I feel myself called upon to request that you will contradict such account, as it was a person of that name resident in Castlereagh Street.29

William Kelly had arrived as a convict in 1819 and had been a printer at the Gazette office, first living with Sarah Wills and her family for a short time and then removing himself to lodge independently in Cumberland Street. He married Elizabeth Hayes, the widow of Michael, in 1826. His achievement of this kind of life - a town household and family - in so short a time was unusual, and by 1827 William Kelly obviously cared for his reputation. Perhaps it galled him that his old master Robert Howe should be so careless in his allegations. William's letter was a personal defence in which his respectable character is assumed. It said nothing about the Rocks, apart from the fact that he lived there. There is no defence here,

28 HRA, Archdeacon Broughton to Ralph Darling, 19 June 1830, Vol 15 725-728.

29 SG 30 May, 8 June 1827; Mutch Index.
or for that matter anywhere else, by Rocks people of the ‘reputation’ of their neighbourhood. Although a distinctive neighbourhood with myriad connections and associations had emerged, Rocks people themselves at this stage had no sense of being a separate place in moral or cultural terms from the rest of the town.

Did those early critics themselves consider Rocks people as actually different, morally, from the lower orders of the rest of Sydney either? After all, tradesmen, labourers, publicans, lower public servants, householders, convict and free servants lived in similar patterns in most of Sydney’s other streets. There is little evidence to show that they were much different in outlook or behaviour from Rocks people. William Kelly placed his offending namesakes in Castlereagh Street, where fine residences and shops were being built, and genteel addresses advertised. There were, despite Bigge’s assertions, many incidents of public disorder, assaults, robberies, rowdy dancing and drinking parties, and ‘flash houses’ in other parts of Sydney. Why, then, was the Rocks nevertheless invariably singled out by people like Howe, Bigge and Broughton, and Alexander Harris and the Reverend Nathaniel Pidgeon after them? Why not, instead, Brickfield Hill? This was a place on the outskirts, just as old, but, by contrast, a far less settled, more rootless sort of place, with fewer family groups and married couples and many shared houses occupied by single men.

The answer lies in the complex interaction of townscape, early history, the quick, firm and polarised associations made in the minds of observers, and the way that the Rocks continued to draw in newcomers, drifters and strangers. It was the first part of the town seen by seamen and convicts as they sailed in and came ashore, its disorderly streets and jumble of houses -

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30 See Districts Constable’s Notebooks, CSC and analysis in Byrne, Criminal Law, p77. See series of CCJ and SQS records for locations of crime and disorder; for example see SG 25 September 1819 ‘low gambling and dissipation’ at the racecourse; Australian 29 September, 6 October 1825, pugilistic contests at Brickfield Hill and Cockle Bay; 27 March 1829, a ‘fatal squabble’ in Clarence Street.

31 District Constable Notebooks, CSC.
- drinking houses, bawdy houses, houses offering lodgings - signalled welcome, a familiar place in an alien land. It was probably the quarter that the convicts banished to Norfolk Island had in mind when they referred to Sydney as 'heaven'. From the perspective of those whose disapproval has been handed down as 'history', the Rocks was the obvious target, distinguished, again, by its physical, more than social, characteristics. It was easily locatable, finite, highly visible, marked off in the eye and the mind, the wrong side of a bisected town. It tumbled over the precarious rocky headland, its streets and lanes wild and disorderly. It loomed over Robert Howe's house in George Street, and he was stabbed one night in its streets. Here it was possible to point, as Broughton did, to the 'depravity' of the lower orders of Sydney generally. Brickfield Hill was largely out of sight, and the other streets of the east side of town extended out in an orderly fashion from the early official centre, were not so easily distinguishable from it. They lacked those clear boundaries, mostly trickling off to the south and east. The historical singling out of the Rocks does not mean that its people were 'separate' from the rest of Sydney, or that they were somehow socially or morally different. The Rocks was an integral, if distinctive, part of the early town, in an organic eighteenth century sense. It was not an aberration; rather, it represented the town of the lower orders.

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The Culture of the Lower Orders

Clearly, William Kelly of the Rocks did not want to be associated with vice of this sort. Yet he and many like him lived on the Rocks which was well-known for bawdy houses, unlicensed drinking houses which attracted runaways and thieves as well as seamen and soldiers on their drinking sprees and itinerant tradesmen and labourers.³³ Herein lies part of the resolution of the contradiction between the Rocks’ reputation and the solid evidence for comfortable, steady family life. It is clear that both types of life existed side by side there, often intermingling. It was difficult for elite and educated observers to see this: their unfamiliarity and disgust prevented it.

The other strand of resolution is that, from the elite perspective, the behaviour and cultural outlooks common among the lower orders were generally considered rude, lacking in gentility, order, self control and sentiment, and usually inherently immoral as well. Hence, any place inhabited by the lower orders became, by definition, disorderly and immoral, and the Rocks was the most visible of these. It is thus important to explore the culture of the lower orders, in order to discover what they understood by ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, ‘moral’ and ‘immoral’ and so on. For if Rocks people clearly cannot be characterized as wholly degenerate and corrupt, a population of thieves and prostitutes, neither do they then, by default, become the opposite - paragons of industry, with moral feelings and sentiments much like our own. These questions are threaded through the succeeding sections about family life and work; here we examine common public and private behaviour.

³³ For example, Mary Redmond, Mary Bryant, Catherine Byrne, Caroline Cochrane/Martin and Ellen Lindsay kept disorderly houses; Mary Robinson let out rooms in her house for casual prostitution; publican John Hull leased a house to three prostitutes, Margaret Shannon, Julia Bryant and Sarah Dorset. A man named Davey was one of the many who allowed convicts to gamble at his house, SG 2 April 1828. Byrne observes that ‘the numbers of households described as disorderly steadily increased’ in the 1810s and 1820s, Criminal Law and Colonial Subject, Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p167.
Fig. 47A: 'Wesleyan Chapel, Prince Street'. Source: J. Maclehose, Sydney, 1839, p.119.

Fig. 47: Sophia Campbell, 'Sydney Church and the Regimental Mile from the Main Guard' 1817. In contrast to the often stylised and heavily metaphoric works of other artists, Campbell had a keen and often humorous eye for the rather less dignified realities of everyday life in Sydney; she painted 'people doing things'. Here St. Phillips, the 'ugliest church in Christendom', stands in open, unbeautified ground, littered with cut stone and criss-crossed with dirt roads and paths. A soldier snoozes in a chair in the sun, a woman carrying a basket walks purposefully by, a man strides downhill.

Public disorder was perhaps most clearly perceived in leisure activities which included gambling, drinking, dancing and singing through the night. It was manifested in the reports, if not the sight, of the mobs which gathered to watch and bet on cock-fights, bull-baiting and dog-fights, much as they did for hangings and floggings. Out in the streets of the Rocks, constables were frequently called to break up fights between drunken men or women, or between sailors and locals, and to deal with ‘riots’, the disorderly gatherings of mobs of onlookers, both men and women, eager to watch some action. The constables were usually abused, attacked and hit with stones during the fracas, eventually dragging off the struggling offenders to the lockups. During one such incident in 1828 the constable was unable to quell a riot, which was of such magnitude that he ran to the Magistrate for assistance. A party of military men was hastily despatched up to the Rocks, where they found a ‘large concourse of people’ gathered around James Murray ‘stripped, and in the act of striking at some person’. Murray and his friend Tom Carr were arrested and locked up; both were drunk.\textsuperscript{34}

The interesting features of this incident was that it happened not at night, but in the daytime, and on a Monday (perhaps St Monday?\textsuperscript{35}), not Saturday or Sunday. And, further, the drunken pugilists and peace-disturbers were not the unskilled, drifting, recently arrived convicts one might expect, but skilled townsmen. Thomas Carr was a carpenter who had arrived free and worked at Thomas Street’s shipyard in Sussex Street, while his companion James Murray was most likely an ex-convict painter, aged 30, who had arrived in 1821 and lived with another painter, Robert Mantles and his wife in George Street. In other words these ‘riots’ and fights

\textsuperscript{34} SG 12 September 1828; see also 28 January 1828; and Australian 6 October 1825, an account of a boxing match ‘near the old Government windmill in Cockle Bay’ and 27 March 1829, brawls between civilians and soldiers. Paula Jane Byrne, Criminal Law, p242. For an account of pastimes such as cock-fighting, see Waterhouse, Private Pleasures, Section 1; and SG 1 January, 30 September, 25 November 1804, 11 August 1805, 16 June 1810.

\textsuperscript{35} For a discussion of the traditional custom of St Monday among working people, and its persistence, see E. P. Thompson, ‘Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism’, 72-77.
were not atypical incidents perpetrated by a small, lowly element in society, but rather
comm mon daytime, weekday events, probably witnessed, or even taken part in by those
householders of the Rocks.

Carr and Murray were also outsiders, single men spending their Monday drinking at one of
the many licensed and unlicensed Rocks houses. Like the groups of seamen and itinerant
labourers, they were the people of the Rocks the Constables could not list, pin down on their
sheets of paper during a census. They were part of the human tide constantly shifting in and
out, yet invisible in the final count and calculation. But there is ample evidence, too, that
men of the Rocks, as discussed in more detail in Section 4, irrespective of wealth or status,
were also given to violent language and behaviour to express anger, or settle a score. Self-
restraint and avoidance of violent behaviour were not considered as essential to a respectable
reputation.

Elite men held higher expectations and deeper fears of women of the lower orders. They
considered them 'worse than the men' because women were supposed to be better than men.
Court evidence and newspaper reports show that many Rocks women liked to drink, could
be violent, fought with each other in the streets, joined in the mobs that gathered to watch
fights, and loved to annoy the constables. In other words their behaviour in some ways was
not so different from that of men of the lower orders. George Howe reported the pugilistics
of Rocks women, and men, in his gloriously pseudo-pompous style in 1803:

On Wednesday evening a Battle Royal was fought in front of the General Hospital, in
which several persons of either sex were seriously engaged. A pair of Amazons at length
engrossed the attention of the spectators...a Mrs Fido matched against a Scot, the latter
of whom was finally declared triumphant, although she had...experienced many manual
expostulations from the husband of her antagonist...
The husband was then punched in the nose by an onlooker, another ‘desperate tete-a-tete’ raged for twenty minutes until ‘the appearance of a number of Peace-officers put a period to the sport’. Fighting was public entertainment, sport, with both men and women participants and spectators, the lines between these latter blurred and overlapping.

These were not necessarily ‘deviant’ women, ‘bad’ as opposed to ‘good’. Ann Kelly, an Irishwoman convicted in Dublin who arrived on the Minerva in 1800 was the long-time wife of Cumberland Street baker Richard Campbell (arrived 1797). She was sent out to the Female Factory for 28 days in 1824 for being drunk and disorderly, ‘making away with her husband’s property’ and being ‘a pest to police’. Yet in 1828 she was still with Richard in Cumberland Street, one of that steady, settled core of Rocks people. Mary Goodwin (nee Brown) was fined for assault in 1813 and set in the public stocks for drunkenness in 1826. But she lived in the salubrious Prince Street with her husband William Goodwin, her five children, son-in-law Joseph Love and a number of grandchildren, another ‘good family woman’ who was still at the same address in 1828. Ann Chapman was in 1822 the ‘wife’ of a labourer William Maggs fifteen years younger than herself in Gloucester Street, and had moved with him to Cambridge Street by 1828. She too was arrested for drunkenness, for ‘making a great noise in Gloucester Street’ and on another occasion for assaulting a constable.37

Most sources confirm that Sydney’s people were not religious in terms of the established church. Orders commanding them to attend divine service and to observe the Sabbath by avoiding both work and carousing were routinely ignored, so that clergymen were invariably scandalised by the empty churches and the full taverns on Sundays. Grocott observes that this

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36 SG 1 May 1803; see also 12 March 1803.

37 See CSC Index, entries for these women. Re Ann Kelly R6023 4/6671 p91. Re Mary Goodwin SG 16 December 1826. Re Ann Chapman, R6023 X820 p71; and cited in Paula Jane Byrne, Criminal Law, p161.
is not surprising, given the English lower orders' indifference and apathy towards religion, which fell within the sphere of learning, wealth and power. Over forty percent of the convicts said they had no religious affiliation whatsoever. Compulsory attendance at divine worship, with sermons delivered in language and terms they could not understand, was regarded as part of their punishment. For convicts and ex-convicts with any prospects, material success, not spiritual well-being, lay at the forefront of their concerns and efforts, though some made their way up to St Philip's occasionally to be married, to baptise their children, and for funerals (Fig. 46).

Similarly, Catholics showed relatively little interest in religious observances and activities. Small bands of devout Catholics are said to have met in the houses of men such as William Davis and James Dempsey, yet these were described as comprising only a 'few old men'. Occasionally petitions were submitted demanding Catholic priests 'for domestic calamities and serious indisposition which constant visit us in this remote land' by active Catholics including Davis and Michael Hayes. But as to the depth of religious feelings observance and fervour among the general populace, Waldersee has argued that Catholicism was more a 'quietly accepted tradition, to a great extent bound up with Hibernicism...equally bound up with clannishness...it did not very often manifest itself in demonstrations of religious zeal or even religious interest'. Although Catholics probably made up one quarter of the Rocks' inhabitants, there was no church in the vicinity until St Patrick's was built in William Davis' rear yard in 1840 (Fig. 41). Like their Protestant neighbours, though, they did use the churches for baptisms, marriages and funerals, first St Philip's and later St Mary's.

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38 Alan M. Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches: Attitudes of Convicts and Ex-Convicts towards churches and clergy in New South Wales 1788 to 1851, Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1980, p2, and Chapters 2 and 3; Mutch Index, ML.

A simple Wesleyan chapel was built in Prince Street on the Rocks in 1820 by James Scott, with Robert Howe as its champion. Wesleyans had earlier had some success with the convicts because they ‘associated with them on terms of familiarity and equality’ and because of their educational endeavours. But by 1820 the missionaries at the Prince Street chapel considered Sydney people to be ‘sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death’ and harangued them on new cultural codes of abstinence, piety and the rejection of ‘vice’. Although a Bible Association particularly requested the attendance of the ‘Poor and Labouring Classes’ at the chapel, it was not well-attended, and the Wesleyans soon focused their attention instead on the children, in order to ‘snatch [them] from vice and infamy’.\textsuperscript{40}

The culture of the lower orders has been well described as one of resistance through defiance and disorder.\textsuperscript{41} In this definition though, it still remains within the context of the authority of church, state and law. Yet plebeian society itself was not entirely chaotic, rootless or anarchic. There is also the dimension, more difficult to read, of unwritten rules, shared values, elements of commonality which provided cohesiveness.

One striking characteristic is immediacy of action and reliance on self and neighbours in practically all aspects of everyday life. When people were robbed, for example, they often followed clues, found the perpetrator and recovered the goods themselves, with help from friends.\textsuperscript{42} When they were injured or ill, they treated themselves using the sorts of home

\textsuperscript{40} Grocott, \textit{Convicts, Clergy and Churches}, p80; \textit{SG} 29 January, 20 May, 9 December 1820, 20 January 1821, 2 October 1823, 29 August 1828.

\textsuperscript{41} Waterhouse, \textit{Private Pleasures}, Section 1.

\textsuperscript{42} This observation was made by Paula Jane Byrne in \textit{Criminal Law}, Introduction, and p165; see also for example \textit{SG} 30 April 1809, actions of Edward Wills to retrieve his stolen goods. The publican Andrew Coss heard a noise at four o’clock one morning, went outside and saw a convict carrying a trunk. He ‘challenged him and then followed him’, interrogated him, and then took him to the watchhouse. The trunk had been stolen from Captain Richard Siddons. See committal papers, 20 May 1816, CCJ COD 405B AONSW.
remedies often published in the Gazette (beef brine for rheumatism, for example, and home-made gargles and purgatives), calling on neighbours to nurse them. They regarded the hospital as a ‘slaughterhouse’, the resort of the poorest and most desperate, while doctors were widely distrusted. We have seen the way they built their own houses or huts according to their own preferences, though arranged, in common, to face the water. They organised their own working lives, often around the daylight hours, the seasons, or the tides. Their marriages and separations were also their own business. Unlike the deference of modern people to ‘experts’ in fragmented fields, it is clear that early Sydney people were largely unfamiliar with, or distrustful of the intervention of authority in the shape of constables, doctors, clergymen, surveyors and the like, in such fundamental aspects of their daily lives.

Another powerful common thread was spectacle: public display lay at the heart of commonality. We have seen that people gathered in noisy and unruly mobs to watch fights, to witness gestures of defiance or anger or some jealous lover’s revenge. They gathered quickly to exclaim in terror over a huge shark circling near the wharf, or to hear of a shipwreck recounted by a survivor, to watch the launch of a new vessel. Curious, interesting or artful objects were often put on public display: a child’s inscribed gravestone, a model ship.\footnote{SG 13 January, 17 February 1805, 13 July 1806, 25 January 1807. Marvellous stories were the staple fare of the Gazette.} Public spaces -streets, the marketplace- were also used by feuding people to vent anger in quarrels and blows, and such public exposure of conflict was mirrored in the public notices announcing the separation of husbands and wives. There was no sense of shame or unseemliness attached to such displays; on the contrary, the public eye was essential. The distinction between private life and public profile, fundamental to the modern sense of privacy, was thus absent.
But the greatest and most dramatic public theatre was the exercise of the law, the area where immediate self reliance was forfeited in deference to the judge or magistrate. Court proceedings were ‘highly interesting to the crowded auditory’, human drama which might be edifying, disturbing or hilarious. People crowded into the courtrooms to view the accused and the victim, to hear the unfolding stories of the witnesses and to shudder at the verdict and sentence. Mobs jeered at the condemned in the carts trundling up to the hanging grounds. Later, when the authorities had become squeamish over these processions and ordered the hangings to be carried out behind the gaol walls, people nevertheless gathered to watch from Cambridge Street, and went away disgruntled if a last-minute reprieve was granted. They would also fill the rooms at the hospital to watch the dissection of the body of a criminal, and made grim fun of the rotting bodies strung up at the places where horrendous crimes had been committed. While governors’ orders were often ignored or forgotten, the acceptance of the rule of law, despite its brutality and its imperfect exercise, was a vital strand of cohesion.44

Commonality stemmed also from the sheer precariousness of life. For early Sydney people, the relationship of husband and wife, their children’s lives, a steady income, sanity, and good health could not be taken for granted, they were conditional upon luck, fate, acts of God. Rocks people were surrounded by evidence of disease, death or misfortune that could so easily befall them through accidents, a slip in judgement, occurrences beyond human control. In these circumstances, the logical relationship of cause and effect, the ideals of planning, order and control so familiar to their betters were not entirely relevant to them. Better by far for a man or woman to accept ‘the different stages and situations he has been destined to in

this colony'; to grasp any opportunity, in the hope of gain; and to endure times of trouble with pragmatism, and the resignation of fatalism.

Yet this precariousness did not preclude compassionate behaviour. Relationships between people were not entirely brutal, debased or lacking in human sympathy. Even for the poor, sick, aged and homeless, there were acts of pity and comfort, and attempts to alleviate distress from those of their own rank. Edward Hirard, a government servant, had suffered for many months from dysentery, and his neighbour Thomas Small ‘had seen death in his face for several days’. Small lent him money for beer and ‘asked him if I could do anythink for him’. Hirard knowing he would die, simply ‘thanked me and said no’. Thomas heard him ‘groaning all night till 12 or 1 o’clock, after that I heard no more’.

Death was a common companion in early Sydney, and when it came, the traditional acceptance of fate of the sort expressed in the death of Edward Hirard came to the fore. Once more, these were shared habits and attitudes. People were familiar with the signs (‘death was in his face’) and with the sight of dead bodies. The dying were not banished, but remained amongst them, and the dead were not immediately hidden away. Men towed in the bloated bodies of the drowned, no matter the condition, cut down and carefully lowered the hanged, hauled bodies out of the wells. Women laid them out, washed them, closed their eyes and bound up their jaws. Bodies on which inquests were carried out were left in situ (the drowned for example, were laid on the public wharf) or carried to hotels where the jury sat. Even epitaphs on gravestones, focused less on the hopes of everlasting life, than on tributes to a person’s life in this world. They dwelt on the frailty and helplessness of human

45 John Mollet, Petition for confirmation of pardon, 1810, CSC F3166 4/1847 p149.
46 Inquest on Edward Hirard, 1 January 1821, CSC R6021 4/1819 p303.
life, the inevitability, finality and capriciousness of death, and the loss and sadness of those left behind.\textsuperscript{47}

Those who attended the dying, usually family members, friends, and neighbours, did not really attempt to intervene in the process. They tried to make the dying person as comfortable as possible, offering them warm wine, or milk mixed with ginger, putting them in bed if there was one, placing warm bricks at their feet, and comforting them with their bodies by lying down next to them. They hardly ever called a doctor until after the person had died, (a typical example: 'he saw a change in the deceased and that feeling his pulse had ceased to beat, he sent for Dr Redfern'), usually to make sure he or she was really dead. So death coming through disease, accident or old age was regarded fatalistically, as a natural process, best left to run its course.\textsuperscript{48}

A death became disturbing and shocking where there had been obvious human interference, and retribution was considered necessary in these cases. When an old man named John Driver committed suicide by hanging himself in 1809, the \textit{Gazette} reported the incident in great detail and concluded matter-of-factly 'the body was interred on Friday near the place where the act was committed, and a stake driven through it'. Both place and body had been contaminated by the act, and required drastic action to set them to rights. Suicides were not given a Christian funeral, nor interred in the consecrated burial grounds. Some were laid at isolated crossroads outside the towns, to signify their eternal exclusion.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47} SG 13 August 1827; for gravestone epitaphs see SG 5 May 1804; 'Description of Thomas Reibey's Tomb', 1811, ML Ar27; Joseph Arnold, 'Epitaphs in the Church Yard at Sydney NSW 1795-1815', 1815, ML A1849-2.

\textsuperscript{48} See series of Coroner's Inquests CSC R6021 4/1819, ML and CSC 2/8286-90, R2232 and R2233 AONSW; example from inquest on Edward Hall, 1817, R2232 p114 AONSW.

\textsuperscript{49} SG 28 May 1809; Obed West, \textit{Memoirs}, p30.
From the plebeian perspective then, those marks of disorder - drinking, fighting, sexual mores, violent behaviour, unruly mobs - were not laden with connotations of immorality, but were intrinsic to their way of life. Although the extremes, prostitution, excessive gambling, drunkenness and constant fighting, were not approved of, neither were they considered shocking, foreign or aberrant, but more as unwise excesses, met with a shrug or a shake of the head. By contrast, such 'unnatural' crimes such as infanticide, suicide, murder, buggery and bestiality were considered horrible and unnatural. They excited unease, moral outrage and disgust among ordinary people, who demanded expiation through public shaming and execution.
The Nature of the Rocks Community

There is a tendency for historical understandings, both popular and academic, to move pendulum-wise, from one interpretation to its opposite. Hence, in emerging historical revisions of the Rocks, the idea (or ideal) of ‘community’ looms large in opposition to the old corruption/slums/rats triad. Was the Rocks, then, a cohesive, close-knit community with warm-hearted inhabitants always ready to lend a hand? Was it a lost world where people enjoyed the things we think we are missing today? Historians of community warn constantly that the term is imprecise (Hillery found ninety-four different definitions), thickly overlaid with nostalgia which prefigures interpretations, and often rooted in fear of modernity and change. Yet the concept is nonetheless ‘fundamental and far-reaching’, and the exploration of what ‘community’ does and does not entail lies at the heart of understanding this aggregate of people and the extent to which locality created bonds between them.50

How might we define, hence recognise, a community? Several pointers may be drawn from an extensive, complex literature. MacFarlane observes three levels of perception: first, the ideal, or what the community ought to be; second, ‘what is thought does happen’, often the negation of this ideal; and third, the ‘behavioural or statistical community’. These three, which may be at variance, or may overlap, fit the various perceptions of the Rocks precisely: the ideal social order (the hardworking, deferential, orderly lower orders) of elite imagination were inevitably dashed by what little they knew and saw of the Rocks. Hence they portrayed

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it as a perversion of society, expressed as the historical reputation for immorality and degeneracy. It is the third angle, the actual community, which is the focus here.\textsuperscript{51}

David Garrioach, in his exploration of the eighteenth century neighbourhoods of Paris found that locality itself played a large role in binding people with common local knowledge, shared names and places. Thomas Bender countered that such spatial location may or may not be an element of community. A ‘community’ can exist without being tied to one place. What is more significant for Bender is the ‘special quality of human relationships’ found in a community, defined as

a limited number of people in a somewhat restricted social space or network held together by shared understandings and a sense of obligation. Relationships are close often intimate, and usually face-to-face... There is a ‘we-ness’ in a community; one is a member. He observes, too, that a ‘sense of self and community may be difficult to distinguish’, suggesting that a community is not necessarily self-conscious, but taken for granted. Following on from this, Garrioach argues that members of a community will treat outsiders differently to one of their own number. The ‘unwritten rules’ of community, which do not apply to outsiders, are ‘an essential characteristic’.\textsuperscript{52}

At the same time, paradoxically, community cannot be defined by social unity and harmony. Conflict, suspicion and hostility are also integral to its being, as J.A. Sharpe argued in his study of litigation in early modern English communities, although Bender adds that such conflict is ‘mediated by the emotional bonds’.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} MacFarlane, \textit{Reconstructing Historical Communities}, p13.

\textsuperscript{52} Garrioach, \textit{Neighbourhood and community in Paris}, Introduction, p5 and Chapter I p16ff; Bender, \textit{Community and Social Change}, pp6-7.

If these are the theoretical outlines, then the Rocks was a community, certainly by the 1820s, and probably earlier. The word 'neighbourhood' was used as early as 1808, for when a child fell down the Rocks 'a report of the infant's death was shortly afterwards circulated throughout the neighbourhood'.\textsuperscript{54} News carried by word-of-mouth, and the interest and concern over a local child's death in themselves suggest communal networks. Yet, as Bender warns, the Rocks community identity was not self-consciously articulated. No-one said 'I am a Rocks man/woman', although they often introduced themselves by stating 'I live on the Rocks', the way the slighted William Kelly did.

There are two intertwined levels at which Rocks people were bound together. The first was the \textit{commonality} of outlooks and behaviour, as outlined above, shared with the lower orders of Sydney generally. Then there were other dimensions which drew people together such as common trade or calling, similar time of arrival in the colony, and Irishness. At this level the Rocks serves as microcosm for the wider society. But at the second level, that of \textit{community}, the Rocks emerges as distinctive, in that its people depended on many ways upon each other, and its social networks were clearly shaped by locale and proximity.

Local knowledge of familiar landmarks, as observed in Section 1, was one way of maintaining the upper hand over outsiders, and essential for the constant observations of neighbours, lodgers and strangers. Rocks people were indifferent or at best only partly receptive to official attempts to name their streets and lanes. They used their own relational system of names and landmarks to find their way about and exchange information.

Still more basic to the spatial dimension of community is continuity of inhabitation. The Rocks was not a fixed, unchanging, or isolated community; it was constantly awash with new faces, strangers, visitors, and drifters. But it had at its core clusters of people who had

\textsuperscript{54} SG 25 September 1808. The child survived.
arrived on the early fleets, settled there in the 1790s and early 1800s, and were still in occupation in 1822. Although the comparison with the 1828 Census shows that over half the population was not even listed after only five to six years, of those who were traceable, nearly sixty percent were still living on the Rocks, and forty percent of those were at the same address. The Rocks thus possessed a stable population of familiar names and well known families which made community possible in the first place (Tables 10 and 11). There is some evidence that their children, reaching adulthood, also remained on the Rocks, or at least nearby in up-market Bunker's Hill or over the ridge at Millers Point, not far from where they had grown up.

TABLE 10. ROCKS PEOPLE 1822/23-1828: TRACEABLE AND UNTRACEABLE BY STATUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Traceable?</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convict/Government Servant</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convict/Living Independently</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket of Leave</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardoned</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free by Servitude</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came Free</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Colony</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS:**

- Traceable: 599
- Untraceable: 686
- Total: 1285*

* Excludes 5 persons whose status is unknown.
## TABLE 11. MOBILITY/STASIS OF TRACEABLE ROCKS PEOPLE 1822/23-1828 BY STATUS AND SHOWING LOCATION IN 1828

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>At Same Address on the Rocks</th>
<th>At Different Address on the Rocks</th>
<th>Sub-Total</th>
<th>At Other Addresses in Sydney</th>
<th>At Other Towns or in Rural Areas</th>
<th>In Institutions*</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convict/ Government Servant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convict/ Independent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket of Leave</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardoned</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free by Servitude</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came Free</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Colony</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As % of Traceable People</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* including the Benevolent Asylum, Orphanages, Hyde Park Barracks, the Female Factory, Road Gangs, Sydney Gaol, and places of secondary punishment, such as Newcastle and Moreton Bay.

The evidence for familiarity, mutuality and a sense of obligation within the Rocks may be found in many aspects of everyday life. Court and inquest reports are rich with glimpses of people meeting in the street, exchanging greetings or stopping for a chat, dropping in casually at each other’s houses to eat, drink and talk, and to buy and sell. Rocks women sent to the Female Factory at Parramatta seem to have been or become close friends. Publicans’ wives Jane New and Eleanor Frazier were confidantes there; Eleanor Frazier also became a sympathetic ear and drinking companion to her husband’s ex-lover, Mary Jones. Men who were neighbours also formed strong friendships: the cabinetmaker and upholsterer George Woodford was ‘in the habit of intimacy’ with his Cumberland Street neighbour, the Master.

55 SG 20 June 1827; Governors’ Despatches, Papers from the Trial of John Stephen jun, 1834, Evidence of Ann Gordon, Matron of the Female Factory, ML A1267 p323ff.
mariner Edward Edwards. The annotated Constable’s survey above reveals that orphaned or abandoned Rocks children were usually not sent to the orphanage. If there was no family in Sydney or elsewhere in the colony, they were often taken in and fostered by Rocks neighbours. Similarly, the aged were often found living with their families, or sharing houses with friends. Very few lived alone, and fewer still went into institutions such as the Benevolent Asylum. Those who married seem to have frequently chosen partners from the Rocks, and neighbours agreed to act as one another’s witnesses during marriage ceremonies, as well as sponsors for their children at baptism, and executors of their wills. If a Rocks person was arrested and charged, the guarantors who came to their assistance for bail and recognizance were invariably local people, usually publicans. When there were unusual circumstances in a Rocks death, an inquest jury was formed of local men. Hence parents who lost children, husbands who lost wives, and so on, gave their often grief-stricken and intimate evidence not before an impersonal, anonymous body, but their own neighbours.

The inquests often reveal community bonds between neighbours which were strongest in times of distress. When Hannah Hancey of Cumberland Street fell ill suddenly in 1824 she sent for her neighbour and friend Elizabeth Board. Elizabeth stayed with her until eleven at night, and sent her daughter to check on her in the morning. She was sent for again at ten and ‘on going in found her just Dying’. Another neighbour, Mary Cooper also called in that morning, and left her ten year old daughter with Hannah at Michael Hancey’s request. She too was

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56 Inquest on Edward Edwards, 6 November 1818, R2232 p265 AONSW.

57 Orphaned or abandoned children fostered by Rocks people include Thomas Condon, Elizabeth Findlay, Ellen and Margaret Downey, Esther O’Hara, Mary Ann Lamb, Ann Buttey, Thomas Alford, and Rebecca Hooper; evidence of neighbours acting as witnesses and sponsors at marriages and baptisms from the Mutch Index and St Mary’s Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages 1820-1840s ML FM4/5270-71; see series of Court records in CJC and Court of Petty Sessions, AONSW; and Coroner’s Inquests.
called back to be with the dying woman. The neighbours probably washed and laid out Hannah’s body and drew the shutters closed.58

There is evidence of women helping one another out after the birth of a child, of opening their homes to take in a lodger they knew ‘for charity’. The young convict butcher Robert Noble of Cumberland Street took pity on old John Rogers, a watchman at the slaughterhouse on Cockle Bay where Noble worked. Rogers was dismissed ‘for repeated drunkenness’ in 1817 and when he ‘seemed reluctant to leave’ they cut his hammock down. Noble asked the old man where he would go and he replied he ‘did not know where to go’. This ‘touched his feelings’ and he told Rogers he was ‘welcome to his house until he knew how to better himself’. But Rogers got drunk that night, tried to get into his hammock, fell and died later on the floor. His dog had to be driven away from his body with a whip.59 A defenceless cripple who was set upon and knocked down by a ‘stout athletic ruffian’ in Essex Lane immediately aroused ‘the indignation of the mob’. The man was immediately surrounded by Rocks people, ‘rather rudely handled’ and chased off ‘amidst shouts and execrations’.60

By contrast, strangers to the Rocks were treated with suspicion or, at best, with indifference. Nobody mourned for murdered seaman Stephen Boylan, found face down in a pool of bloody water in 1804, nobody found his killer.61 The tale of Elizabeth Mandeville, well-illustrates Garrioch’s point about the community’s treatment of outsiders. Elizabeth Mandeville was a black woman who had arrived on the Aeolus in 1809, a Londoner tried in Middlesex the year

58 Inquest on Hannah Hancey, 1 February 1824, 2/8289 p37 AONSW.


60 SG 30 January 1813.

61 SG 15 July 1804.
before. She had lived with her defacto husband Stephen Wain and their two young children on their small Hawkesbury farm. In January 1821, three weeks from giving birth to a third child, she and a neighbour left home with a cartload of wheat to sell in Sydney. A few days later, her neighbour returned home without her, having been unable to find her in Sydney.

Passing through Cambridge Street at midday, the surgeon William Bland saw a group of Rocks women gathered uneasily around a heavily pregnant women lying in the street. They said she was in labour, but he thought not, suspecting exhaustion. He said later

When I saw her in the morning I was afraid she would perish for want of attendance, and as the women standing about hesitated about taking her in, I said I would pay the expenses for any care of that sort...she appeared to have been drinking [but was] not intoxicated.

Elizabeth told the woman who took her in that 'she had been drinking hard, that she belonged to the country...had received money for [the wheat] at the stores, bought necessaries, became intoxicated had been robbed and was afraid to return home'.

At ten o'clock the next day Bland heard that she was dead, but that her child was alive. He went back up to Cambridge Street and, in the house, 'performed an operation on the deceased' but found the baby also dead. By the time the inquest was held the following day, Stephen Wain had been told of her death and came, weeping, to give evidence. He told the assembled Rocksmen

She took no money with her for I was possessed of none or else she would...the neighbours reported...that she had had two glasses of spirits. She was ordinary sober, as good a woman as never broke bread at home - but two glasses would have had a great effect on her...Two men came and told me at the stores today that my wife was dead...as far as I have heard she had nowhere to go.
The coroner’s clerk noted, a little testily, ‘Here the witness wept as he has also done most of the time’. The coroner E. S. Hall found that she died of ‘exhaustion brought on by intoxication and want of nourishment’. But her husband was closer to the truth: ‘she had nowhere to go’, no friends, no town connections, for she ‘belonged to the country’. The Rocks women, opportunistic, suspicious and wary of strangers, would not take her in until payment was assured.  

Here we must recognize, too, that ‘disagreements betwixt neighbours’, acts of callousness and individual self-interest also characterised this pre-modern style ‘community’ as much as those of England and America. A culture in which suspicion, angry confrontation and violent outbursts were generally considered natural must dispel images of utterly peaceful, harmonic human relations. Although they might be moved by pity and feelings of compassion for those less fortunate than themselves, Rocks people were also quick to anger, easily slighted and highly litigious. While many aspects of life were still integrated and organic, nevertheless, the Rocks had been founded on actions of competitive, possessive individualism, and the reverse side of a belief in fate and human helplessness was ruthless opportunism. Hence any pity Daniel Cubitt may have felt for his widowed neighbour Ann Williams and her six children was swamped by his desire for material gain. Bernard Williams was dead only a few days when Cubitt petitioned for his job as well as his house.

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62 Inquest on Elizabeth Mandeville, 31 January 1821, CSC R6021 4/1819 p435. Compare with inquest on Russerk, another stranger, who died of intoxication and cold outside the front fences of houses in Prince Street, though his groans could be heard by householders; p609, 614-616.

63 SG 26 April 1822; Daniel Cubitt to Colonial Secretary 26 April 1822 CSC R6055 4/1760 p47. Disputes among Rocks people over land, boundaries and houses were very common, see for example Thomas Prior, Petition, 26 February 1824 CSC R6061 p200; Andrew Goodwin, Petition, July 1824, CSC R6061 pp198-99; William Hawkins, Memorial, February 1825, CSC 4/1842A p397; Edward Ewins, Petition 30 September 1818, CSC R6047 4/1741 p300.
Although the Rocks community was not characterized by the sort of constant riot or lawless mayhem that would destroy the social fabric, neither it cannot be described as truly peaceable. A certain level of violence was integral in social, and often personal relationships, and particularly in relationships between people and authority. People, adults and children, regularly witnessed the course and the effects of violence around them. A survey taken of male householders in the area in 1802 shows the early houses equipped with guns, swords, pistols and/or bayonets (see Appendix 4). The Rocks bristled with weaponry, with each householder ready to defend or attack as needs be. Men and women were quick to anger, and, although they were avid users of the courts, also engaged in direct, violent and public confrontation to resolve disputes. Even the highly respectable personage of Isaac Nichols could on occasion throw a punch at the nose of an offensive person in the public street. There is ample evidence that violence was used by men against women in the home, and sometimes in public, that women with grudges against their neighbours would attack them in the streets and occasionally inside the houses. Fighting, sometimes resulting in death, often erupted in pubs triggered by a remark, a smirk, a song. As examined in Section 3, violent men were not only found among the poor shifting unskilled and the desperate criminals, but among the respected and wealthy, the skilled and propertied.

Yet the occasions of violent or threatening altercations were often mitigated by what Bender called the ‘emotional bonds’ of community. A serious attack like the savagery of young Elizabeth Woodward on her neighbour, old Ann Chapman, resulted in a court conviction and sentence. But for smaller incidents, stone throwing, a few punches, or libellous remarks uttered in the heat of the moment (language was powerful: people were very sensitive to slights to their good name) the injured party often agreed to a settlement. This usually

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64 ‘Register of Arms Taken April 10 1802 - Maskeline and Banks Districts’ CSC R6041 4/1719 pp85-6. See Appendix 4.

65 Papers from trial of Isaac Nichols for assault on David Dundas, 21 March 1809, CCJ 5/1150 R2652 p112 AONSW.
involved a public apology, phrased in the most abject terms. 'The words were spoken by me in a passion' said publican Catherine Doyle in her contrite apology to fellow Rocks publican John Hull, 'for which I had no ground'.

Another, more dramatic dimension of such emotional bonds may be read in Thomas Condon's attempted robbery and murder of his friend James Tunnicliffe. Condon, with an accomplice, successfully lured his victim over the Rocks to Cockle Bay, hit him over the head, seized him by the throat and rifled his pockets. Tunnicliffe passed out, but Condon could not bring himself to kill him. Instead he shook him awake and they went together to the house of a mutual friend, where he pretended they had both been attacked by four men. Tunnicliffe, shaken and bleeding, was more shocked by the betrayal and denial than the violence. He reproached Condon over and over again 'Oh, Tom! I did not think you would have served me so!'. The 'grounds of friendship' that spared Tunnicliffe's life sent Condon away, but by 1828 he was back on the Rocks, a waterman of Gloucester Street.

The paradoxical stresses and ties of the Rocks community are perhaps best exemplified in the experience of the considerable numbers of Irish there, and in the underlying confluence and conflict in the relationships between English and Irish people.

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66 SG 24-27 January 1827; 2 April 1826 attack on Ann Chapman.

67 Papers from trial of Thomas Condon and Dugald MacFarlain, 16 October 1819, CCJ COD 449 p89ff AONSW.
The Irish

By the 1820s about twenty-five percent of the Rocks population, including householders, servants, lodgers and colonial-born children, was Irish. If their children are excluded, the figure among adults alone is around 22%. Expressed another way, around 34% of Rocks households were Irish, this larger figure including the small but significant number of English/Irish marriages (Tables 12 and 13). From a list of property- or leaseholding individuals drawn up for Commissioner Bigge’s perusal in 1821, it appears that around 20% of those ‘settled on their own property’ were Irish, a little less than their proportion among Rocks adults.68

### TABLE 12. ESTIMATED NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF IRISH PEOPLE ON THE ROCKS 1822/23, BY STREET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET</th>
<th>IRISH</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>TOTAL IN STREET</td>
<td>% IRISH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Street</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester Street</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland Street</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington Street</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Street</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Lane</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex Street</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyle Street</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68 These figures were estimated by cross referencing people from the District Constables’ Notebooks who arrived on Irish ships, (ships listed in Donohoe, Catholics of New South Wales, and Robinson, Women of Botany Bay) and who were Catholic, as listed in Donohoe and the 1828 census.
Were these Irish a distinctive group within the Rocks community? Or did they blend imperceptibly with their English neighbours, all trace of their own culture subsumed, lost? The lives of Rocks people were obviously inextricably bound up with the Irish among them. Irish voices and songs were familiar, they drank in Irish pubs, such as Alice Flynn’s St Patrick’s Inn, Patrick Cullen’s Ship Fame, later Andrew Coss’s Punch Bowl. There were Irish shops like those of Elizabeth Mulhall and Elizabeth Rafferty, Irish constables patrolling the streets, Irish servants, husbands, wives, friends. That the Irish seemed to blend in this way into the Rocks community makes discernment of a distinctive experience from their own standpoint difficult. They were great adaptors.

**TABLE 13. ESTIMATE OF IRISH HOUSEHOLDS* ON THE ROCKS BY STREET 1822/23**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STREET</th>
<th>IRISH HOUSEHOLDS</th>
<th>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS IN STREET</th>
<th>% IRISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge Street</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester Street</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland Street</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington Street</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Street</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte Place</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry Lane</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex Street</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyle Street</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS:</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>291</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes husband and/or wife, or household head is Irish.

Patrick O’Farrell reviewed the wide range of experience and background among the Irish, the difficulty of generalisation, the easy traps into which the historian, searching for ‘Irishness’, may fall. (These include for example, the fruitless search for Gaelic culture in language, building styles; for defiant rebels transported after the uprisings to feed the radical nationalist
myth; even for battling, hard-done-by ‘Colleens’ who are the raw material for suitably feisty ‘Matildas’). O’Farrell concludes:

What was Gaelic continuous, what was preserved, nurtured, passed on, was not language, or modes of building, or curious folkways, but something more elusive, much less tangible, more central - mind-sets, mentality, values, mental furniture, ways of thought, attitudes, dispositions, slants and tangents.69

These shared ‘intangibles’ drew the Irish of the Rocks together. While their economic interests and aspirations, their houses, their language (apart from accents, and there was plenty of variety in Sydney’s accents anyway) and behaviour differed little from those of their English neighbours, there is clear evidence of close Irish association and networks within the Rocks community. As O’Farrell wrote simply and perceptively in another book, about Irish immigrants in quite another place, ‘they tolerated each other well enough. Yet, when it came to closer things - friendship, marriage - the Irish preferred their own, if they could.’70 This searching out of one’s own kind, especially in times of trouble or celebration, goes to the heart of their experience.

The distribution of Irish people on the Rocks shows some striking patterns of association. As Table 12 shows, their numbers were far less in the better, more prestigious streets (5% of people in George Street, 6% in Prince Street) where they tended to be the servants of dealers and merchants. Yet, these servants in Prince Street had not far to go to see and hear their countrymen and women. In Cumberland Street just below, almost half the people, and well over half the households, were Irish. In the succeeding three streets, Gloucester, Cambridge,


70 Patrick O’Farrell, Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1990 p30. There is evidence for the survival of the Gaelic language in more isolated areas. In 1824 Father Connolly requested ‘there would be sent to Van Diemen’s Land missionaries who were proficient in Irish’. ‘I am at a loss’, he wrote, ‘to know how I could hear confessions without knowing the language’. See O’Brien, Dawn of Catholicism, p173.
and Harrington, they made up roughly a third of the households, and between 22% (in Cambridge Street where there were fewer children) and 34% (in Harrington Street) of the population. As noted from the constables’ survey, there is also a clear pattern of clustering of the Irish households close together in each street around and northwards from the old east-west axis of Surry Lane.

Within the households, too, the Irish tended to draw in their own. Those who were well-off or in business took in Irish servants. The Coss’s, publicans in Cambridge Street, had Patrick Keelan; Richard Byrne, the stonemason, and Margaret Kelly of Cumberland Street had George Darby. Their lodgers also tended to be Irish - Thomas Ryan and Jane Maxwell shared their house with convict women Ellen Flaherty and Julia Bryan. When individuals shared a non-family household, Irishness again might draw them together, as in the house in Gloucester Street next to James Flynn’s (also Irish), which was shared by his convict servants Patrick Cubitt, John A’Hearne and William Dunn.

Perhaps a measure of underlying distrust and disdain from the English convicts and emancipists also encouraged the Irish to look to their countrymen and women, to ‘prefer their own’ in friendship, marriage, business dealings and connections. There were also connections of a more nefarious sort, like Mary Bryant’s recruitment of Irish women to help her swindle the Government storeman.

Living close together created the bonds of locale which overlaid, and melded with the older ties of origin. When the Irish woman Margaret Rafferty, who lived opposite the Dockyard, died in 1809, the executors she had chosen were Irishmen Edward Quin and the barber Charles Bryan.71 That they were also both Rocks men is evidence of those early neighbourhood connections. Irishness and neighbourly compassion moved Bridget Nowland

71 SG 2, 9 October 1803; 25 June 1809, 21 January, 16 February 1810.
to take her neighbour Elizabeth Johnston and her five children into her own home after the
Irish Catholic Andrew Johnston was sent to a road gang in 1827.

Marriages and business dealings between the Irish were common: the saga of the Flynn, Murphy and Welsh families, all publicans, well-demonstrates the confluence of Irishness and
neighbourhood. James Flynn arrived a convict in 1818 and shortly married a widow, Alice
Murphy, less than two months after her husband Stephen died. The Murphys had been among
the earliest Rocks settlers, and Flynn thus acquired their St Patrick’s hotel in Gloucester
Street. This hotel stood directly opposite William and Eleanor Welsh’s Lord Wellington,
across Cribb’s Lane, and the Welshs were witnesses to the Flynn’s wedding. Both Alice
Flynn and William Welsh died in 1825 (William’s executors were fellow Irishmen Thomas
Dunne and Patrick Cullen), and six months after Alice’s death James Flynn married Eleanor
Welsh. Having thus acquired a second hotel, he leased the first to another ex-convict Irish
couple, James and Sarah Byrne.72

The Catholic wedding of Rocks widow Catherine Rourke to the shipwright Henry Simpson
in 1803 suggests early Irish networks coming to the fore in celebration. The Gazette reported
that ‘a ‘fidler [sic] with his merry crowd received a universal welcome’ with the bride leading
various dances, ‘Country Bumpkin’, ‘Cheshire Rounds and Irish Trots’. The celebration
appears to have continued from Saturday night over to St Monday, for two days later they
gathered to perform ‘a grand serenade of CULINARY instruments’, clanging and bashing
pots, pans, spoons and basins outside the house of the newlyweds, the din described as
‘harmony little short of marrow-bones and cleavers’. In accordance with ‘custom’ they
refused to go away until a ‘fee’ was paid ‘which being complied with the YOUNG couple

72 Mutch Index, ML; see entries for James Flynn, Stephen Murphy, Alice Murphy/Flynn;
Australian 8 January 1824, 9 June 1825; James Byrne, Memorial, 5 May 1834, in
Memorials forwarded by the Commissioner of Claims, CSC R1201 2/1783 No 581
AONSW.
were left to their domestic QUIET'. Here Howe, with his usual playful irony, was probably implying that the couple was not young, and that the Rocks, where they lived, was rarely quiet.\(^{73}\)

The Irish came together, too, for the other great human rite of passage, the funeral and wake. Here we must read through the thick lens of derision used by English writers, editors and later, reporters. Patrick O'Farrell recalls David Collins's accounts of Irish wakes of the 1790s, which dwelt on the bizarre and the foolishness of Irish folk-custom, and he concludes that the Irish wake was promptly privatised and modified. Perhaps so, but in the 1820s they were still being reported as distinctly Irish affairs. At the 1827 Rocks wake of Dennis O'Callaghan, his body was laid out on the table, surrounded by friends and family. His wife, Mary O'Brien, 'made everything genteel, and gave us plenty of the best Jamaica'. But when another woman Bridget Murphy entered and found no rum left she made a sarcastic remark about the corpse and then hit Mary O'Brien with a brick pulled from the fireplace. In court later, confronted with Mary's bruised face, Bridget pleaded that she had gone 'into the wake' (into, like moving into a circle) where 'the devil a drop of rum was left, which so aggravated me, that I could not drink. "God be with Dennis" and I certainly lost my senses'.\(^{74}\)

Although recounted in the customary farcical manner by the *Gazette*, the importance placed on gathering together to farewell the dead person, who still lay among them, and on hospitality and conviviality is clearly evident, as well as the anger of Bridget Murphy at feeling left out of the circle and the ritual drinking. When women came together their relationship could often be ambiguous, swinging easily from support and consolation towards uneasy suspicion, arguments and violence. The other observation which may be made here

\(^{73}\) *SG* 15 May 1803.

is the Irish mastery of language when facing magistrates and judges. Using words which may not have even been their native tongue, they often ran rings around their accusers, and deflated the pomp and seriousness of the proceedings with obfuscation or hilarious retorts and repartee. Irish publican John Hull, charged with abusing a soldier, said he had been at a wake to ‘drown dry sorrow’ and had ‘put an enemy in his mouth that stole away his brains’. The soldier had to admit that Hull was so drunk he ‘did not know what he was about’, and he got away with a small fine.\textsuperscript{75}

The Irish also become visible, and probably partly defined themselves, in terms of the suspicion, ridicule and bigotry of the English authorities and some of the people. The Irish songs sung in pubs are a good example. Philip Butterss has discovered that popular Irish ballads were ‘nothing like’ those of English origin. While English broadsheet songs tended to legitimise English law, the Irish ballads ‘lament for transportees who have been unjustly convicted’, celebrated successful escapes, and still more common, the ‘rebel song’ which dealt with those banished at various times after uprisings against ‘England’s hostile Crown’.\textsuperscript{76}

They had a great deal of potency, these songs; they were flashpoint where the underlying tension between English and Irish people came to the surface in the early Rocks. In 1814 a soldier named Connell sang ‘a croppies song’ in the Rocks pub of Elizabeth Ryan. ‘Croppy’ was the colloquial, usually derogatory, name for the Irish, some of whom cropped their hair like French revolutionaries. Another soldier, Sergeant Morrow, objected to the song, but an

\textsuperscript{75} SG 26 April 1826. See discussion in Thompson, Making of the English Working Class, pp436-37; the Irish could ‘make magistrates dizzy with their blarney’. Hunter thought the Irish were responsible for a rise in the ‘shocking crime of perjury’ in 1798, HRA, Hunter to Portland 10 January 1798 Vol 2 p118. Byrne observes that the animosities between women were often played out in the courts, Criminal Law, p240.

\textsuperscript{76} Philip Butterss, ‘Convicted by the laws of England’s hostile crown: popular convict verse’, in Oliver MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle, Irish-Australian Studies, Papers Delivered at the Fifth Irish-Australian Conference, Canberra, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1989, pp 7-24; these refs pp8-14.
Irish woman, Eleanor Irwin, who was there with her husband, insisted that it be sung again, joining in the singing herself. The chorus now louder, more raucous, Morrow objected again, to which Eleanor Irwin retorted that 'although she was not a croppy's wife, she was a croppy's sister'. Morrow then declared haughtily 'You are no society for me, take yourself away and walk'. Enraged by this insult, Eleanor Irwin picked up a bayonet and stabbed him in the stomach. The confusion in the evidence mitigated for the Irwins; they were convicted of killing and slaying, rather than murder, and sent to Newcastle for two years. The angry words, the taunting songs, the eruption of violence, the extraordinarily volatile atmosphere of the public houses seem to have been common in encounters between soldiers and the populace, men and women, Irish and English.\textsuperscript{77}

Some Irishmen, including Thomas Dunne, Thomas Lynch, Arthur Martin, and Joseph Welsh, were appointed constables and this could be another source of festering resentment. Thomas Dunne investigating a 'violent disturbance' on the docks one night found Daniel Cubitt junior in company with some sailors, 'in a state of intoxication'. Dunne told them all to go home, and when Daniel refused he remarked that 'it would have been much better for him [Daniel] to be at his duty than to be in the company of drunken sailors'. This unleashed young Daniel's considerable powers of insult. Seizing the ageing constable' stick, he roared that Dunne was a 'damned scoundrel' who had been trying to injure both him and his father for a long time, and it was a pity 'that any bloody Irishman should hold a situation - for they would eat the flesh of any Englishman's bones'.\textsuperscript{78} Evidently Daniel Cubitt had been brought up on the idea that their Irish neighbours in the Rocks, like Dunne, were 'bloody croppies', treacherous, inferior, undeserving of public office. There was something wrong with the world when an Irishman could order an Englishman to be about his business. Clearly, for

\textsuperscript{77} SG 25 June 1814; case cited in Byrne, Criminal Law, p246. O'Farrell explains the term 'croppy', Irish in Australia, p27.

\textsuperscript{78} Evidence of Thomas Dunne, 6 April 1822, CSC R6054 p41.
people like Daniel Cubitt junior, and those who bristled at 'croppy' songs, the tension and loathing remained not far below the surface of everyday life, and was easily brought to it by drink.

The gaunt walls of Fort Phillip rising from the highest point of the Rocks were material reminders of the authorities' fear of Irish treachery, for it was built as a direct result of the Irish rebellion of 1804. Some of the Rocks' men, including publicans Joseph Morley and Samuel Thorley, the well-off watchmaker John Sparrow, tailors John Mollett and George Pashley, the waterman George Atkinson, and several others, were among those free householders 'possessing property and good characters' who volunteered for the Sydney Loyal Association formed in fear of Irish insurrection in 1800. While the rebels of 1804 were pursued and captured or slain on the road to Windsor, the Loyal Sydney men were placed 'in defensive positions' around Sydney in case of attack.⁷⁹

How did this overt loyalist stance, this willingness to bear arms against the Irish, affect everyday neighbourly relations of the Rocks? Here are some paradoxes: George Atkinson lived next door to the inoffensive, quiet Irish barber Charles Bryan in Cambridge Street for many years. Did he ever go to Bryan for a haircut? Or were their relations always surly and suspicious? When John Sparrow's faithful servant died of snakebite in 1803 he buried him with great care and dignity, as a good master should. The servant's name was Francis MacNamara, an Irish Catholic. When the failing Irish dealer Patrick Shannon stood trial in 1807 for stealing, John Mollett was among the friends who stepped forward in his defence. George Pashley's son, also George, married an Irish convict named Johanna Barrett, from

Cork, who bore his four grandchildren and brought them up in their pub in Surry Lane. George Pashley junior also had the apprentice carpenter Owen Lynch lodging with him. Owen was the son of Irish constable Thomas Lynch. Thomas Moore, the well-respected Master of the Dockyard, was a Lieutenant of the Sydney Loyal Association. Yet he had also given the Irishman Edward Redmond his start in the colony, taking him on as a servant and introducing him to its property market, and in later, wealthier years acting as his benevolent patron.  

Another, perhaps stranger confluence of Irish and English on the Rocks, was the marriage of Thomas Dunne (Hillsborough, an Irish Catholic) and Rose (or Rosetta) Bean, the Protestant daughter of a free settler named James Bean. The Bean family had arrived on the Buffalo, also in 1799, and were farmers near Prospect. In 1803 a band of escaped Irish convicts attacked the Bean’s house, and two of them brutally raped seventeen-year-old Rose in front of her mother. Lynette Silver has remarked that, among those civilian volunteers who actively pursued the Irish rebels along the road to Windsor less than twelve months later, James Bean ‘had more of an axe to grind than most’ because of this incident. Yet, in October 1804, only six months later, Rose married the Irish Catholic Dunne, fourteen years older than herself, in St John’s at Parramatta. It was a successful marriage: their six children were born between 1809 and 1820, Thomas became the Chief Constable, the family lived on the Rocks in Cumberland Street, and were still together in 1828. What, then, was the axe that James Bean had to grind? Did it not concern those perceived as brutal banditti, out-laws who offended and outraged by their transgressions, far more than their Irishness? Thomas Dunne,

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80 Re Atkinson and Bryant, the Pashleys and the Lynches, see District Constable’s Notebooks, 1828 Census, Mutch Index, ML; Re Sparrow and MacNamara, SG August 2, 16 1807. Re Edward Redmond and Thomas Moore, see Redmond, Memorial, February 1810, CSC F3167 p188, and Lang, Home Was Here, p12ff.
irrespective of his Irishness and his religion, was obviously considered a suitable husband, a steady provider, and so he proved to be.\(^{81}\)

There is another dimension of the Irish of the Rocks, the stories of those who acquired wealth and a measure of respectability and thus, to some extent, set themselves apart from the far larger numbers of the Irish lower orders. The combination of Irish affinities and association with fairly peaceable co-existence, if not partial subsumption, into the English society is, again, well illustrated by the lives of the one-time rebels, Michael Hayes and Edward Redmond. They and men like them profited to varying degrees by their enforced emigration. Taken suddenly out of the context of maddened and disintegrating Ireland, they turned quickly to making money in New South Wales through dealing, pubs and land in precisely the same way that the English emancipists did. Hayes had the most promising start, but Redmond was far more successful. Their compatriot William Davis of Charlotte Place outlived them both to see the gothic stone St Patrick’s built on his land in 1840.\(^{82}\)

The attitude of the Governors, particularly King, towards these rebels had been deeply polarised. While on the one hand their Irishness and their crimes were frightening, on the other, they also included men of some rank and education. Others possessed useful trades and abilities, and a Governor with any good conscience or sense of humane social propriety could not send such men to the miserable outstations, to the ‘grubbing hoe or timber carriage’. It was the latter impulse, that concerning rank, which largely prevailed. They were pardoned, allowed to set up businesses and live independently, and given land. And they, as

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\(^{81}\) Silver, *The Battle of Vinegar Hill*, pp64, 97. Rosetta probably met Thomas when he was working for the Reverend Rowland Hassall at Parramatta; Hassall was a friend of the Bean Family; see SG 25 September 1819 and Hassall to W. Kelley, 17 November 1802, Rowland Hassall Papers, ML A859 p85. Rosetta Bean was mentioned as already living on the Rocks in 1804, so she may have been with Thomas before they were married; see SG 17 June 1804.

\(^{82}\) O’Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, pp29-34; Waldsee, loc. cit.
a whole, and much to the chagrin of those historians seeking the heroic rebel alive and kicking in early New South Wales, took ‘the quiet path’ and went their separate ways.83

For all that, the Irishness of Redmond and Hayes remains readable, in glimpses and glances, words, actions and associations. This did not rule other cultural attributes, such as sense of rank, education, and religiousness. Edward Redmond was an unlettered man who had been arrested at the age of about twenty-two in Kings County during the 1798 uprising. He was among the rows of convicts on the Minerva’s deck from whom ‘General’ Joseph Holt carefully stood apart in 1800, and by 1803 had acquired a house in Essex Lane, flanking the gaol, which he opened as the Foul Anchor Inn and from which he carried on his dealing. He lived with a ‘lovely and virtuous’, and also educated Irish woman, Winifred Dowling, from about 1804, producing two daughters Mary and Sarah, as well as caring for the son of her first marriage, John. The distinctly maritime Foul Anchor became the more agrarian Wheatsheaf, and then the supremely loyalist Harp and Crown, a hotel ‘conducted with great propriety’. When Edward and Winifred married eventually in St Philip’s in 1811, their witnesses were the Irish Rocksman from the Minerva, Edward O’Hara, and Ann Leonard. Edward’s business partner was also an Irish Rocksman, Patrick Cullen (Atlas 1 1802), with whom he held the lease on the Sydney tollgate; they hired one Michael Dwyer to man the gate.

The Redmonds continued to amass capital, land and acquired another hotel licence. When Joseph Holt and Sir Henry Brown Hayes departed the colony for Ireland in 1812, the Redmonds attended the large dinner party held at Patrick Cullen’s house to farewell them. But, as successful emancipists, they were also present at the Anniversary dinners held by Isaac Nichols which celebrated loyalism, raised their glasses to King and empire, and saw

83 HRA, Hunter to Portland, 12 November 1796, Vol 1 674; 20 March 1800, Vol 2 475; O’Farrell, ibid.
themselves as on par with their English counterparts, and hence separate from the Irish lower orders. Both Redmonds, like Michael Hayes and William Davis, were active in the building of the Catholic chapel, St Mary’s, of which Hayes was so proud. Again, although this expressed their distinction from Protestants, it still fell within the ambit of ‘civilizing’ influences, in step with authority rather than posited against it, yet another sign of respectable and responsible social behaviour.

Perhaps the evidence which best expresses the Redmonds’ ambivalence over their Irishness and Catholicism is the their treatment of their daughters after they married. Mary Redmond married an Irish Catholic emancipist named Roger Murphy in 1828. Murphy, then a lawyer’s clerk, and a later a ‘prosperous businessman’ was ‘one of the most important Catholic laymen in Sydney’. Sarah, the younger daughter, married Captain John Scarville, a handsome, well-connected Protestant Englishman, whom she met at a ball at Government House in 1828. (The sisters’ emancipist pedigree was ignored for that event in the dearth of acceptable young women in the colony.) Edward Redmond immediately selected the best and most accessible of his lands, at Killarney Chain-of-Ponds at the Hawkesbury, and built the newly-wed Scarvilles a fine stone house. They raised a large family and became prominent and well-known in the district. Meanwhile, Mary and Roger Murphy were given Redmond lands at Bingham in the Abercrombie Ranges, which was ‘rugged and inaccessible’. The Irishness and Catholicism of Roger Murphy was seemingly less important to the Redmonds than the rank, prestige and connections brought on them by the English Protestant John Scarville.84

Michael Hayes came out of the Irish middling orders. He was in his own time a modern man, one of those at the forefront of the spread of Catholicism of the sort posited against the

84 ADB entry for Edward Redmond; Lang, Home Was Here; Mutch Index ML; Redmond, Memorial, 7 February 1820 Wentworth Family Papers, ML A764 p65; Waldarsee, pp84, 193-94.
old Gaelic world of belief and ritual. He also had a deep respect for education, particularly with regard to clergy, and he despised the colonial Protestant clergy because they were ‘composed of Tradesman such as smiths, shoemakers etc that does no know a word of Greek or Latin, nor speke good English’. Hayes thus shared a clear sense of rank, and its appropriate arrangement, with his English contemporaries. He and his sort probably looked down on the lowly peasants and unskilled, unschooled and superstitious among his compatriots as much as the English did, though he exhibited none of their mockery and derision. His experience in colonial dealing, and the outlook shaped by it was also shared with his contemporaries.

Streams of Irishness are nevertheless threaded through Hayes’ lyrical letters of later life. Such lyricism is also commonly found in the petitions of Irish convicts. He named his children for his Irish siblings, and lamented his separation from Ireland, a grief which Bigge observed in the Irish generally. He was hurt when his family failed to pass on news. ‘I beg you will write to me constant’ he wrote to Richard reproachfully ‘you have not informed me you are ordained in the Wexford convent’, and he asked to be remembered to ‘the old friars’. His moods and emotions often dwelt on despair and sorrow, and guilt at the ‘clouds of sorrows and difficulties that must have attended my poor injured family’.

After Hayes died in 1825, his family soon split up, although, significantly, they remained on and around the Rocks. His daughter Mary married an ex-convict publican and by 1828 they were living in Charlotte Place with her two sisters, Eliza and Ellen, and a baby, also Eliza. Elizabeth Hayes married another Irishman, the printer William Kelly in December 1826. He was a Protestant. They lived for some years in Cumberland Street, and then moved to Essex Street, closer to the Gazette office. Michael’s sons Richard and John Hayes, both carpenters, lived with them, and Richard later married and settled in Prince Street. They were all listed
as Protestants in 1828.85 What, then, survived of Michael Hayes in his own family? Not necessarily Catholicism, for all his energy and devotion; not education, nor dreams of return to Ireland, but, rather, the bonds of family, the Irishness in association and marriage; and the binding ties of their neighbourhood, the Rocks.

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85 ADB entry for Michael Hayes; Hayes, Letters to his family, ML A3586; Mutch Index ML, St Mary's Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages; SG 13 October 1805, 23 March 1806, 23 July 1811, 1 July 1820, 15 September 1825; District Constables' Notebooks; 1828 Census. Bigge remarked of the Irish that 'their separation from their native country is observed to make a stronger impression on their minds...', Report, p9.
Section III

Family Life

"Your petitioner...has a wife and two children now living in Sydney which upwards of these eight last years past has not had the happiness of enjoying the comfort essential to a marriage state."

- Petition of Thomas Crump, boatbuilder, to be allowed to return to Sydney from Newcastle, March 1810.
Sex

Michael Hayes, the transported Irish rebel who came to live in Harrington Street, described and condemned the colony’s women in much the same way as the colonial elite did: in terms of sexual morality and sexual behaviour. They were ‘unfortunate wretches’ who had ‘no shame’ over their ‘lude acts’ which comprised mainly ‘being with men without being sanctioned by the bonds of matrimony’. He himself married seventeen year old Elizabeth Baker, the colonial-born daughter of first fleet convict. Her mother, Susannah Huffnrell, might well have been one of the women he described in his letter. Elizabeth Baker herself had already had already been married once, to Aaron Davies, and born him a daughter, Frances, in 1804. Yet in other cases, as we shall see, men who wrote such diatribes against female convicts were not necessarily distanced from these women, nor were they invariably speaking from a kind of class/cultural ignorance or unfamiliarity, as Michael Sturma suggested in his pioneering 1978 paper. Women were viewed by men with an ambivalent mix of expectation and fear, as the founders, yet the corruptors of civil society. These attitudes were shared, to some extent, and under certain circumstances, by men of all ranks.

The ‘damned whores’ image of women, (and by extension, the immoral, vicious and degraded image of the colony as a whole) has already been rightfully demolished by several other historians in more recent years. Kay Daniels, Portia Robinson, Babette Smith, Deborah Oxley, Marian Aveling (now Quartly), to name a few, have all turned to the reconstruction of real lives, to the words and actions, in the search for the meaning of women’s experience in the early colony. Aveling in particular deftly presents the interwoven narratives of women

1 Michael Hayes, Letter to his sister Mary, 2 November 1802, ML A3586; Mutch Index, ML; Donohoe, Catholics of New South Wales, entries for the Hayes family, Elizabeth Huffnrell-Baker and Aaron Davies.

Fig. 48: Anonymous, 'Farewell to Black-eyed Sue and Sweet Poll of Plymouth' 1790s, a satirical and stereotypical view of convict women as lewd, drunken and brutalised.

Fig. 49: Detail from Sophia Campbell, 'Sydney Barracks 1817', showing a woman washing for the soldiers and laying out clothes in the parade ground. Laundry work was usually done by women and many Rocks women made their living in this way.
Reproduced from Tim McCormick, First Views, Plate 156 p194.
‘at once trapped and enabled by social contradiction’. But for all the words written around the issues of sex, sexual relations, marriage and reproduction, and the ‘obsession with the refractory prostitute’, it is strange how little we know of the sexual behaviour and relationships of Sydney people. What were their standards of proper, moral conduct? What was considered normal, and what was aberrant?

Lawrence Stone has suggested a general relaxation of attitudes towards sex and sexual conduct in England in the period after 1750: mistresses were tolerated, illegitimate children accepted and provided for, often brought up within the ‘legal’ family. He notes, too, a striking increase in the number of pre-nuptial pregnancies amongst the lower orders in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Combining this with other evidence of ‘sexual promiscuity’ such as popular expressions of admiration for virility (signboards, models, ‘priapic feasts’) popular pornography, obscene popular songs and so on, Stone argues for a parallel relaxation amongst the common people, although noting that what remained of ‘sexual modesty’ was ‘characteristic of the lower middle orders’. The height of one cycle of outlooks and behaviour, however, produced the seeds of the next: another wave of sexual repression had its origins in the 1770s and would shape mores in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

But for the early convict men and women of Sydney, and hence the Rocks, as well as for the tiny elite of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, sexual activity and heterosexual sex itself were basically considered natural and normal. As Sturma pointed out, this simply reflects cultural attitudes widespread in Britain at the time. Those who described Sydney as

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3 Daniels, ‘Prostitution in Tasmania’; Robinson, Women of Botany Bay; Smith, Cargo of Women; Oxley, in Convict Workers, and ‘Packing her (economic) bags’; Aveling, ‘Imagining new South Wales as a Gendered Society’ and ‘Bending the Bars: Convict Women and the State’, p156.

4 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p326-396.
a sink of iniquity and so on were more than likely assuming what they expected to find in a convict colony. From the First Fleet onwards, women and men met and formed relationships on board the ships on the voyage out, in households where they lived and worked, in the early neighbourhoods like the Rocks, in hotels and private houses. Convict women often formed relationships with seamen on the transports who ‘indulged’ them with ‘tea and other things’. Men seem to have courted women not so much with words but with things: presents of clothing and food, a pair of earrings. For those who fell pregnant on the voyage, their first experiences in the colony included giving birth and mothering. While they were often abandoned by the seamen who left with their ships, as the surviving ‘Petitions for Maintenance in Bastardy’ show, some sailors decided to try life on land. Daniel King off the Lord Melville (arr 1817) had evidently formed a relationship with a convict from the ship, Susan Tirley. Shortly after arrival they discovered Susan was pregnant and Daniel, instead of sailing away, remained in the colony. Susan was sent to the Female Factory at Parramatta for the birth but their son Daniel lived only two weeks. The couple then applied successfully to be married (January 1818), were granted some land, and seemed to have settled at Parramatta, where at least four children were baptised. Daniel senior established a river passenger and freight service between Sydney and Parramatta in 1821, and these journeyings may have prompted the family to move to a simple two-roomed house in Cambridge (now Gloucester) Street on the Rocks shortly after.⁵

Other shipboard alliances were not permanent, and their terminations were not always straightforward. The convict Mary Poole had a lover on her ship Indispensable (arr 1796), a seaman named John Smith. But once assigned to the Master Boat Builder Daniel Paine, she wanted no more of Smith. It appears that John had to be drunk and in the company of another man to try to talk to her. ‘What do you want?’ she called into the dark when they

⁵ Joseph Arnold, Journal 1815 ML C720; Petitions for Maintenance in Bastardy 5/1153 COD 297B AONSW; Collins, Account, Vol 1 p127. Re Daniel King and Susan Tirley see District Constables’ Notebooks; Mutch Index, ML; SG 25 August 1821.
appeared at the house. 'I want you' came the growled reply. When she retorted that he was in liquor and told him to go, his mood grew ugly, he forced his way in, demanded the clothes he had given her and threatened to cut them from her back. He pulled the covers about on a bed where a boy was sleeping; the boy protested that 'he was no woman and to let him alone.'

This glimpse suggests that, for all their openness about their sexual activity, men and women nonetheless seem to have been shy and awkward in talking intimately and straightforwardly about it with one another. Men probably bragged and joked with other men, women certainly confided in one another. Drinking made both sexes bold, and actions (gift-giving, pulling the covers about) - denoting amorousness and attraction as well as aggression, anger, hurt and displeasure - spoke instead of words, and had to be carefully watched. When William Howell robbed his master Simeon Lord of some fine Izarre fabric, he took it straight to Mary Bryant's house in Gloucester Street where his lover Ann Dalton was staying. He made her a present of some of it, to make into a gown. George Legg 'gave his woman [his wife, Ann Armsden] two yards of ribband, which she publicly wore'. James New was passionate about his wife Jane: his servant said he 'went to great expence about his wife' providing silk dresses, satın bonnets, stuff shoes and silk stockings.

Convicts, both men and women, had a reputation for profanity, and this was considered especially shocking in women. The Spaniard Alexandro Malaspina thought Sydney women completely lacking in 'habitual modesty'. He said they approached him 'announcing the price

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7 Papers from trial of James Pass et al, 1813, CCJ Reel 2390 p318 AONSW; Papers from trial of George Legg, 9-12 April 1797, CCJ R2391 p321 AONSW; Papers from trial of John Stephens jun., Governors' Despatches, 1834, ML A1267 18 pp263, 330ff.
at which they sell their favours’ with ‘a small increase to indulge in other detestable vices apparently frequent in the colony’.\textsuperscript{8} As well as observing that Malaspina seemed rather knowledgeable in this sphere (what, one wonders, were the ‘vices’ to which he referred?), it is tempting to read the description the other way: the outspoken, disorderly women publicly teasing an embarrassed foreign gentleman hurrying by in a funny hat.

Yet when interrogated in court proceedings about matters of a sexual nature people were surprisingly coy about using plain sexual terms. They referred to the sexual organs as ‘private parts’ or simply ‘part’, and sexual intercourse as ‘having connection’. Yet, they would unhesitatingly reel off the profanities used by the accused, or a witness, such as ‘bugger’, ‘frig’ and sometimes ‘screw’ and ‘fuck’ and so on, the court clerk busily inserting dots and dashes or scratching out parts of the offending words.\textsuperscript{9} The bravado seems to have hidden an ultimate uncomfortableness with intimacy, and perhaps also a measure of ignorance.

It is difficult, of course, to assess the level of sexual knowledge among the people. Children, who were not segregated from their parents nor from any aspect of everyday life, probably learnt about sex by watching and hearing rather than through the spoken word. The early Sydney houses were of traditional form which did not allow for much privacy, although there was sometimes divisions made between ‘public’ and ‘private’ rooms. Mary Chipp (later Mary Boyle, of the Rocks), a native born girl, at thirteen knew well enough what Henry Seyers intended when he followed her into the brush ‘threw her down on the road, pulled her cloaths


\textsuperscript{9} See for example, Inquest on Lydia Ragin, 9 March 1817, CSC R2232 pp139-60 AONSW; and papers from trial of David Dundas, 18 March 1809, CCJ 5/1150 R2652 p1.
up [and] unbuttoned his breeches'. But it does not necessarily follow that people were well-equipped with detailed knowledge about sex and the sex organs. Stone suggests that English people preferred not to undress for intercourse (women, who wore no underwear, lifted their skirts or shifts, men dropped their pants). In Sydney, although men in particular were not ashamed of their bodies, since they bathed naked at the public wharfs, the scant evidence available suggests sex occurred in the dark, or if in the daytime (say with a prostitute) the clothes stayed on. James Smith told the court in 1821 that he had taken Bridget Haley to Mary Robinson’s house in Harrington Street where he ‘gave Robinson a dump for the use of a room’. He ‘retired into the bedroom with the prisoner Haley...about 5 minutes’. Hardly enough time to undress, but long enough for Bridget to pick his pocket of notes and cash.\(^\text{10}\)

This kind of evidence also suggests sex that was short, basic and unerotic, more like a business transaction, which after all is what it was.

A rare insight into sexual activity and attitudes is provided by the 1814 trial of James Larra, a Jew who was a wealthy and respected publican and dealer, for the murder of his second wife through ‘bizarre and unnatural sexual assaults’. He had married the widow Phoebe Waldron, a well-off Rocks publican and dealer of Windmill Row after her husband John had been transported to Newcastle for receiving stolen rope in 1809 and presumably died thereafter. People said the Larras were a happy and affectionate couple until in 1814, Phoebe, a normally healthy woman, grew ill with dropsy (a watery swelling of internal organs, now known as oedema). She became convinced that her suffering had been caused by her husband

\(^{10}\) Re bathing see SG 13 November 1803; ‘Brooks said he went to the wharf to bathe’; and 6 October 1810, Macquarie’s order prohibiting the ‘very indecent custom of soldiers, sailors and inhabitants of the Town bathing themselves at all hours of the day at the Government Wharf and also in the Dockyard’. Papers from trial of Henry Seyers, 1809, CCJ 5/1150 R2652 p131 AONSW; and from the trial of Bridget Haley, 7 June 1821, R1975 p480 AONSW. Stone, Family Sex and Marriage, p303ff, 347,349; Stone observes that ‘for the very poor sexual privacy was a luxury neither possessed nor could have been desired; among the bulk of population up to the mid-nineteenth century whole families lived, worked and slept in two rooms.’ p382.
having used a candle during sexual intercourse. Significantly, the word 'dropsy' could also
mean an insatiable vice, pride or lechery, the physical manifestation being a grossly swollen
body. Hence, probably, Phoebe's belief as to the source of her disease - his unnatural action
had invaded and upset the natural order of her body.\footnote{Papers from the trial of James Larra, 6 September 1814, CCJ R2390 p452; see Oxford
English Dictionary, and Hans Kurath (ed.), Middle English Dictionary, Ann Arbor,
University of Michigan Press, 1963.}

She kept this fearful conviction to herself for weeks, knowing she would die, and when near
death she told a woman confidant, and eventually a doctor, William Redfern. She said that'
evety time she had any' sexual intimacies she always felt herself to be hurt' and when she
tried to talk to her husband about it 'he replied it was of no consequence, it would wear off'.
Phoebe thought her own ignorance on 'what was done to Jews' (presumably she referred to
circumcision) might explain the difference she felt. Redfern was astonished that a married
woman 'could possibly be so far deceived' and concluded that she had 'never had any natural
connection with her husband'. When Larra was confronted with this by Redfern he was
consumed with shame and eventually admitted that his wife 'after having connection with
him...appeared more amorously inclined and he as an old man felt himself incapable of
satisfying her, and he had resorted to that expedient...'. Phoebe died in agony, and the
rumours surrounding her death led eventually to James' trial.

The theme running through the evidence in this case is one of deep reticence to talk of things
sexual, particularly anything abnormal, of secret shame, fear and guilt. James had brushed
off and denied the matter; the nurses and doctors begged Phoebe to tell them what was wrong
for weeks, and she, 'unquiet in her mind', seems to have been completely alone with her fears
and suspicions, and a sense of her own ignorance. But what is also significant from this story
is that what James had done, if not proven as criminal, was unacceptable because it was
considered unnatural. He had to stand a long and exhaustive trial, and even though acquitted, his reputation suffered severely.\footnote{Flynn, Second Fleet, entry for James Larra.}

Here we may begin to discern a moral code which was not much concerned with legal marriage, illegitimate children, premarital and extramarital sex, separation, divorce, or even prostitution, but with behaviour which was considered offensive in a deeper sense, as anathema to the natural order of things. Incidents of homosexuality seem to have aroused a sense of abhorrence - Rocks man John Hopkins, a married man with children, was probably reported upon by neighbours, and convicted in 1808 of ‘a most disgusting and abominable crime’. His death penalty was commuted, but he seems to have vanished completely from the colony thereafter. When a drunken Captain David Dundas approached a soldier on guard duty at the wharf, stroking the front of his trousers and asking for a ‘genteel frig’ the soldier was so shocked that, calling him ‘a scoundrel or a bugger’ he threatened to ‘put my bayonet in his guts’. Asked in court why he did not arrest Dundas, the soldier replied ‘Because he was in the character of a gentleman, and I was much agitated’. In his defence, Dundas appealed to a sense of rank and superiority, to simply circumvent the charge. Appealing to the jury as ‘fellow gentlemen’, he said that the convict lower orders in general exhibited such a ‘looseness of Principle’ that their testimony could never hold up against his own. He was acquitted.\footnote{SG 31 July 1808; Papers from trial of David Dundas, 18 March 1809, CCJ 5/1150 R2652 p1 AONS, and Defence of David Dundas CCJ R2392 p289 AONS. See also Garry Wotherspoon ‘A Sodom in the South Pacific: Male homosexuality in Sydney 1788-1809’, in Graeme Aplin, A Difficult Infant, 1988, pp91-101.}

Bestiality, as Paula Jane Byrne points out, was also regarded as a terrible and disturbing perversion and people themselves gathered evidence and took offenders to court. The rape of young children was considered repulsive, the convicted offenders, if they did not receive
the death penalty, were publicly lashed, placed in pillories on market days and then transported. Collins claimed in one case that an offender escaped hanging because an execution would serve no educative purpose; the crime was so much reviled that 'no other man would stoop so low'.

Although women did arrive with 'economic baggage' - skills, capital, talent, some education - and some became established as dealers, publicans, farmers and so on, economic inequality nevertheless underpinned gender relations. Women in the colony, as in England, were in a vulnerable position because they nevertheless had far fewer skills or opportunities for making a decent living than men, particularly if they had children. The search for a husband to help support them meant that women were rivals, and that sex, like marriage itself, was regarded and used in pragmatic and hard-headed ways. As Aveling and Atkinson have pointed out, women 'saw nothing shameful in using their bodies as well as their brains to survive in Botany Bay'.

Judith Simpson, the emancipist publican, householder and landowner who moved to the Rocks in the late 1810s was typical of those who were successful, and her story demonstrates the difficulty of interpreting such women solely as victims or agents. She arrived on the *Indispensable* in 1796 and must have fallen pregnant on the voyage. Five months after landing she gave birth to her first son, James Walton; the baptismal records noted the child as the 'reputed' son of James Walton, perhaps a mariner. Judith was then about 22. By about 1800 she had formed a relationship with Captain Anthony Fenn Kemp of the New South Wales Corps. He was probably away in England when their son was born in 1801. She named the child Anthony Fenn Kemp. Such liaisons between convict women and

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15 Oxley, 'Packing her...bags'; Alan Atkinson and Marian Aveling (eds), *Australians 1838*, Sydney, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987, p278.
military and civil officers were very common, and although they may be seen as enforced sexual subjugation, they were also one way a woman could establish some claim to status and a measure of material success. Kemp senior married another woman in 1802 and eventually settled in Van Diemen’s Land. Meanwhile, by 1805 Judith formed a relationship with another officer, James Lucas, also of the N.S.W. Corps. Their son was born in January 1806, and though Judith already had a son named James, this child was also named after his father.

Judith Simpson owned land at Windsor which produced wheat by 1809, while in Sydney she occupied land in Chapel Row and was granted a spirits licence there in 1810. She sold it in 1812 and seems to have moved out to Windsor in that year. Her property in Sydney by 1813 included ‘houses in Castlereagh and King Streets’, and she was granted a beer licence in 1818 for ‘Chequers’ in Castlereagh Street. At some time in that decade, Judith also bought two properties on the fast developing Rocks, one in Prince Street the other in Cumberland Street. By 1822 she was living in Cumberland Street with her two younger sons, Anthony and James, now 21 and 17 respectively and both tradesmen. She also claimed she owned a ‘commodious house in Gloucester Street’, though this may refer to the same property.16 For Judith Simpson the children of her three partners, each named proudly for his father, were not badges of shame or degradation, but the opposite: evidence of her connections with rank and status, which together with her own talents and skills had left her well-off and respected.

16 See Mutch Index, ML; CSC index, entries for Judith Simpson, Anthony Fenn Kemp, and James Hunt Lucas; Judith Simpson, Memorial 9 July 1809, CSC F3009 4/1822 No.293; District Constables’ Notebooks; SG 15 February 1807, 21 July 1810, May 30 1812, 4 July 1818. Her sons were included on ‘List of those victualled’ 1821 CSC 4/5781, one a carpenter, the other a stonemason. Simpson seems to have wished to hide her original convict status; this has caused some confusion. In 1822 she told the constable she had arrived free on the Atlas which arrived in 1802; this could not be true, since her son Anthony Fenn Kemp was born in 1801. In 1828 she said she had arrived free on the Indispensable; however she is listed among the convicts aboard that ship, see Robinson, Women of Botany Bay, p286. Hence, Perrott in her account says Simpson was a free arrival, see A Tolerable Good Success: Economic opportunities for women in NSW 1788-1830, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1982, pp88-89.
Portia Robinson would celebrate Simpson’s energy and success, as Monica Perrott does, as a ‘good mother and good citizen’ - more evidence to disprove the charge that Sydney women were sexually depraved. For Robinson there is a distinct division between good women and bad, founding mothers and depraved prostitutes. But in reality, prostitution/promiscuity could grade imperceptibly into the search for a husband or partner, using sex, and does not seem to have prevented women forming relationships, having families, and succeeding in business. The sexual behaviour of ‘family women’ and ‘promiscuous/prostitute women’ were thus not mutually exclusive. When Sarah Yeats tried to claim maintenance from William Wade for her child Thomas, he objected vehemently, denying paternity of the child, claiming that she had had several partners, and was therefore a ‘prostitute’. Yet he also added that Sarah and her child had in any case settled down with another man, and as I can find no other trace of her, presumably she married and changed her name.  

In a way this ‘grading’ of sexual behaviour (encompassing professional prostitution, casual prostitution, promiscuity, casual cohabitation, serial monogamy, monogamous cohabitation, and legal marriage), partly explains the blanket condemnation of all convict women by those few men who wrote about them. It was impossible to make sharp and simple divisions about moral/sexual behaviour, but it was easy to employ the rhetoric about women which, after all, was what people expected to hear about a convict colony, and tied in nicely with women’s disorderly behaviour.

Some, like the Reverend Samuel Marsden, really were outsiders with no understanding of either common, accepted sexual mores among the lower orders, nor of the practical economic choices women (and men) faced in the struggle for a decent life. In an uncertain world where

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17 Petition of William Wade, 1811, in Petitions for Maintenance in Bastardy, 5/1153 COD 297B p431 AONSW. The child probably was fathered by Wade, as he is listed as such in the baptismal records, see St Philip’s Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, entry for 30 March 1811, CSC R6024.
a husband or wife might vanish by going away to sea, or become violent, a drunk, or squander the family finances and so on, legal, binding marriage was not a viable option until the couple was fairly certain of a stable relationship.

But for many other male observers, hypocritical rhetoric was really all it was, since many were themselves involved sexually with convict mistresses and sired illegitimate children by them (some include the Judge Advocate David Collins, the Surveyor General Augustus Alt, Surgeons John White, William Balmain, Thomas Arndell and Richard Halley, Captains James Meredith, George Johnston, Lieutenants Phillip King, James Furrer, Ralph Clark, John Poulter and Robert Kellow, the Government Printer George Howe, as well as Governor King and Lieutenant-Governor Paterson, who was said to have fathered 'six fine bastards')\textsuperscript{18}. At base is an underpinning of familiar sexual double standards, so long lived that perhaps it has no history. The abovementioned William Wade was not a member of the elite, but a convict still under sentence. He lived independently in the town, probably as a labourer, and later became a Rocks constable. His long petition, a classic defence, appealed not to rank, like David Dundas, but to gender:

the extreme hardship which every unscrupulous Prostitute in this Colony could impose...in point of property which she might think convenient...these virtuous Cyprians who are so unreservedly and bountifully indiscriminately bestow their favours upon every humble applicant...in fact Gentlemen none of yourselves are probably safe from such attempts against your property.\textsuperscript{19}

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\textsuperscript{18} See Samuel Marsden, Female Register, 1806, discussed in Robinson, Hatch and Brood of Time: A Study of the first generation of native born white Australians 1788-1828, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985 pp74-75; Monica Perrott, A Tolerable Good Success, p41; Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, p68.

\textsuperscript{19} See Samuel Marsden, Female Register, 1806, discussed in Robinson, Hatch and Brood of Time: A Study of the first generation of native born white Australians 1788-1828, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1985 pp74-75; Monica Perrott, A Tolerable Good Success, p41; Grocott, Convicts, Clergymen and Churches, p68.
Sarah Yeats, he said, had ‘selected me as prey whereon she hath fixed her talons for the purpose of fleecing me’. While Wade now ‘resides and cohabits’ with another woman, Yeats was ‘resident with and supported by her paramour’. The petition is eloquent in sexual double standards. It demonstrates that men of higher and lower orders alike, when threatened with unwanted commitments, responded by portraying the women with whom they had shared their homes and their beds as depraved and corrupting, and preying on them in material terms. Meanwhile, they themselves only acted as was ‘natural’ to a man.
Marriage and Married Relationships

For all the underlying struggles, distrust and inequalities between men and women, most Rocks people preferred nonetheless to be married, or to cohabit as if they were. As we saw in Section II, the majority of households comprised husband and wife, many with children as well as servants and lodgers. While not forgetting the vulnerable position of women, marriage and married relationships were clearly considered by Rocks people to be natural and desirable, despite the risks. The marriage bond, whether economic, family or emotional, was strong enough in at least twenty-three Rocks marriages to draw husbands, wives and children on the long and dangerous voyage to join transported spouses, though it is significant to note that the vast majority of these were wives.

If we are to attempt to understand their society on its own terms, therefore, it is difficult to see marriage itself as a relentlessly oppressive institution, or as some kind of hegemonic plot imposed upon unwilling people from above. As Aveling points out, it is unrealistic to argue that convict women would veer from the usual expectations of marriage and family life normal to women in England and Ireland.20

The nature of married relationships and ideas of what constituted a marriage among common people in the colony of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were in some ways strikingly different to our own, and certainly contrasted fundamentally with the ideals of the later Victorian middle-class. Let us look first at the English background. Several Australian historians have pointed out that cohabitation was considered normal and quite respectable among the lower orders of England; hence its commonness in the colony.21 Why was this so?

20 See Aveling, ‘Bending the Bars’, p151.
21 Sturza, ‘Eye of the Beholder’; Robinson, Hatch and Brood, p16ff; Atkinson and Aveling, Australian 1838, p278.
Lawrence Stone has traced the long struggles of the church and then the state to control, standardize and legalize marriage. In the eleventh century and earlier, both marriage and divorce were completely private affairs, but from the thirteenth through to the eighteenth centuries the church began the long campaign against common law marriage, particularly among the poor, and to promote the idea of marriage as an indissoluble union involving a monogamous relationship.  

But traditional habits and beliefs of secular plebeian forms of marriage proved resilient. As John Gillis argues, it was not until the eighteenth century that the passing of the Hardwicke Acts (1753) gave the established church ‘a monopoly on the notarization of marriage’. Parsons could no longer accept common law marriage and the result was a split between people and clergy, the latter now ‘identified with Patrician interests’. From the 1750s, particularly in rural areas, there was a resurgence of ‘unique rites of notarization and legitimization’ among labouring people ‘that were functional substitutes for the private betrothal and clandestine marriage now denied them by law’. In mid-nineteenth century London common-law marriage was almost universal amongst large sections of the lower orders.

Eighteenth century common-law marriage and divorce were manifested in myriad local rituals, such as jumping the broom (a ‘besom marriage’), the giving of the dow purse (symbolising the wife’s right to maintenance), the exchange of rings. The return of the ring was ‘the woman’s form of self-divorce’, its male counterpart was the public ‘wife sale’. All of these traditions emphasised ‘orderly process, public notarization and the mutual rights of participants’ and were thus not the province only of the very poor, the uprooted, or the ‘immoral’ or socially irresponsible. In rural areas they were deeply entwined with family and local community, although in cities ‘public witness seems to have been of less importance’.

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22 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, pp29-34.
For women there were economic and legal advantages in avoiding church marriages. Besom weddings, for example, meant that a wife kept rights to her name, property and children. Common law arrangements were seen to interfere less with a woman’s trade or business, and ensured that women remained legal entities in their own right, while in church marriage ‘the husband and wife became one person in law’. In other words, her legal standing was obliterated.

Gillis observes that in England and Wales ‘the educated classes, and particularly the clergy, were almost entirely ignorant of the existence’ of widespread secular marriage.\(^{23}\) In Sydney they came face to face with it, and were horrified. Collins recounts tales of the convicts entering hurried marriages for material gains, ‘various little comforts and privileges’, but on finding these advantages not forthcoming ‘actually applied to be restored to their former situations’. He was disgusted and concluded that they were ‘ignorant and thoughtless’. George Worgan was still more forthright. Since half of the newly married spouses ‘asked the Governor if Chaplains cannot unmarr[y]’, they were ‘in short...a vile pack of baggages’. Some convicts did not believe that the clergyman Richard Johnston could really marry them at all.\(^{24}\)

Sydney was founded in a period when the ideas and forms of marriage were in flux in Britain, making the slow transition from pre-industrial ideas and habits towards more modern practices of official and church intervention and policing. Rather than immorality or brute ignorance, the observations of Collins, Worgan and others suggest a people still unfamiliar with the concept of state/church encouraged and performed marriage, and, if they were not openly hostile to the clergy, trying to readjust and establish for themselves what powers a


clergyman might have in areas of marriage and divorce. Could he really marry them? Did this have the same import and value as their secular marriages? Could he then also perhaps divorce, just as common law marriages could be ended by appropriate rituals and actions? The successful Cambridge Street publican Elizabeth Mountford was unclear on the legal and binding implications of her marriage to Michael Cassidy in 1808. After he had beaten her severely in 1818 she told a Magistrate that that marriage was null, since ‘We were married during the Usurped Government which has since been declared void, thereby he has no power over me’. In her mind, church and state ran together, so if the power of one was void, so it was in the other.

Governor Macquarie probably did more than his predecessors in educating the lower orders towards the idea of official marriage, yet the effect was by no means universal. The Sydney Gazette carried his edict more or less commanding the majority of people who were cohabiting to marry; some did, but many took no notice. Grocott points out that ‘by 1821 the great majority of children were still illegitimate. Marriage in the Macquarie era was still for a minority.’ It is clear that many of the Rocks people, young and old, newly arrived and long-time residents, with children or without, were not officially married, and did not consider marriage essential. It was not strongly linked to the attainment of a respectable, comfortable lifestyle, and it could in fact prove a burden and a great disadvantage, particularly for women. The constables themselves took this for granted and in 1822/23 listed them according to their relationship, rather than to their official status, so the women were listed as wives, married or not. By contrast, when Bigge had his survey of Sydney householders completed in 1820, this distinction was made. Hence Daniel Cubitt was listed as unmarried, even though he and Maria Ann Cook had been together since 1792 and had twelve children (an unnerving

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25 Collins wrote of the ‘erroneous opinions which were formed of the efficacy of Mr Johnson’s nuptial benediction’. Statement of Elizabeth Mumford (Mountford), 5 June 1819, CCJ COD 447 p131 AONSW.

26 SG 24 February, 3 March 1810. Grocott, Convicts, Clergy and Churches, p75.
example of how misleading such seemingly reliable documents can be). The absence of official marriage meant that, in event of the disappearance of a husband or wife, through the breakdown of a relationship, desertion and so on, the remaining spouse was free to find another partner, to form a new household. On the whole people continued to consider their sexual lives, partnerships, marriages and separations as part of the private and communal realm, and little to do with governors or clergy, except the occasional appeal for intervention to punish absconding wives or abusive husbands. Like many aspects of their lives, it was a traditional stance with roots that stretched back centuries undeterred by the intrusive attempts of church and state.

We must thus divest ourselves of the idea that all Rocks people lived by the rules laid down for them. One example was the rule that no convicts still under sentence could live together. Among the households listed in the 1822 Constables Notebooks are numerous couples living together who were either still under sentence, or holding Tickets of Leave. Some like William Collins and Martha Dunne of Cumberland Street were almost certainly not officially married, since by 1828, Martha had been banished to Port Macquarie and William had a new wife. Tinman Henry Buckland (TL arrived 1812) and Sarah Smith (TL arrived 1811) of Gloucester (now Cambridge) Street had a more successful, but again unmarried relationship. Nevertheless she listed herself as his ‘housekeeper’ rather than as a wife in 1828.

This can also be read in the openness of action and testimony concerning cohabiting, and was reflected in the laissez-faire permissiveness of the governors. In the earliest years and during the Macquarie period little actual official interference was attempted, and the formation of family households was considered very beneficial in the new society. People, convicts, did meet, mate, set up households, bring up children and sometimes separate with no official

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27 See Bigge, Report, Appendix, BT Box 25, ‘Return of Persons Free Above the Age of 21 residing upon their own property in the Town of Sydney December 1820’ p5311.
involvement at all, apart from encouragement through indulgences and favours. Even when occasional appeals were made directly to the Governor by desperate husbands and wives complaining of their spouses' bad behaviour, they and the magistrates were reluctant to interfere in what were considered domestic disagreements, and they expected couples to sort out their own problems one way or another.

People were not embarrassed or shy to admit they were not officially married. 'The prisoner [Mary Furney] and myself live as man and wife together', William Flynn, a visitor to the Rocks in 1814, told the court straightforwardly, 'We have lived together about four years'. After a mentally disturbed man, Thomas Robertson, committed suicide in Gloucester Street in 1816, his lover Mary Armstrong, a convict, informed the inquest jury frankly: 'Yes I lived with the deceased and slept with him repeatedly at Jane Getty's house'.

Others displayed astounding openness and naivety. Even in 1827, a much more strictly policed period, a convict servant named Thomas Ryan persuaded another servant, the recently arrived Caroline Butcher, to abscond and live with him. He installed her in a house on the Rocks, introducing her to the neighbourhood as a free woman. But when the couple had a fight a short time later, he reported her to the authorities, with the result that the scheme was discovered and he was flogged. Caroline was seen as his victim and reinstated with her master, though by 1828 she was at the Factory. As it was only his own resort to the law that exposed them, this incident speaks volumes for the continued lack of regulation of private lives in the Rocks, as well as the openness of such relationships within the local community.

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28 Papers from trial of Mary Furney, 29 March 1814, CCJ R2390 p288ff AONSW. Inquest on Thomas Robertson, 11 March 1816, CSC R6021 4/1819 p599 AONSW.

29 SG 2 May 1827; Census 1828.
Evidence of traditional sectarian marriage rituals such as those described by Gillis is almost non-existent for the early Rocks, perhaps because most convicts came from urban areas where public notarising through such ceremonies were not considered necessary. It is thus difficult to know whether couples who decided to live together had any ceremonies to mark that commitment. Regarding weddings, the glimpses we have suggest that couples opened their homes to their friends for all-night celebrations, and that the guests dressed in fine, elaborate and colourful clothing, makeup, wigs and accessories like fans, hats and bags. Irish couples seem to have gathered Irish friends together, again at their houses, for celebrations of drinking, singing and dancing which lasted three days.\textsuperscript{30}

The marriage registers suggest that Rocks people who did decide to marry in a church often asked their Rocks neighbours, evidently now friends, to be their witnesses. Sometimes two couples married on the same day, one after the other, and signed the book for each other. The marriage of butcher George Cribb to Fanny Barnett on April 11 1811 at St Phillips was witnessed by his neighbours just to the south in Gloucester Street (then Cambridge Street) Samuel Thorley and Agnes Shields, who, after being partners for 13 years also decided to marry that day. The 1822 weddings of Gloucester Street labourer James Farrell (evidently recently separated from his first partner Mary Ann Kelly) and Jane Williams, together with Gloucester Street publican John Hull and Judith Ann Caffsey (who already had four children) were also held on the same day.\textsuperscript{31} Evidently weddings were not seen as especially focusing on one couple, or on the bride, as they are today. Marriages, like so many other aspects of lifeways, could be shared in common.

Gillis argues that English women preferred common-law marriage because it ensured their continued rights to their own names, property, legal entity and business interests.

\textsuperscript{30} SG 11 December 1803; 15 May 1803.
\textsuperscript{31} Mutch Index, ML.
Interestingly, there is strong evidence to indicate that this stance continued in Sydney amongst both women who were officially and unofficially married. Most Rocks women continued to use their maiden names, sometimes alternating with their husband’s names, married or not, as advertisements, petitions and so on show. When the constables took down the names of householders in 1822, 137, or two thirds, of the wives were listed by their own names, not only convict and ex-convict women, but also those who came free to join a husband, and a few who were born in the colony. This practice seems to have lasted longest amongst Irish women, many of whom were still listed under their own names in the 1828 Census.  

Rocks women were also quick to defend publicly their right to their own property as distinct from their husbands. Few would have been convinced by Macquarie’s assertion that only official marriage guaranteed a wife’s right to property. While this may have been true for women who had nothing of their own, in the eyes of others, a husband posed a potential threat to the houses, capital and goods they had built up. Margaret Foggarty took her husband, the successful butcher Richard Cheers, to court in 1803 for selling her house on the Rocks and leaving her with a baby to support. The court ordered him not only to pay maintenance for the child but to compensate her for the house. The couple was reconciled, but their remaining life together, as we shall see, was not happy. The Sydney Gazette was studded with advertisements from husbands refusing to pay debts incurred by runaway wives, but also from wives claiming ownership of houses, land, cattle and so on, and warning people not to buy them from their husbands. Mary Connor of Harrington Street warned people against buying ‘cattle or other property’ from her husband Patrick Traynor, because ‘the whole of [it] belongs to me and my family’. Elizabeth Mountford told the Magistrate that her husband had ‘made away with my property and left myself and my four children

32 Karskens, Analysis of District Constables’ Notebooks.
destitute': no uncertainty here over who owned what. Later she would find an effective way of dealing with him.

The wealthy widow, publican and dealer Sarah Wills who lived near the wharf at the foot of the Rocks, was very careful to maintain her hold over her property, which included a house and warehouse, two farms, a brig and its cargo of elephant oil and stock-in-trade valued at £2,500). When she married the Gazette editor George Howe in 1812, she had a 'Deed of Trust' drawn up to 'vest them for herself and her children', six in number, and it was witnessed by her neighbour, the well-regarded Isaac Nichols. Howe already had a son Robert by his first marriage in England, and five more children from his 'irregular alliance' (as the ADB politely puts it) with Elizabeth Easton in Sydney. His struggling fortunes were reversed by his marriage to Sarah Wills. With an eventual total of thirteen children between them, Sarah had made pragmatic and far-sighted arrangements for herself and the children of her first marriage. Like many other Rocks wives, widows and single women (Elizabeth Mulhall, Elizabeth Mountford, Elizabeth Rafferty, Bridget Nowland and many others) she continued to run her businesses herself in her own name.

What evidence is there for the idea of female subservience in marriage, of a wife's absorption into her husband's identity? In the early years men, when speaking to other men, referred

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33 Re Margaret Foggarty, SG 2 October 1803; see also advertisement placed by Sarah Reynolds SG 4 September 1808. Re Mary Connor/Traynor SG 19 May 1825. Statement of Elizabeth Mumford (Mountford), 5 June 1819, CCT COD 447 p131 AONSW. There is evidence that some unmarried partners ensured the woman's right to property by placing the title in her name. Flynn writes of William Prentice and his partner Elizabeth Rickers, of Cumberland Street: 'The couple do not appear to have been married and it may have been to ensure her inheritance that William transferred the title of their home...to Elizabeth in 1813'; Second Fleet, entry for William Prentice. When the freehold titles were investigated and granted in the 1830s, Margaret Kelly/Byrne was the claimant, not her partner Richard Byrne; see Section 1, note 76.

34 ADB, entries for George Howe and Edward Wills; Mutch Index, ML; Clune, Bound for Botany Bay, p121; SG index, entries for Sarah Wills.
to their wives as 'my woman', or 'Nichol's woman', rather than by their names. Women sometimes identified themselves by the man with whom they lived. But I think that this conveyed more a sense of identification through 'belonging' to one person or household, of one's place in society, rather than a sense of 'ownership' of the wife by the husband, and the power relationship suggested by it.\textsuperscript{35} The bulk of evidence of wives' actions and words reveals that a sense of subjugation was not internalized - they do not seem to have thought of themselves in this way. Rocks marriages were much more a traditional matter of husband and wife forming a partnership for economic purposes as well as for raising children. Their relationships and families strongly resemble those of the lower orders of sixteenth and early seventeenth century England, in which, Stone writes, 'husband, wife and children tended to form a single economic unit, like the crew of a ship, in which the role of the wife was critical'.\textsuperscript{36}

Thus the decision to marry was in most cases a pragmatic one: would the husband be a good and steady provider? Would the wife be able to run a shop or a hotel, be frugal and sensible with the family's money? What would each contribute in terms of property? Aveling cites the fact of numerous occasions on which women changed their minds about which man to marry. This was not a sign of fickleness, but of cool calculation on who would make a better husband, and hence a better life.\textsuperscript{37}

The urgency of economic prospects for the decent support of a family meant that convict and native-born women tended to choose those men who were already settled, had trades, businesses and houses; these men thus also tended to be older, on an average ten years older,

\textsuperscript{35} See for example HRA; re 'ownership' of wives by husbands, see Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p315.

\textsuperscript{36} Stone, \textit{ibid.}, p139.

\textsuperscript{37} Aveling, 'Bending the bars' p152; see also discussion in Aveling and Atkinson, Australians 1838 pp100-102.
than their wives, often more. Older women, particularly those who had managed to amass the same kind of economic security in places like the Rocks, also had no trouble finding husbands, if they wanted them, and sometimes their newly arrived husbands were ten or more years younger than they were. Elizabeth Dean was nine years older than James Evans (for whom she had left her first husband) while Mary Fitzgibbon was still the defacto wife of William Merritt, eighteen years younger than she, in 1828. These seem to have been steady and long lasting relationships. Radical age differences between husbands and wives, although they sometimes caused problems, seem not to have raised any eyebrows among the lower orders of Sydney.\footnote{See discussion in Aveling and Atkinson, Australians 1838, p102; Robinson, Women of Botany Bay, p206; David Kent and Norma Townsend ‘Deborah Oxley’s "Female Convicts": an accurate view of working-class women?’, Labour History, No 65 1993 188; Karskens, Analysis of District Constables’ Notebooks; SQ 8 February 1807.}

On the Rocks were many couples whose marriages were of this typical ‘working partnership’ sort. Perhaps most successful were the publican couples like Phoebe and John Waldron (Prince Street), Catherine Brown and Patrick Doyle (Three Jolly Sailors, Harrington Street), Sophia Blundell and Stafford Lett (Punch Bowl, Cambridge, later Gloucester Street), Thomas and Ann Whittaker (Labour in Vain, Harrington Street), Ann Mash and William Chapman (who had a hotel opposite the King’s Wharf), Alice Schofield and Stephen Murphy (St Patrick’s Inn, Gloucester Street) to name just a few. These couples often combined their hotels with other concerns: they were also dealers, passage boat owners, bakers, butchers, and tradespeople, and they often held small to medium sized farms out on the Cumberland Plain. It should be noted, though, that all of these partnerships were broken by the death of a spouse, in these cases, the husbands.

For women who, as a whole, had far fewer highly paid skills, and who were often left with children to support, marriage was certainly the obvious and best way to economic security.
For those without business or property, the sudden loss of a husband was devastating. If the usual rather narrow avenues of making a living, such as laundering, failed, women could be reduced to relying on the Government stores as 'Objects of Charity', as the dependent poor were termed. Sarah Curran (came free in 1806) mother of four, widowed washerwoman of Harrington Street, was listed as one of these in 1821. Mary Kearns (came free in 1817) and her two children were also listed, but by 1823 she had moved in with the publican and stonemason, Thomas Glover who already had an illegitimate son. The relationship seems to have been successful and by 1828 they had seven children between them and still lived at their Cumberland Street hotel. When Thomas died in 1838 Mary married a whaler, and sailed away with him, leaving her children behind.  

For women married to men who were cripples or otherwise unable to work, the situation could be worse than for widows. Margaret Roach, accused of stealing clothing she was given to wash, sent a petition outlining her pathetic situation, she 'suffered severely from shortness of food and ill health during a confinement of four months...and also from an afflicted mind'. She had 'three infant children absolutely destitute of wearing apparel, her husband being a cripple...three years', and she supported the family herself, and had 'not the means to employ counsell' to defend herself. It was no use: she was sentenced to be transported for five years.

But it was also important for men to have wives, particularly tradesmen who wanted to run hotels, businesses and farms at the same time. Major Druitt told Bigge that the wives of the overseers who worked for the government commonly 'attend to the business in the shop' while their husbands were at work, and hence their private trades did not interfere with their work for government. It was said of Cumberland Street publican James New after his wife Jane was sent to the Female Factory that 'he was not able to carry it [the hotel] on after his

39 'List of those victualled', 1821 CSC 4/5781 p68; Karskens, Analysis of District Constables' Notebooks; James Pashley, Memorial, 11 July 1840, in Memorials Forwarded by the Commissioner of Claims, 2/1760, No 465 AONSW.
wife was taken from him'. Even in the well-to-do Redmond family, the wife, Winifred Dowling and her daughter Mary served behind the bar of their George Street hotel. In the case of Irish Catholic blacksmith William Davis and his wife Catherine Styles, it was she who ensured their success, security and prosperity. A normally mild-mannered woman, Catherine was provoked to publicly defend herself when William accused her of bigamy in 1826. She stated in the Gazette that she was married to him in 1809 by a Catholic priest and then recounted her efforts on his behalf. She had applied successfully for his Ticket of Leave, his 'emancipation' and then a free pardon, in the meantime obtaining a hotel licence to support them 'which I retained for 12 years, without intermission and with unblemished character'. She concluded that his accusation was 'an unprecedented hardship' and that she had never had any husband but him. This advertisement probably succeeded in making William appear to be as foolish as he really was; nevertheless the couple were reconciled and remained together.

The butcher George Cribb seems to have considered a wife essential, and his story, and that of his wives, are a good case study of the patterns as well as the precarious nature of life on the Rocks. He was likely to have been already married when he arrived as a convict in 1808, but in 1811 wedded Fanny Barnett, another 1808 convict arrival. The couple most likely lived in their L-shaped stone house in Cambridge (now Gloucester) Street at the corner of Cribb’s Lane, but, from the evidence that can be pieced together, their lives were probably upended when George learned that his first wife Mary was coming on the Northampton to join him. It was evidently decided that Fanny had to leave. The ship arrived in 1815, and its surgeon Joseph Arnold remarked with a kind of shocked voyeurism in his journal that

\[40\] Papers from trial of Margaret Roach 14 April 1821, CCJ R1975 p315 AONSW; Bigge, Report, Appendix, evidence of Major Druitt, Box 1 p4; Papers from trial of John Stephens jun., Governors’ Despatches, 1834, ML A1267 \(16\) Cy895 pp274, 294. Papers from trial of William Jackson 7 December 1821 CCJ R1976 p170 AONSW. Jackson took a tumbler from the Redmonds’ hotel.

\[41\] SG 15, 29 March 1826.
several of the women we brought out to join their husbands found them married here and in one case what is very extraordinary a Mrs Cribb came out with us to join her husband...and another Mrs Cribb (wife to the same man) is going home with me in the Indefatigable...

It was perhaps not until Fanny had sailed away that George realized that Mary Cribb had not arrived after all. Surgeon Arnold reported to the Governor that she with two others had ‘left the ship at Rio de Janeiro and concealed themselves so effectually’ that the ship sailed away without them (a minor detail which would have rather spoilt the story in his journal). Perhaps Mary had second thoughts about rejoining George, and found Rio more to her liking.

So George, left without any wife at all, waited a few years more, and in May 1818 married his Gloucester Street neighbour and fellow publican Sophia Lett, nee Blundell. She had been the wife of the well-respected Stafford Lett, had been widowed six months before and left with five children, including newborn twins. George listed himself on the Register as a ‘Widower’. She and her children moved into George’s house, although she retained the licence to her hotel.

They seem to have prospered steadily through his butchering business, slaughtering beasts at the rear of the house and selling meat from a small shop he built adjacent in 1817. They had two hotels (his and hers), farms, and houses at the rear of their Rocks premises (in Cumberland Street) which they leased to tenants. Cribb was wealthy enough to own horses which he raced, his bay colt Sly Boots winning the Sydney Races in 1819, and another horse Mulberry running in 1821. Yet despite the surface images of emancipists-made-good, there were undercurrents of tension and nefarious activity. George was fined for hawking meat illegally in 1819. In 1823 Charles Throsby lodged a complaint about him with the Colonial Secretary, claiming that Cribb had trespassed on his land and ‘used’ his bulls. In 1823 both he and his nephew Thomas (also a convict, assigned to his uncle) were implicated in the
serious crime of cattle stealing, and of bribing witnesses. A man named Charles Raven sent
to Newcastle for the crime wrote a desperate letter claiming Cribb had conspired to steal the
cattle and then framed him. Cribb was involved in a civil suit and appears to have lost his
extensive Rocks premises as early as 1824, although he still owned the house where the
family lived.

At the same time, their marital relationship had deteriorated. In 1823 he advertised in the
Gazette:

The Public are hereby cautioned not to credit my wife Sophia Cribb on my account
as I will not be responsible for any Debts she may contract after this notice, having
eloped from her home...without any provocation whatsoever...

and further, a reference to his houses:

and I do caution all my tenants who hold Houses from me not to pay any Rents to her
from this date otherwise I will compell them to pay the same over again.

When women left their homes, for whatever reason, husbands inevitably tried to retaliate by
cutting off financial support. Since Sophia had her own resources, it is difficult to say if this
was an effective ‘punishment’. She had evidently been the rent collector, and probably ran
the shop and hotel as well.

Sophia Cribb died in February 1827 at the age of 43. Cribb sold the house in May, and by
the following year the family had completely dispersed, for George Cribb evidently had little
further interest in his stepchildren. He himself vanishes from the historical record after her
death, and nothing was left of this couple’s connection with the prosperous and promising
little empire on the Rocks, except the name of Cribb’s Lane.\footnote{Mutch Index, ML. SG 30 July 1809; James Byrne, Memorials, 5 May 1834, in
Memorials Forwarded by the Commissioner of Claims, CSC Memorials 581 and 582,
AONSW. Arnold, Journal, 1815, and his Surgeon’s report, Northampton, 19 June
1815, CSC R6045 4/1733 p168. SG 22 April 1822, 28 June 1817, 29 November 1817,
4 July 1818, 5, 30 January, 5, 30 June 1819, 18 August 1821, 14 June, 22 November}
Most of the stories, like this one, underscore how essential both parties were to a successful marriage, and the mutual agreement implicit in it. This was at odds with the idea of women as completely dependent, submissive and submitting to her husbands wishes. Occasionally a woman might turn that idea to her own advantage: Margaret Brown, when accused of passing stolen bills at numerous pubs on the Rocks, said in her own defence that she was merely ‘acting under the authority of her husband’. But this was play-acting to the expectations of authority. She was acquitted, though it was remarked that this argument ‘did not hold good in all cases’. The reality had little to do with the idea of women ‘exchanging the power of the state for the power of a husband’ however reassuring that notion was to authorities. People married or lived together on their own terms, sometimes foolishly, more often sensibly, and many women went on behaving exactly as they pleased.

For all the differences in underlying ideology, the confluence of official stance and plebeian action was another strong encouragement to marriage. Marriage was generally seen as a superior status to being single: it implied the security, fixedness, steadiness, and it was rewarded. Married or cohabiting men and women were regarded as householders, a large step up from drifting, itinerant labourers. Bigge learned from Druitt that the three to four hundred overseers and convicts who were allowed to ‘sleep out in the town’ rather than under surveillance in the new barracks, were ‘the best behaved men and men married legally’ (my emphasis): note the equation of behaviour and the married state. Married women were considered ‘settled’ rather than ‘loose’, and were regarded amongst themselves as mature and


43 SG 2 December 1820.
worldly. Mothers in particular achieved respect after they bore children. Phoebe Larra was finally able to tell her dreadful secret to Sarah McDonald because ‘you have been a married woman and the mother of children’.44

When Rocks people approached authority for ‘indulgences’ they always pointed out that they were married and had children: ‘I am a free and married man’ was the way publican Samuel Hulbert introduced himself in his petition for land. The petitions hardly ever refer to ‘love’ or passion, but often to ‘comfort’. Thomas Crump, during his sojourn as a prisoner at Newcastle, pleaded for remission, lamenting that he ‘for eight years has not had the happiness of enjoying the comfort essential to the married state’. (This was rather ironic, since he had left one wife and two children for the wife to whom he was referring, and was living with a third woman while at Newcastle). A woman off the Northampton (1815) wanted to be reunited with her convict husband. Her marriage, she said, was the source of ‘comfortable sustenance and enjoyment of Life in this transitory world’. These words perhaps best express the ideals and purpose of plebeian marriage.45

A spouse, and particularly children, were also strong mitigating factors for those men and women who committed crimes, and had real power to have sentences reduced or commuted. When a man and two women were arrested at a house on the Rocks for robbery in 1804, the man was ‘kept in close confinement’, while the women ‘were humanely permitted to return to their families until called upon’. Here again is evidence of ‘a fate infinitely softer’ for women, and one easily a cause of resentment between the sexes. Mary Bryant was a householder who had arrived free to join her convict husband Bryan Eagan, and held a beer

44 Bigge, Report, Appendix, BT Box 1, evidence of Major Druitt, p23 and D’Arcy Wentworth p576; papers from trial of James Larra.

licence in Gloucester Street; she also had five children. When she was convicted of receiving stolen goods in 1813 (from William Howells, Anne Dalton’s lover) she was sentenced to seven years transportation, but served only a few months, returning to her home and family.\(^{46}\)

Andrew Johnston, ex-convict of Cumberland Street who was convicted of stealing in 1827, pleaded that he had a wife, (Elizabeth, born in the colony) and five small children. The court ‘taking this into consideration sentenced the man to two years in an iron gang’ rather than death or a fourteen-year transportation. So Andrew was despatched to break stone and grub out tree roots on the rugged ridgeline on the new North Road at Wiseman’s Ferry, while back on the Rocks his family moved in with their neighbour, and Elizabeth became a washerwoman.\(^{47}\)

As well as consolidating property and teaming talents, marriage was one of the few remaining means for newly arrived convicts to become established on the Rocks. The analysis of the 1822/23 Constable’s Notebooks shows that by that time, when most allotments were officially and unofficially appropriated, the few 1822 convict servants who still lived on the Rocks in 1828 were those who had married established Rocks inhabitants. The printer William Kelly and butcher James Cross both married Rocks widows and soon became propertied and pardoned householders.

\(^{46}\) SG 12 August 1804; Malaspina, ‘Loose Notes...’, p141; Papers from trial of James Pass, Mary Bryant et al, CCJ 1813; CSC, listed among prisoners sent to Newcastle per Estramina 1813; granted pass to go to Sydney for one month, 4 October 1813; sentence remitted, return to Sydney, as ‘Egan’, 16 December 1813, R6003, 4/3492, pp211, 273, 295; petition for mitigation of sentence, 1817, CSC F3175 4/1850 p42; Census, 1828.

\(^{47}\) SG 20 July 1827; Census 1828.
But what of love? Did the cool pragmatism and hard-headed material concerns preclude romance, affection, passion? Did Rocks people feel the emotional attachments to one another that our own society regards as essential and fundamental to the married state? It is here necessary to point out that the present popular idea of 'romantic love' is a quite recent invention. Stone sketches out its popularisation via the romantic novels of the eighteenth century, which gave endless variations on the key notions that

there is only one person in the world with whom one can fully unite at all levels; the personality of that person is so idealized that the normal faults and follies of human nature disappear from view; love is often like a thunderbolt and strikes at first sight; love is the most important thing in the world, to which all other considerations, particularly material ones, should be sacrificed; and lastly the giving of full rein to personal emotions is admirable... 48

Eighteenth and early nineteenth century Rocks marriages were certainly not devoid of affection and deep emotional bonds. But the means of choosing a spouse, and the relationships between husbands and wives bore little resemblance to this romantic view of love, in many ways were precisely opposite to it. What is frequently observed in words and actions of happily married Rocks couples was that pragmatic marriages, and the 'comforts' of companionship, loyalty, affection, consideration, and belonging went hand in hand. The commonly-used word 'comfort' itself meant material as well as emotional security; the two were inextricable. Rocks people for the main part telescoped them, and when material security began to fail, so did marriages, as we saw in the case of George Cribb and Sophia Blundell. Perhaps we may call these bonds 'love', remembering that sentimentality is absent; they were not in love with 'love' itself. Yet the diffidence, disagreeability and distance of pre-industrial plebeian marriages also described by Stone were not typical either.

48 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p282.
There were many couples on the Rocks who seem never to have violently disagreed, left one another, publicly scolded one another or come to blows. Hannah Manley and George Barnett, Thomas and Elizabeth Boulton, George Talbot and Ann Armsden, Richard Byrne and Margaret Kelly, George Pashley and Louisa Sturdy and many others, lived amicable and companionable lives until parted by death. Occasionally we see glimpses and gestures of intimacy slipping through in the official records. Ann Collins of Prince Street described her husband Thomas as ‘her only friend’ as well as her only means of support, in a doomed attempt to save him from the gallows. George Woodford, the husband of Elizabeth Giles, of Cumberland Street, was called out one night in 1818 by his young neighbour, fourteen year old Ann Edwards, to search for his friend, her father Edward. Edward, in his unstable state of mind, had gone wandering around Cockle Bay. Once he was safely back in bed, George considered lying down with his afflicted friend to comfort him, but then ‘recollecting his wife was sitting up for him, went home’. Both were considerate and caring, the wife waiting up in the early morning hours, the husband returning to her.49

Joseph Holt’s memoirs describe the relationship between himself and his wife (always referred to as ‘Mrs Holt’) as ‘loving’. Transported to Norfolk Island in 1804 he wrote that he ‘parted my wife once more, to the great displeasure of a loving couple to be separated in a strange country’. On his return, she was ‘overpowered with joy’ and ‘swooned away’. A man whose wife was ill and died during the night said he had heard her cry out in bed, and put his arms around her to comfort her. Stephen Wain openly wept in grief at the inquest on his wife, Elizabeth Mandeville, saying of her that ‘as good a woman as never broke bread at home’: here again is that convergence of material and emotional. The passion that the Cumberland Street publican James New and his convict wife Jane felt for one another was so great that Jane jumped the high walls of the Female Factory twice to be with him. She

49 Ann Collins, Petition, CSC F3173 4/1849 p42; Inquest on Edward Edwards, 5 November 1818, R2232 p265ff AONSW.
wrote him a note in 1827 saying ‘I am almost out of my mind at not seeing you’. Eventually James quietly sold up everything and the couple left the colony clandestinely, with Jane disguised as a man. (Jane then had the temerity to write to a Sydney attorney from Hobart and demand her clothes which had been sent back to the Female Factory after her escape, threatening legal action if they were not returned!) The News were exceptional in this though; most couples were more down to earth about the relative importance of their affections and their material lives.\(^{50}\)

It is difficult to generalise about the nature of married relationships because they were as varied as they are today. Some couples, such as these, were close and affectionate, others distant or only loosely bound, still others were extremely violent. Nevertheless one striking feature was that men and women, after their marriage, continued to maintain independent lives in some senses, and that the idea of what constituted married life was still flexible. Women and men could have their own circles of friends, both male and female; these might overlap, or they might not. It was not necessary that wives and husbands spend their leisure time together, (although they often did) and it was quite acceptable for them to go their separate ways in pursuit of a living or leisure. In some cases they did not even live together all the time, pursuing different paths and coming together occasionally, yet this did not erode their sense of being married.

What is thus absent in Rocks marriages is a strong sense of women being eclipsed socially, legally and psychologically by their husbands, in the way that some surviving records, like petitions and memorials, suggest. Women were not confined by the power of their husbands to the home, their movements at work or at leisure, their circles of friends were not constantly

watched and controlled. Many wives and mothers from stable households were quite disorderly in their behaviour, fighting, drinking, being 'pests to police' and occasionally making off with the family property, without it much affecting their marriages. Again, the perceived gulf (and the heuristic device built upon it) between 'good family women' and 'loose disorderly women' is difficult to sustain.

Some alliances were casual, pragmatic arrangements which suited both parties and left them with companionship and a roof over their heads. The widow Mary Long (Ward) moved in with Thomas Bristow in Cambridge Street probably after her sons were accepted into the Male Orphan School in George Street below in about 1819. She was still with him in 1822, and in 1828, when she was listed as a washerwoman. It is unclear whether she was wife, friend, housekeeper or lodger; or perhaps something of all four. Yet theirs was one of the stable household relationships on the Rocks.51

The marital arrangements of Mary Bryant and Bryan Eagan emerged when Mary was tried for receiving stolen goods in 1813. She was a Rocks householder and had some of their five children with her, probably took in lodgers and kept a drinking house. Her house was a well-known meeting place, in this case for a thief, William Howells and his lover, as well as for tradeswomen like the mantua maker Kitty Baker. Bryan Eagan had just returned from a period working at Shoalhaven; he said his usual occupation was 'in the Hawkesbury trade' and that he had 'lived with the prisoner Mary Bryant', using the past tense. Yet he left his chest and its key at her house, and described himself there 'sitting at my door'. He said they

51 Flynn, Second Fleet, entry for Mary Long; District Constables’ Notebooks; Census, 1828.
had a disagreement about his trunk, but they were not now ‘at variance’. Their marital relationship was cyclical, each partner with their own sphere.\textsuperscript{52}

Still looser was the relationship of Happy Filler and her soldier husband William Filler. He lived at the barracks, she lived at Mary Redman’s house on the Rocks. When she died (either of illness, or murdered, the case was never resolved) her friends and acquaintances recounted her drinking during the day with friends, men and women, including her husband, then crossing to William Welsh’s hotel in the evening where she danced a reel with Rocksman Thomas Happy. Later as she lay ill in bed upstairs, she was tended by another soldier named Davis, who bathed her legs. When she died someone went to the barracks to tell William; he arrived to see her body already laid out by the women of the household. He had his suspicions about the cause of death, but ‘was obliged to go back to barracks’. It seems to have been a marriage of the loosest, most open sort. Yet when a soldier in search of a drink rapped at Mary Redman’s locked door that morning, she reproached him saying he ‘ought to be ashamed of himself for coming there, as one of the women belonging to the Regiment was dead in the house’. Happy Filler’s behaviour, and the nature of her marriage, evidently did not affect this underlying sense of ‘belonging’.\textsuperscript{53}

The accounts of Happy Filler dancing, drinking and otherwise keeping company with various men were not unusual. Rocks women Rose Bryan and Elizabeth (or Esther) Jones were both caught picking pockets of strangers as they sat drinking with them in pubs. They were not single or prostitutes but married/partnered women with children. Joseph Salter told the court of an evening he spent with Celia Wright and Elizabeth Remrant, treating them to food and

\textsuperscript{52} Papers from trial of James Pass, Mary Bryant et al CCJ. Compare this distance with Stone’s discussion of the remoteness of plebeian family life in the sixteenth and seventeenth century England, \textit{Families, Sex and Marriage}, p81-84.

\textsuperscript{53} Inquest on Happy Filler 28 December 1822, with papers from trial of Mary Redman, Bridget Lever, Thomas Francis and William Fenning, CCJ, R1979 p93ff, AONSW; see also \textit{SG} 8 May 1823.
drink at Mary Gotham's house. Celia was a married woman, her husband a blacksmith. When Mary Ward, formerly Mary Boyle (nee Chipp) went to the races with her husband Thomas in 1829 she soon left him, and instead went about the canvas booths drinking with her friend Edward Burton, a ticket-of-leave man. There was evidently nothing improper in this; there is no evidence of these husbands objecting, nor wives being embarrassed or ashamed. Thomas Curry was resentful of the amount of time his native born wife Charlotte Cubitt spent at Thomas Rushton's household, but there was little he could do about it:

my Wife as gone back and forth...for this 5 or 6 years the same as one of their own family and we have been married this two years and she as still used the house and as come home loaded with tea and sugar and...some clothes to where... Charlotte's continued friendship with the Rushtons and their servants, and her willingness to run their messages, eat and stay with them, were evidently established in her youth (she was born in 1801), and she did not allow her marriage to interfere with those connections and habits, much to Thomas Curry's dismay.

At the same time there is evidence that husbands and wives had separate spheres and expected each other not to interfere in them. If women's spheres tended to be the home, these were their domains, badges of material security, not their prisons. There is no sense of the home being a confining space for women from their own perspective. One man begged his friend not to tell his wife about a stolen horse, fearing 'he should have a noise in the house about it'; the house was her domain and he was loathe to disturb it. At certain times, for instance at childbirth, or when someone died, men seem to have been banished


55 Defence of Thomas Curry, County Gaol, 8 March 1822, CCJ R1976 p273 AONSW.

56 Statement of William Refain, 22 June 1822, CSC R6054 p47.
from the house. But at an everyday level the divisions are by no means so clear-cut. Both husbands and wives worked at their joint businesses, the wife often combining this with childcare, the husband with an outside job or a farm. While husbands and wives could go their separate ways if they wished, the leisure time and spaces of the sexes was also integrated, although not necessarily that of husbands and wives. Both men and women drank and danced in hotels together; they also sang, talked, ate and drank in private homes together.

While the work of washing and ironing clothes seems to have been allocated to, or appropriated by, women (Fig. 49), other so-called ‘female’ tasks: cooking and sewing for example, were not as rigidly gender specific as they later became. Men cooked meals in the households where they worked as servants, and there are orders for men’s thimbles in government despatches. Beverly Kingston and Jane Elliot have pointed out that men in this period were often responsible for buying the household provisions. Children were claimed and cared for more by mothers than fathers, yet they also appear in their father’s arms in the streets, playing around their feet in the houses, or on boating trips with them.\(^\text{57}\)

Not all marriages were happy ones, and some were extremely violent. The sources for discord seem to be mainly that either husband or wife failed in some way and to varying degrees to fulfil their spouses’ expectations of them, or conversely succeeded in confirming their fears and suspicions of them. In stormy households and between feuding couples there was much china breaking, window smashing, brick-throwing and shouting. Some reckoned the law still had no place in these disputes: a constable who tried to stop a man throwing his

wife out of the house was told that ‘his house is his castle into which no authority but his own could or should be admitted’. Others, such as the belligerent and violent drunkard William Callaghan thought of their wives as property, to be treated as they saw fit; hence when constable George Pashley remonstrated with him for assaulting a woman, asking him if were not ashamed of his behaviour, Callaghan retorted that ‘she was his wife and he would do as he liked’.

Neighbours were also reluctant to intervene. William Blue and Elizabeth Williams felt nothing more than annoyance when their sleep was disturbed by their neighbour Margaret MacKnight screaming because her husband was beating her again. (Later the court heard that this wife was of ‘unsound intellect and became unruly at the slightest intoxication’ so that her husband, Thomas Lynch, ‘had’ to beat her; this seems to have been accepted as quite understandable). Yet when women themselves asked neighbours to protect them from violent husbands, they were taken in, and sometimes the husbands were reproached. Violence itself was regarded as something of a matter of course in society generally, although people frequently sought redress by taking one another to court for assaults like a punch in the nose or a sharp push. But where it involved husbands beating wives the question with which courts and the community concerned themselves was whether or not the husband’s attack was warranted or excessive.

The widely-held expectation of women as civilising partners had its constant obverse side, the equally widely shared fear that they were naturally morally corrupting and would bring chaos and ruin to a man’s ‘orderliness’ and lay waste to his property. The Sydney Gazette in 1803

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58 SG 29 April 1804, an account of the death of ‘poor old John Justice’ who mended ‘fractured china’ thus ‘alleviating the otherwise fatal and irreparable effect of domestic inquietude’; and 5 August 1804. Re Callaghan, Proceedings of the Court of Petty Sessions, 16 January 1813, COD 234 AONSW.

59 SG 15 July 1804; inquest on William Wall, 20 February 1821, CSC R6021 4/1819 p720; papers from trial of James Larra, CCJ, 6 September 1814 R2390 p452.
offered these diametrically opposed gems: a story of a settler who leaves his house in the care of his wife but returns to find her drunk, his house and property in disarray, a cautionary tale about the disorderly and untrustworthy nature of women. And, in the same year, one of the ‘Christmas wishes’ was the hope that ‘the fair’ would be given ‘an increase of Prerogative, a willing submission to their mild dominion, and the unfading Privilege of dispensing domestic happiness’.\footnote{SG 2 April and 25 December 1803.} Here, conversely, it was women who were \textit{supposed} to bring order and tranquillity through domesticity and security.

These were precisely the terms used by complaining husbands: failure to be a ‘civilizing’ woman, confirming fear of disorderliness and moral corruption. One problem was that some Rocks men with high expectations married women off the convict ships they did not know very well, had their hopes of ‘domestic happiness’ dashed and their fears of chaos and financial ruin seemingly confirmed. Accordingly, their complaints were inevitably couched in terms their wives’ ‘immorality’, closely tied to their lack of respect for property. William Sibley, a mariner who had arrived a convict on the \textit{Hillsborough} in 1799, married Elizabeth Male (or Meal), a young woman off the \textit{Broxbournbury} in May 1815. They had had a child two months before, but it appears to have died. William seems to have steadily built up property and possessions, including a house in Prince Street by 1820, and then built Geranium Cottage at 6 Cumberland Street in 1821. Elizabeth said in a petition for a pardon in 1821 that her marriage had been ‘happy and comfortable’, although she lost another child in early infancy in 1819, and would lose yet another in 1823. After her pardon was granted, her behaviour suddenly changed, and went beyond what William would tolerate. The following year he resorted to a desperate petition to the Governor. His wife had been ‘absconding her Home and plundering his house of Valuables and Money’ and, despite his forgiving her and taking her back ‘had again eloped’. To make matter worse, she was ‘glaringly without shame or remorse’. After a month at the Factory she ‘conducted herself as became a wife’ for a
year, but by 1824 had resumed her ‘disorderly’ habits, continually drunk, destroying her husband’s property, smashing his windows, and ‘resorting to the most abandoned houses of Sydney’. William claimed that she believed ‘the indulgence of emancipation’ meant that ‘no punishment can be inflicted on her’. Elizabeth, her time served as dutiful wife, now thought herself a truly free woman once more. Perhaps grief and disappointment over the loss of her babies expressed itself in violence and destructive behaviour. It is clear in this case, though, that the ‘authority’ of husband over wife in marriage, as a general means of control over women was chimerical: she had merely bided her time until she was emancipated. By 1827 William and Elizabeth had separated, he had sold his Rocks houses, and on his returns from the sea he lodged on the Rocks and sought casual sex and companionship from young women like the native-born Charlotte Walker Beeby.61

The pattern of conflict in the marriage of John and Mary Massagorda was similar. Mary had arrived in 1815 having been sentenced in Warwick the previous year to seven years’ transportation. Her husband, a ‘looking-glass maker’, and four children joined her in 1816. Since there was no call for his trade in Sydney, John became the turnkey at the gaol. Although the couple lived ‘on the most amicable terms’ at first, once Mary’s sentence expired in 1821 she too began to rebel. She had an affair and then ran away with their convict lodger, William Innes. Her husband brought them before the magistrate, William was sent to the country, and Mary back to her home. Shortly afterwards the couple agreed to separate, and Mary lived with her son and daughter in a house in Cumberland Street probably rented from George and Sophia Cribb. John, who was ‘in the constant habit of passing the house where his wife lived’, no doubt to see what she was up to, observed to his ‘aborrence’ that the house was ‘frequented by infamous characters’. He said in his memorial to the Governor

61 District Constables’ Notebooks; Mutch Index, ML; St Philip’s Register, CSC R6024 entry for 9 May 1815; Petitions of William Sibley, c1822, CSC R6056 4/1763 p263 and 24 January 1824 R6061 p44; petition of Elizabeth Sibley, 1821, CSC F3210 4/1863 p62; SG 15 February 1822; 1 January 1824, 29 August 1828; Australian 29 August 1828.
that he was horrified that his children were exposed to their mother’s ‘lewd and diabolical practices’. It is a pity we do not know Mary’s side of the story, to put her husband’s rantings into perspective. Her ‘freedom’ was not to last. By 1828 there had been a reconciliation, and they were together again, living in a George Street shop, John listed as a ‘Dealer in Curiosities’.62

Andrew Frazier’s marriage was his undoing. He was a wealthy Scots baker and publican of the Rocks who had risen from an illiterate ex-convict to become one of the most respected and wealthy men in the town. Frazier had had a relationship with his assigned servant, the ‘honest, diligent and attentive’ Mary Jones for some years, but suddenly became enamoured of, and married Eleanor Hatton, a convict woman of twenty who arrived in 1824. He was forty years older than her, and she had already had an offer of marriage, but chose him instead. Mary Jones was packed off to the Female Factory where she remained for the next few years. But Eleanor Hatton liked to drink, often absconded and drove her husband to distraction, and they went before a magistrate to settle their differences in 1825. William Charles Wentworth, the young arrogant editor of the Australian, reported the incident as high farce, stressing Frazier’s age and his foolishness in seeking out love and marriage at his time of life, while also including many puns to underscore his lowly status as a baker, despite his wealth:

Her loving spouse, whose furrowed and care-worn cheeks betokened how much he was a stranger to those fond caresses which he vainly sought in the holy bonds of wedlock...he [had] looked about him for one with whom he might divide his pillow and his cakes, and who might cheer his cot and warm him during the winter of his life - he saw Miss Eleanor...and became enraptured...[but she] put an extinguisher on his hopes. He appealed to the worthy Magistrates...His rib had taken all sorts of fine

62 District Constables’ Notebooks; John Massagorra, Memorials, 1820, CSC F3025 4/1824B p823, 826; 17 October and 18 December 1823, R6059 4/1773 pp119-120c.
things, was fond of vanity, and threatened to extinguish the flower of his profits and the profits of his flour...

Once more the wife attacked the material assets of the husband, things he was likely to care about. Unlike the indulgent and passionate husband James New, Frazier was unwilling to indulge his wife's taste for 'vanity'. His life after this and subsequent exchanges was unhappy. Although briefly reconciled, he and Eleanor continued to quarrel over her behaviour, especially after she began to keep a disorderly house nearby. Like Elizabeth Sibley, she spent time at the Female Factory, where she later met and befriended Jane New, whose mother she had known in England, as well as Mary Jones, Andrew's ex-lover.

By late 1826 Andrew Frazier had had enough. He began to drink, heavily and purposefully, until he died in early January 1827. The Gazette noted his passing plainly, reporting the coroner's findings of 'extraordinary abuse of ardent spirits', though concluding respectfully that Frazier had been 'and industrious and honourable Scotchman. We wish we had some more of them'. But the old man had his revenge. A few days later it emerged that he had left the bulk of his fortune to the convict Mary Jones, his faithful servant and lover, serving out the last days of her sentence at the Factory. Again the action was expressed in material terms; he ensured that Eleanor would get nothing of his fortune. Within two weeks Mary Jones had married somebody else, a botanist named William Baxter. As a bizarre postscript, five months later Constable Miller arrested two women engaging in 'outrageously riotous and disorderly conduct' together in the street: they were Mary Baxter and Eleanor Frazier. Mary was suspicious of her new husband's fidelity and had gone to Eleanor's house to 'pour out her griefs'. The two women, evidently friends, shared a meal and 'a cheerful glass' (or several) before 'supporting one another well enough' back to Mary's lodgings at midnight and causing a complete 'uproar' outside the house.63

63 St Philip's Register, CSC R6024 entry for 18 October 1824; Australian 5 January, 12, 19 May, 11 August 1825, 17 January 1827; SG 12 May 1825, 5, 6 January, 20 June 1827. Andrew Frazier, Memorial, 21 January 1824, CSC R6060 4/1778 p41; Mary Jones, Petition, 1822, CSC F3220 4/1866 p16.
All these husbands wanted their wives back, but expected them to behave as wives should in plebeian marriages: not as completely subservient, decorative and sex objects, but sensible working partners and companions. The facts of adultery and absconding were looked upon realistically, and even forgiven, if a woman would only act as a ‘good’ wife should.64 The appeal by husbands to the authority of governors and to the law was a last resort, when private and communal means had failed. It was usually preceded by the attempt to use economic leverage against wives who left the home. George Cribb, Richard Cheers, William Thorn, John Hull and many others advertised that they would not pay their wives’ debts, hoping to force them into returning this way. These notices were also public declarations that relationships had gone awry; there seems to have been no impulse to hide the fact, or keep it as a shameful secret.

Some men did not take these paths but resorted instead to violence to express anger, frustration, hatred of their wives. Paula Jane Byrne observes that ‘this violence seems, in part, an extension of domestic arguments. It results from a quarrel gone wrong, or from extreme violence in the haste of the moment. Intoxication plays some role’. But in some cases, the violence was habitual. Shoemaker Patrick Traynor attacked his wife Mary Connor in public at the race course in 1812, striking her violently. She said she was frequently ill-treated and abused by him and ‘craved the peace’.65 The boatbuilder Thomas Crump and Mary Johnson had been so ‘troublesome’ when they lived together at Newcastle in 1811 that the Commandant had to separate them. They were reunited back in Sydney in about 1813 (although Thomas had been living with Mary Webb and had two children, as well as another

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64 Hilary Golder observed similar ‘tolerant and realistic’ attitudes to adultery in a review of husbands’ divorce petitions from the second half of the nineteenth century; see Divorce in 19th Century New South Wales, Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1985, pp146-47.

65 Byrne, Criminal Law, p97; Mary Connor/Traynor cited in Byrne, p89. Patrick Traynor was also brought up on charges of ‘violently assaulting’ Sarah Quinn of Gloucester Street, see CCJ 12 October 1818 COD 445 p97 AONSW.
two from a earlier relationship) and settled down on the Rocks and produced eight more children. But their relationship continued to be violent. On one occasion Thomas followed Mary to Elizabeth Rickers’s house in Cumberland Street (where she was helping out after the birth of a baby) and breaking in, began to beat her over the head with a stick, with ‘she and all children crying Murder’. A constable who intervened was also attacked, abused, and had his shirt torn.66

William Chapman, a shipwright of Cumberland Street, was incensed that his partner Sarah Allen, who was weak and in poor health, came to the hotel where he was paying his workmen and asked him to come home. In doing so she invaded his sphere, perhaps inadvertently, for onlookers said she was drunk. He was so angry at this intrusion, perhaps also feeling belittled before his workmen, that he punched and kicked her to the ground in fury. But then he returned to her side saying ‘Sally, my dear what have I done to you?’ ‘My dear Chapman’ she replied ‘I am terribly hurt’. She was trundled away in a wheelbarrow, her shoes full of blood, her broken body jolted over the rough pathways back to their house where she died. At the trial William was resigned, saying only that he ‘left his cause in the hands of the Almighty’. The court’s decision was lenient. The ‘affectionate language’ of their last exchange, and her weakly and drunken state mitigated for him, and he was convicted of manslaughter. But it seems he could no longer live on the Rocks after this; in 1828 he was working as a labourer at Pitt Town.67 It is worth noting too that the men who attacked and sometimes killed their wives were not necessarily of the lowest and poorest ranks. They were often quite well respected tradesmen and householders with property.

66 Mutch index, ML; SG 18 June 1809; see John Campbell to O’Connell, 30 April 1811 and 18 December 1811, CSC R6066 4/1804 p72; 27 December 1811 CSC R6002 4/3491 p138; Papers from Supreme Court committal hearing: Thomas Crump, 24 April 1821, CCJ R1975 p188 AONSW. The couple had separated by 1828, see Census.

67 Papers from trial of William Chapman, T21 25/148 AONSW; SG 2 June, 3, 14, 17 October 1825; Australian 6 October 1825; District Constables’ Notebooks; Census, 1828.
What are less obvious in the record, perhaps because we have not been looking for them, are similar expectations and fears that women held of men. Men were selected as husbands for their ability and inclination to provide for a wife and family through business, trade, labour or property. A husband was also expected to be the ‘protector’ of his family: hence Hugh Hector Noble pleaded to be released from gaol in order to return to his ‘unprotected family’. At the same time, and parallel to the fear of the disorderly women, there was underlying fear of the brutish, violent man with uncontrollable passions. The wife-beater was berated in the *Gazette* as defeating domestic tranquillity, and as such was ‘the bane of society’. Collins described rape as an ‘unmanly attack’.68 These were the terms in which women also complained about their husbands: for failing in their duties as good providers, and for brutal and violent behaviour. They did not condemn men in moral terms, in the way that men did women, but as ‘unmanly’, as brutes, wasters and fools.

Women, like men, publicly advertised to warn people against buying from their husbands, and they too sometimes petitioned the Governor and the magistrates in order to get protection. Ann Maria Cook wrote a barely literate petition to the Governor in 1823 complaining about the behaviour of her husband Daniel Cubitt. She had moved out of their Harrington Street home after 31 years, having borne twelve children to him, and was living in Pitt Street with her daughter and a new son-in-law. She stated that she wanted her ‘case taken into consideration under those circumstances by not suffering the said Daniel Cubitt and said daughter [Charlotte] ...general abuse and bad language to the great injury of your memorialist’. But unlike the spells in the Factory meted out to refractory wives, there was

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68 Petitions of Hugh Hector Innes Noble from gaol, 1 and 18 January 1823, CSC F3235 pp39-41; *SG* 17 July 1803; Collins, *Account*, Vol 1 p363. The role of the husband/partner as provider is underscored in the inquest on Hugh Wood. He left the house he shared with Elizabeth Kinsela in 1817 because he was unable to support her. She came home from her work of nursing children one day to find he had returned and hanged himself in her hallway; see CSC R6021 4/1819 pp733-37.
no official action over this petition. The Colonial Secretary wrote mildly on the reverse ‘Is an industrious and steady woman - they parted only from disagreement of tempers’. 69

Other women used the law as a threat against violent husbands. Publican Elizabeth Mountford’s petition claimed Michael Cassidy had attacked her repeatedly, left her a cripple, stole her property ‘and left me and my five children destitute’. He had been bound over to keep the peace but had ignored the order. In spite of these attacks, Elizabeth withdrew the charges. Shortly afterwards Michael Cassidy was tried for robbery. He had been labouring out at Liverpool and had, with another labourer, fraudulently stolen a chest in Sydney. It seems likely that Elizabeth had used her threat to resort to the court to force him to leave their home and Sydney. When he was convicted and sentenced to transportation to Newcastle, she wrote another petition, ‘not in compassion for her husband’, as she bluntly stated, but to request that he be sent to Van Diemen’s Land (still further away) instead, so that he could work to support his ‘unoffending, unhappy and helpless children’. But he did go to Newcastle, and like John Waldron and Thomas Curry, died there shortly afterwards. By 1822 Elizabeth was listed as ‘widow Cassidy’, free at last. 70

While women could behave violently towards other women and to men they robbed, there are few instances of them using violence against their husbands, though this may simply reflect the unwillingness of husbands to go to court for this kind of assault. A more common response to irreconcilable differences was separation, if possible by mutual consent. Benjamin Pate advertised in the Gazette that he and his wife Mary Blany had agreed ‘to separate from bed and board forever’ (the material dimension again) and that she should have their stone house on the Rocks. Some simply shared a house but not a bed. Margaret

69 (Maria) Ann Cook, Memorial, 1823, CSC R6051 p256-7; and see note 33.
70 Petition of Elizabeth Cassidy (Mountford), 22 September 1819, with papers from trial of Michael Cassidy, CCJ, COD 448 p54; District Constables’ Notebooks; Census 1828.
Foggarty and Richard Cheers were still together after the court ordered him to pay maintenance for their child, and they had two more children; but by 1810 she was drinking heavily, and he seems to have been disdainful of her. When she died their servant told the inquest jury that the couple ‘had not cohabited together by sleeping in one bed for nearly two years’. (A second wife with whom he had differences also died suddenly). Thomas Allwright and Sophia Langford, bakers with seven children, separated in about 1812. Perhaps she did not want to go with him to Van Diemen’s land, or perhaps she had already met Thomas Wheeler, another baker, with whom she was living in 1822. Susannah Harrison, the partner of Isaac Peyton, a rather cantankerous man, and mother of three children, petitioned successfully in 1810 to be allowed to leave as Mary Putland’s servant. She promised to return, but was never seen again. Peyton’s second wife Ann Bligh simply left him.\(^{71}\)

So it seems that when relationships failed for one reason or another Rocks people acted to resolve the situation, by separation, living alone, or finding a new partner. These arrangements were not hidden away, and once resolved, do not appear to have affected their status. But does this suggest a population which was on the whole promiscuous, or lacking in commitment, or which took the marriage bond lightly? We do have some more objective means of measuring the duration of Rocks marriages which suggest that, overall, more couples stayed together than were parted. Of the 406 people (203 couples) living together as husband and wife in 1822/23, 66% (either one or both partners) could be located in the Census six years later. Of this remainder, 80 couples, or nearly 60% of those located, were still living together. Of those who were no longer together (57 couples), husband and wife

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\(^{71}\) Re Benjamin Pate and Mary Blany, SG 1 January 1809. Re the Cheers, inquest on Margaret Cheers/Foggarty, 23 August 1810, CSC R6021 4/1819 p77; see also inquest on Ann Cheers, 22 March 1823, R2233 p125-9 AONSW. Re Allwrights, SG 14 April 1803, and Leonard R. Dibbs, ‘Notes on Extant Records of Thomas Allwright and Sophia Langford, grandparents of Sir G R Dibbs’, 1950, ML Ad 95. Susannah Harrison, Petition, February 1810, CSC F3165 4/1846 p104; Ann Bligh SG 7 January 1815, 29 March 1822.
are known to have separated in only 13 cases, and some of these were enforced by a partner being sent away to a road gang or a penal colony. The marriages of Rocks people thus seem to have stood a better chance of survival than those, for example, of the overseers counted in Aveling's study. Of forty couples who could be traced from 1819, only fifteen were still together.⁷²

While the causes of separation were unknown in 29 cases, fifteen couples had been separated by the death of a spouse, and it is very likely that death, rather than marital disharmony, ended many other marriages. A brief survey of the 'Report of Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals 1811-1825' gives the impressions that over a third of the deaths were those of people in their 30s and 40s, while about a quarter were over fifty. The average lifespan in the colony was still under 50 by mid century. A husband and wife could not take their life together into old age for granted; children often lost one or both parents, and could not expect to know their grandparents. In many of the cases on the Rocks, the death was the result of a sudden fatal illness. James Church, whose wife Dinah followed him to the colony, developed a severe cough and died one night in his hammock at the dockyard. Daniel Boyle died suddenly in 1824, leaving his wife, the native born Mary Chipp, with two children.⁷³

There is evidence of great grief expressed by some bereaved partner, as we saw in the lamentations of Stephen Wain. Charlotte Coss' family 'deplore[d] the loss of a kind and affectionate mother' when she died in 1829; Alice Flynn was mourned by a huge funeral

⁷² Karskens, Analysis of District Constables' Notebooks; Aveling, 'Bending the bars', p153.

⁷³ CSC R6024 p1ff; Atkinson and Aveling, Australians 1838, pp82, 113, and Wray Vamplew (ed.), Australians: Historical Statistics, Sydney, Fairfax Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987, pp60-61. See also Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, pp45-52. Re James Church, see inquest 10 August 1822, R2233 p309-14, AONSW. A witness asked Church, who was suffering from a severe cough, 'why he did not go to the Hospital', to which Church replied 'that he would rather die than go to the Hospital'; which he did. Re Daniel Boyle, SG 15 July 1824.
procession. The husband of Jane Mahar, who died sometime before 1815, had memorial in praise of his wife inscribed on her headstone:

As much esteemed as woman need be
A Loving Mother a Relief to Poverty
Farewell my Children my Companion dear
Weep not for me not drop a silent tear
But let this lesson in your memory come
She is gone for us to prepare a home.

Once more, it is the material comforts provided by the wife and mother which were praised, the loss of her companionship and care is bitterly felt, and even in death she was ‘preparing a home’ for her family.

But while widows of the middle classes in nineteenth century America and Europe rarely remarried, Sydney people, and widows especially, displayed much more traditional pragmatism in their behaviour. As Aries writes of seventeenth century bereavement: ‘Someone who lost a husband or wife tried to replace him or her as soon as possible...this does not mean that there is no regret for the deceased.’ Stone also claims that remarriage was very common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but declined in the eighteenth. In Sydney, once more, older customs held fast. Most Rocks widows and widowers seem to have remarried, with less regard to age differences than to economic advantages, and there was no taboo or elaborate etiquette regarding the time which elapsed between death and remarriage. Mary Chipp lost Daniel Boyle in 1824 but married another ex-convict Thomas Ward and had a third son by 1826. Isaac Nichols married again within four months of his first wife’s death by self-drowning in 1804. Andrew Coss remarried less than two years after the highly-esteemed Charlotte died.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{74} Re Charlotte Coss’ death see \textit{Australian} 27 March 1827; Andrew Coss’ remarriage, see St Philip’s Register, \textit{CSC} R6024 entry for 14 November 1830; re Alice Flynn, \textit{Australian} 9 June 1825; Mary Ward, formerly Boyle, listed in \textit{Census} 1828; re Isaac Nichols, see entry in \textit{ADB}; Arnold, \textit{Journal}, transcriptions of epitaphs, entry for 21 June 1815, ML C720; Philippe Aries, \textit{The Hour of Our Death}, translated by Helen Weaver, London, Penguin, 1987, fp 1977, p326. Stone, \textit{Family, Sex and Marriage}, p46.
What emerges from this examination of actual marriages is that marriage was one of those areas of everyday Rocks life which remained largely pre-industrial. The habits and outlooks of Rocks people had far more in common with the traditional societies described by Gillis, Stone, Aries and others, than with more modern ideas of respectability relating to sexual behaviour, the roles of husbands and wives, common law marriages, domestic strife, separation, and remarriage which arose and spread slowly with the commercial and industrial revolutions. Pragmatism, not sentimentality, nor fear of social stigma, was the defining characteristic of married life, and concern with material security was still paramount in what was, after all, still ‘this transient life’.

Yet the strong evidence of affection, consideration, loyalty and companionship between Rocks couples calls into question the idea asserted by Stone and others that traditional marriages and family life among the lower orders were wholly brutal, nasty and short. Questionable, too, is the idea that affection, and love and companionship are simply ‘constructs’ which were ‘invented’, or only emerged with the rise of living standards and the consumer revolution of the eighteenth century. This view must be also questioned when we examine the relationship between parents and children.
‘My Children I love as my life’: Birth, Childhood and Growing Up

The children of Sydney’s convicts were often described in the early years as neglected, their parents too immoral, lazy and drunk to care for them. Some historians have adopted this view uncritically, including, ironically, Miriam Dixson. Her feminist critique argues the oppression and exploitation of female convicts rendered them so debased that it extinguished all maternal instincts; they failed to give their children a ‘stable family life’. Alternately, Portia Robinson argued for the opposite view: the sturdiness and rectitude of the ‘rising generation’ showed that their convict parents (particularly mothers) had brought them up well, had nurtured and cared for them, and that the observations of the elite were merely uninformed prejudice.75

This paradox, once more, invites exploration. If so much of life on the Rocks was pre-industrial, perhaps child rearing was also of the older mode. What would this entail? Lawrence Stone claimed that in the pre-industrial centuries children were not cherished, shown affection, well-cared for or mourned when they died. The high rate of infant and child mortality, for example, is interpreted to mean that parents were so accustomed to losing their offspring that they were hardened and unperturbed by child-death, or as McKendrick asserts, they could not bear the ‘emotional attachment to transient life’. Generally, adults did not bother to ‘invest’ time, money or emotional bonds in their children, the family unit was a transient phenomenon because of high mortality rates, and the practice of fostering children out rendered the ‘parent-child relationship still more tenuous’. Hence, by implication, deep affection between parent and child, and the impulse to care for children are not part of basic human instinct, but recent cultural constructs. Stone’s work was an extrapolation of the ideas of Philippe Aries, who argued that pre-modern people had no concept of childhood as

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separate or different from adulthood, and that hence that the notion of childhood itself, similarly, is a relatively modern construct. 76

These ideas have been strongly refuted, however, by Shulamith Shahar. Her study presented extensive material to the contrary: in spite of poor and often otherwise brutal lives, parents of all ranks strove to care for and nurture their children as best they could, in terms of their own cultural contexts. She argues that the bonds of affection, what we might call ‘love’, are clearly evident, and makes the fundamental point that ‘the continued existence of a society is impossible without the acknowledgment...that...the child has need of nurturing and protection to survive.’ 77

Yet, it is clear that what constituted ‘childhood’ and appropriate treatment of children was nevertheless quite different in pre-industrial society from what it is today. Instead of what might be termed the modern ‘child-centred family’, with its accompanying idealized and moralized images of ‘childhood’, ‘motherhood’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘fatherhood’, traditional societies seem to have focused on children less as a separate group, but as integrated and involved in the family/household unit, as well as into wider social activities. Hence, Aries described children at all manner of social events, often with specific ritualistic roles to play. They were found everywhere, from the lowest of drinking houses to the most solemn of religious events, at hangings and in processions. 78 There is thus little evidence of

76 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, pp48, 52, 113-135, 295-299; McKendrick et al, Birth of a Consumer Society, p286; Philippe Aries, Centuries of Childhood, Introduction, pp7-9, and loc cit; see also Peter Laslett, The world we have lost, London, Methuen, 1965.


children considered, or perhaps sentimentalised, as needing to remain ignorant and innocent of the adult world, by being separated from it by customs and institutions.

Another important phenomenon was that in traditional societies, the child was seen less as a unique and irreplaceable individual than as part of the great chain of being. Hence the medieval practice of giving the same name to two siblings in the expectation that one would die; or giving a newborn the same name of a sibling who had died. Stone claims that these practices died out in the early eighteenth century with the rise of individualism and the modern idea that ‘names were highly personal and could not be readily transferred from child to child’.  

The hard facts of life and death also affected attitudes to children. While the blanket depiction of parents in earlier centuries as callous, cruel and uncaring are clearly incorrect, a certain measure of pragmatism meant that children were considered as mouths to feed, and bodies to clothe at least until they could contribute to family and household themselves. The prospects of, say, the illegitimate newborn among the labouring poor were never good. Children were described and considered as ‘encumbrances’, the burden and responsibility they entailed was openly acknowledged, although this did not rule out love, affection and care.

Neil McKendrick devoted one of the chapters in The Birth of a Consumer Society to a discussion of the way that in the eighteenth century children first became one of the new ‘sales targets’ of new practices of consumption, through all manner of toys, books and entertainment. The elements which made this possible were surplus income and ‘a preoccupation with the child’s future and his or her standing in society’, a new view of children. This preoccupation with the improved quality of life for the next generation among

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79 Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p57.

80 Shahar, Childhood, Introduction.
the upper and growing middling ranks may be read in the growth of schools, in the proliferation of literature specifically for children, in the exhibitions of curiosities, zoos, puppet shows, circuses, panoramas and so on to which children were taken, and in the boom in manufactured toys and games (board games, jigsaw puzzles, fashion dolls) with which children were increasingly indulged. By the mid-nineteenth century manufacturers were also producing lines of cheap toys specifically for the children of the poor. These ‘Bristol toys’ - carts, horses, omnibuses, chaises- sold for a penny, but were nevertheless still regarded as a luxury; one manufacturer claimed he could ‘tell what’s up with the working and poor people by the state of my trade’.

Few Australian historians have written about children, and when they do, the studies tend to focus on adults’ treatment of them. Jan Kociumbas in her survey of the growth of public intervention in child-rearing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries claimed that

The fact [is] that relatively little can be known of actual practice of families in the past, while a great deal can be discerned about the adults who created and transmitted theories about ideal child-raising.

Further, even when we can find out about actual children, these would only be ‘the articulate few’. Such assertions are open to question. While it is certainly easier to research the ‘theorizing adults’, there is also a wealth of information about ordinary children’s experiences, and, for this early period at least, it casts doubt on the interpretation of children’s lives simply as the victims of an all-powerful hegemonic state or social system.

How, then, were children viewed and treated in the early Rocks? We may start, once more, with Michael Hayes and his family. Hayes and his wife Elizabeth had eight children in quick

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81 McKendrick et al, Birth of a Consumer Society, Chapter 7; Walvin, A Child’s World, p96.

succession between 1805 and about 1820, as well as the child of Elizabeth’s first marriage, Francis Davies. Michael in a way recreated his own lost Irish family by naming many of them for his own siblings: Mary, the oldest, a ‘promising, fine child’ was named for his sister; Richard, for his brother, a learned priest, and Patrick and John for other brothers. The Hayes household in Harrington Street was thus filled with the familiar names of home. Eliza, Ellen, and later the more modish Amelia were possibly Elizabeth’s choices.

These children were often in Hayes’ letters and in 1812 he told his brother Patrick that he could not leave the colony because of them, writing ‘my children I love as my life’. He had ambitions for them - he wanted Mary to return to Ireland to his sister or mother, he wished that bright, studious young Richard could have learnt Latin and Greek from his namesake uncle, and perhaps become a priest like him. But, fantasies aside, for the main part, ‘my only object is to acquire a little competency in order to give them an independence’. This was for the main part achieved: the boys were apprenticed out and the girls found husbands.

Yet the words of deep, flashing sentiment stand alongside far more blunt and pragmatic words of a man who was also very down-to-earth. ‘My family is very large’ he wrote in 1816 ‘say eight children’, as though he had not counted them lately, ‘this impedes any progress I endeavour to attain here’. Here, the beloved children are considered, at the same time, ‘encumbrances’, as they were commonly regarded in traditional society. The Hayes were at one stage well-off dealers, Michael was partly educated and an admirer of education and learning. But, like most other Rocks children, the Hayes children were allowed to roam the town with their friends at will. In 1819 four-year-old John was almost killed when he was trampled by a restive horse while playing with another young child on the pavement in busy George Street, down the slope from the family home. His shoulder was broken, and his stomach and arm crushed by the animal. Reporting the incident Gazette editor George Howe delivered his usual exasperated lecture about the necessity for better protecting children who,
from the 'too frequent carelessness of parents', suffered 'burns and scalds, drowning in wells, kicks from horses'. The worst and commonest kind of 'neglect' was this 'suffering of infants to gad about the street without a guide'. The attitudes of Michael and Elizabeth Hayes towards their children was typical of Rocks people. They encompassed deep love, together with pragmatism and a measure of 'carelessness', paradoxical to modern eyes, and were clearly little affected by more modern notions of childrearing.\textsuperscript{83}

These traditional ambivalent, and seemingly paradoxical, attitudes are also to be found in Governors' despatches. The convicts' 'charming children' (for they were described as 'robust, comely, and well-made') were also heavy burdens on the stores. Yet the duty to provide for them was not denied. 'I cannot see their children in want' Hunter wrote firmly of the soldiers whose pay was insufficient to support their families. The great numbers of children were also something of a surprise to visitors expecting to see a prison colony, and they were the most obvious and insistent evidence of the settlement developing in quite the opposite direction.\textsuperscript{84} As we have seen, the Rocks in 1822/23 was dominated by households made up of families with children, and children constituted just over a third of its population.

In spite of the appearance of health and well-being in the children, it was nevertheless assumed that convicts were bad parents. Hence King's much quoted reports that children were 'abandoned to every kind of wretchedness and vice' by their 'unnatural parents'. This may have been simply rhetoric employed to ensure that the orphanage he had established for

\textsuperscript{83} Hayes, letters to his brother Richard Hayes, 25 November 1812, 23 December 1816, and to his mother, 4 April 1817 and 31 January 1825 A3586. The eight children mentioned in 1816 probably included Frances Davies, Elizabeth's daughter by her first marriage, of whom Hayes wrote in 1817: 'My eldest daughter is married'; his oldest daughter by Elizabeth, Mary, did not marry until 1824, Mutch Index ML; SG 2 October 1819.

\textsuperscript{84} HRA, Hunter to Portland, 20 June 1797, Vol 2 24; Malaspina, 'Loose notes...', note 4, p150; Mann, Present Picture, p61; for discussion see Kociumbas, 'Children and Society', pp1-2.
them would be approved. He did cite the ‘children of both sexes going about the streets in a most neglected manner’ and claimed that the confinement of the orphanage was the only means of ensuring ‘some change in the manners of the next generation’. As with elite views on convict marriage, this seems in part the effect of unfamiliarity with the cultural norms of common people. What was considered among them to be acceptable means of childrearing were seen by the elite to be immoral and neglectful. These failings focused mainly on manners and habits, particularly the lack of physical restriction of children to certain spaces.

Critical comment often focused on convict women as ‘bad mothers’ and the legacy of this is the ongoing historical debate on the same subject. But consideration is scarcely given to what it was like to give birth and bring up a child from the perspective of these women themselves. The first aspect to note was the reported fecundity of women transported to New South Wales. Women who had thought themselves infertile became pregnant, and many conceived on or after the voyage and gave birth soon after they arrived. Better and regular food supplies and clothing, and a better climate were perhaps partly responsible. There was apparently little stigma attached to illegitimacy: they were called ‘natural children’, and in 1806 outnumbered the legitimate by 1,025 to 807. In 1821 ‘the great majority of children were still illegitimate’. In the early years, all children were given rations from the Government store if necessary, and by the late 1810s and 1820s, impoverished mothers could, as a last resort, apply to be victualled as ‘Objects of Charity’. These factors meant that the prospects for the newborn with unmarried parents in New South Wales were probably considerably better than they would have been in England or Ireland.86

85 HRA, King to Secretaries of the Treasury, 7 July 1800, and King to Portland, 9 September 1800, Vol 2 524-25, 534; King to Portland, 21 August 1801, and King to John King, 21 August 1801, Vol 3 123, 244.

86 Mann, Present Picture, p61; Malaspina, ‘Loose Notes...’ p151; HRA, Bligh to Windham, 7 February 1807, Vol 6 123; Grocott, Convicts, Clergy and Churches, p75. For discussion of grim conditions for children of the labouring poor in England see Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage.
The arrival of these children created a burden for women and caused them pain and risk. This does not rule out the possibility that children also brought some measure of satisfaction and consolation, that they may have helped bring women who were strangers together. Women insisted on caring for the children in houses themselves, and thus refused to work elsewhere, prompting the early male chroniclers to grumble incessantly, and rather illogically. Tench described the jubilation of women when a ship arrived in the harbour:

women with children in their arms running to and fro with distracted looks, congratulating each other and kissing their infants with the most passionate and extravagant marks of fondness.\(^7\)

These are hardly the actions of women who cared nothing for their children. But, at the same time, women did not define themselves solely as ‘mothers’. Giving birth, suckling and caring for children were obviously demanding and important but were not their only functions, and they do not seem to have altered their behaviour much, to fit any ideal notion of ‘good mothers’. They often contributed to their families’ income, were not confined to the home, had their own circles of friends and many liked to drink, dance and sing.

Mary Long (Lady Juliana 1790), the Rocks street caller we met in Section I, is a good example. She was the kind of woman elite men had in mind when they wrote about female convicts. Convicted for a violent robbery at 25, she was reprieved from the gallows, arrived in 1790 and was shortly after sent to Norfolk Island. There she was flogged once for striking and abusing a heavily pregnant woman, and a second time for ‘improper language’. Her hair was cut off and she was sent to Cascade. She was so troublesome that she was continually sent back and forth between Sydney and the island.

By 1801 she was back in Sydney, probably with a baby daughter Mary (born about mid-1800) and possibly already living on the Rocks. A son, Thomas, was born to Thomas Petrie in

\(^7\) Tench, First Four Years, p169.
1804, and he was probably the infant she was ‘diverting’ with her cries of ‘Hot Bunbury Cakes’ while her neighbour’s house was being robbed in 1805. Perhaps the trial of her cohorts prompted her to move away from the town, for by 1806 she and her children were with James Ward on a rented 50 acre farm at Windsor. The couple never married but had three sons (James born 1806, William born 1809 and John born 1811). Ward was one of those ex-convict small farmers whose earlier attempts at cultivation were beleaguered by drought, flood and debt. Charles Grimes had described him as a ‘worthless character’. By 1810 they were doing better, but applications for their own land were unsuccessful. The relationship ended suddenly when James was bitten by a snake in 1812 and died. Mary stood by his body in the paddock, screaming. Neighbours who came running thought she had lost her mind.88

Although Robinson claims that Mary Long successfully managed the farm on her own, becoming a ‘family farming woman of the bush’, by 1814 she and her children were lodgers in the house of a violent couple Dennis McCarthy and Jane Bayley (this is also recounted by Robinson). As a witness in McCarthy’s trial for assault, Mary told the jury she had been walking the floor in their house with an ailing child in her arms. In 1818 the local clergy and magistrates were asked to suggest deserving boys for admittance to the new Male Orphan School; they included three of the Ward boys, now aged ten, eight and seven on the list. Other mothers were described as too poor to bring up their sons, but Mary was still reputed to be ‘a very bad character and the children been much neglected’. James could ‘tell his letters’ but not the other two; John was described favourably as ‘a fine open countenance youth’. He and William were particularly recommended ‘if an objection is made to so many of a family’, and it was they who were accepted.

The Orphan School was in George Street and so Mary, following her sons, returned to the Rocks in about 1819, moving in with an ex-convict labouring man Thomas Bristow (*Barwell* 1798) in Cambridge Street as his ‘housekeeper’. Her oldest son Thomas became a mariner, and she wanted the same for William, petitioning the Orphan School Committee for him to be apprenticed to the merchant Joseph Underwood ‘to be brought up as a mariner’ in 1822. Another son, (probably James) also went away to sea, for a time at least, but in this case without her sanction, and she petitioned the Governor with her objection:

One of my sons his (sic) ’prentice on board the vessel *Glory of Richmond*...[another son] went on board to take his leave of his brother...Captain Griffiths Detained him on board and prevailed on him to stop on board and sign articles for six months without my sanction or being cleared out of the Port though he is a native... He [the Captain] has used me verry ill by so doing for I assure you Sir he [her son] was a great help to me when he was here.

The fourth son, John, was eventually apprenticed to the Rocks shoemaker, Thomas Jones, after Thomas Bristow petitioned on his behalf in 1825, saying John was his ‘God child’. Evidently he had developed some concern for her son’s welfare.⁸⁹

Mary showed continued interest and care for her sons, perhaps coming to rely on them in later life (as ‘he was a great help to me’ suggests). But it is unlikely that she was transformed by her motherhood into the ‘good woman’ that ‘good mothers’ were supposed to be, as the Windsor magistrates’ report suggests. The *Gazette* was peppered during the 1820 with reports of a Mary Long or Mary Ward being among the many women the Rocks

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⁸⁹ Robinson, *Women of Botany Bay* compare pp169 and 237; SG 25 June 1814; ‘Return of Male Children in the several districts of the Hawkesbury recommended by the clergy and Magistrates...as Objects of Charity for the intended Male Orphan Institution’, 25 July 1818, CSC R6047 4/1740 p253-54; and list of boys accepted, CSC F3307 4/7208 pp3-4; District Constables’ Notebooks; Application of Mary Ward to the Male Orphan Institution CSC R6040 4/400 pp50-52 and Mary Long, Petition, CSC 4/1770 p42; Thomas Bristow, Petition, 15 February 1825, CSC R6063 4/1785 p103.
constables regularly arrested and locked up to appear before the Magistrates for drunkenness, riot, being a 'streetwalker'. Perhaps none of them were this Mary Ward; but perhaps they were.

At the same time, her place of living remained steady, for she was still with Thomas Bristow in 1828, not listed as his wife, but working as a laundress at his house. Three of her sons, Thomas, now 25, James 22, and John 18 had returned to the Rocks to live with her. Her household thus comprised her own family and long-time inhabitants, probably old friends. Like many other women, she now went by the name of her defacto husband, Ward, although he was long dead and they had never been married. She estimated herself to be 46, though she must have been closer to sixty.90

There are those two striking images of Mary Long with an infant in her arms: one where she cries out to assist in a robbery, the other where she soothes a sick child while drunken, violent argument rages around her. In embodying the two images, she was the kind of convict woman that typically confounded her educated betters, uninhibited where drinking, carousing, sex and a little petty theft were concerned (all of which were less tolerated and increasingly considered ‘offences’ as the decades passed) yet living independently in the Rocks and producing fine children for whom she obviously cared a great deal, striving to keep them together, living near them, petitioning on their behalf, defending her right to authority over them. The motherhood of Rocks women is strongly evident, but was not the sort that carried with it much sentimentality, nor any sense that mothers must behave in the

90 Census, 1828; Flynn, Second Fleet, entry for Mary Long; see SG 23 December 1815 (escaped from Female Factory), 23 December 1820 (escaped from the Female Factory with Mary Anderson, possibly another Rocks widow), July 14 1825 (sentenced to the stocks for being drunk and disorderly), 13 September 1826 (‘Mary Ward, free, an old, incorrigible and irreclaimable offender, found drunk and disorderly in the streets’), 25 February 1826 (sentenced to stocks for disorderly conduct), 20 September 1826 (Factory for six weeks), 1 November 1826 (stocks), 4 November 1826 (Factory for six months).
‘moral’ ways of the elite. The argument over ‘good’ or ‘bad’ mothers thus misses the point entirely.

Mary Long/Ward’s story, and that of her sons, was typical in other ways. The death of the father during their infancy was still a common enough event in early nineteenth century Sydney. Many children could expect to lose one or both parents, to be fostered out or to be supported by a step-parent. Mary was using the orphanage and Thomas Bristow to act as their father would have: to find them apprenticeships, to make sure they gained ‘an independence’. Many fatherless boys were placed at the orphanage for the same reason, and their mothers were not necessarily in dire financial situations. The number of Rocks boys who follow their father’s trade and sometimes worked with them also attests to the importance of the father’s role. Fathers who left the colony deserting wives and children were considered to be truly failing in their duties, as well as putting unwanted burden on the government stores. Fathers who worked independently to support their families were considered worthy of reward and encouragement. Children, like marriage and houses, were badges of worth. As noted above men were sometimes seen with their children: Isaac Nichols was holding his child in his arms in the George Street while he talked with a neighbour; butcher Richard Cheers was ‘up and as usual about the house with...the children’ early in the mornings. Fathers took their children on fishing trips on the harbour (despite the risks); fathers searched anxiously and hollered when children were lost in the bush. These are only

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91 See list of boys accepted, which include the sons of Rocks widows such as publican Elizabeth Mountford/Cassidy, the owner of the Parramatta passage boats, Ann Mash/Chapman, and the baker, later nurse, Mary Anderson. See ‘List submitted by Thomas Cowper for the Male Orphan School’ 13 July 1818, CSC R6047 4/1740 4/1740; and ‘List of 117 Boys rec’d into Male Orphan School 1819-24’, CSC F3307 4/7208 p1ff.
a few everyday glimpses, but they suggest men who were not necessarily detached, uncaring or indifferent towards their children, nor felt any shame at being seen with them.\textsuperscript{92}

The collective attitude of the people towards children generally was fundamentally similar to the official view: their need and natural right to care was recognised. Hence, blended families on the Rocks were very common (making up around 20% of family groups in 1822/23), and do not seem to have caused any friction. There are numerous instances of husbands and wives taking on the burden of their spouses’ children (illegitimate, or by a former husband, wife or partner). In many cases the relationship between step-children and step-parent seem to have developed beyond simply material necessity. Edward Redmond seems to have regarded his stepson John De Riveau as his own. Similarly Samuel Thorley cared for and brought up Thomas Parnell, the son of his wife Agnes by an earlier relationship, with his own children and ensured that he was endowed with a farm just as they were. Thomas Bristow petitioned on behalf of John Ward; William Chandler was prepared to take on his new partner’s deaf and disabled son as his apprentice. The case of George Cribb, who vanished after his wife’s death leaving at least one of his step-children in an orphanage seems to be atypical: for many the bonds developed in the blended family and household were lasting. This was also a reflection of households and families which were more traditionally open and ‘porous’, hence easily accommodating and including stepchildren, servants and even lodgers as members. They thus contrast with ‘closed off’ household of the later nineteenth century, in which the family, its servants kept at an increasing distance, retreated into the private domestic world, sealed off and repelling outsiders.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{92} See HRA, Hunter to Portland, 20 June 1797, Vol 2 24; inquest on Margaret Cheers, CSC R6021 4/1819 p77; papers from trial of Isaac Nichols, 21 March 1809, CJC R2652 5/1150 P112 AONSW, SG 30 October 1803, 26 February 1804.

\textsuperscript{93} See Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, pp22, 27, 66-75.
Stone characterises the relationships between parents and children among common people in eighteenth century England as capricious and violent, though he could not say whether the reason for this was 'cultural' or 'economic':

Among the mass of the very poor...the common behaviour of many parents towards their children was often unpredictable, sometimes indifferent or cruel...They were in the habit of treating children with rough, even extravagant affection in good times, and with casual indifference and...great brutality, when in drink or in bad times...In a society which was generally horribly cruel to animals, children tended to be treated in a similar manner.\textsuperscript{94}

But the children of the Rocks and Sydney do not appear to have been treated brutally. Beatings scarcely appears in the records in the way that other aspects of everyday life do, though some measure of physical punishment may have been taken for granted. On one occasion a mother accused her husband of beating their seven-year-old daughter and causing her death. The court took this accusation seriously enough to order the exhumation of the child's body. A witness, the family's lodger reported that he had seen the father 'take a few twigs out of a broom' and give her 'a few smart smacks on the neck, shoulder and arms' as well as striking her on the side of the head. But he also said the child was 'in habits of intimacy with both the father and mother' and this was the only time he had seen her beaten. It seems that the mother and the court were much concerned over the effect of this one episode, suggesting that the beating of children may not have been routine and acceptable. The doctors told the court that she had died of a brain tumour; the father was acquitted.\textsuperscript{95}

The most compelling evidence for the deep collective belief in the infant's right to life and care is found in the reaction to infanticide. The mother of a child found drowned in a cesspit in 1807 was the object of the people's fury and disgust. She died 'in anguish' soon after the

\textsuperscript{94} Stone, \textit{Family, Sex and Marriage}, p294-5.

\textsuperscript{95} SG 22 January 1804. The family concerned, the Grimshaws, later moved to the Rocks.
birth, but her body was nonetheless dragged up to the hanging grounds ‘amid the shouts and revilings of a number of spectators’ and buried under the gallows by men from the gaol gang. Although infanticide was apparently a common occurrence in England, particularly among young servant women, in early Sydney, where the difficulties of social stigma and support were not so severe, it was something of a shock. Howe claimed that never before in the colony, where many children were illegitimate but nevertheless supported, cared for and admired, had ‘such a crime...disgraced humanity’. He noted that the manners of the young woman ‘were not contracted among the very lowest orders’.

Public fury and revulsion on this occasion also explains why the discovery of a stillborn child’s body always resulted in an inquest, to make sure that infanticide had not occurred. These particular inquest records are atypical in the sense that they are about births where things went wrong, while normal live births taking place in Rocks houses must have been an everyday occurrence. It is difficult to glean information about the actual processes and practices of childbirth partly because it was women’s work, to a large extent hidden and unrecorded. These inquests, then, do allow a rare window onto the event, and they underscore the continuing risks of childbirth for women and babies.

Although a few women delivered their babies at the hospital, and were said to have been charged the considerable sum of between 5 and 20 guineas for a doctor to attend, this was probably unusual, since both the hospital and the doctors themselves were held in low esteem. Most gave birth in their own houses, with the women of the household, and probably also from the neighbourhood, in attendance. Mary Johnson probably helped at the birth of her neighbour Elizabeth Rickers’ sixth child, Charlotte, in April 1821. Midwives like Ann Jones,

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96 SG 14 June 1807; a similar account of public outrage is given in Mann, Present Picture, p12. Compare to the commonness of infanticide in England described in Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p297. See also discussion in Byrne, Criminal Law, pp250-58.
who lived in Cambridge Street were called upon by women of the Rocks and other parts of the town. Esther Wells was midwife to the wives of soldiers of the 48th Regiment. It is possible that convict and ex-convict women, in the absence of their own family - mothers, aunts, sisters - came to rely more heavily on their neighbours at times like these than they might have at home. By the 1820s a Dr MacCurdy who lived at 53 Cambridge Street advertised that he would ‘attend poor women in labour for 15 shillings’, though it is unclear how much his services were sought rather than those of Ann Jones. Certainly doctors took every opportunity to discredit the midwives and their skills.\footnote{SG 9 November 1827; Surgeon Bland wrote of the birth of a stillborn child attended by a midwife that ‘no proper person was in attendance’; inquest on stillborn male infant, 1 August 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p317.}

Women prepared for the arrival by gathering baby clothing and a set of ‘child-bed linen’ specifically for the birth. A pregnant women who lost her ‘little store’ to a thief excited much sympathy. When Ann Mash’s hut-mate Ann Flavell stole her dead infant’s clothes in 1791 she was tied to a cart and whipped. There were probably also cots or cradles prepared, which were placed by the fireside for warmth, though this sometimes resulted in accidents. Otherwise mothers took their babies into their own beds. Breastfeeding was apparently universal among all ranks at least into the 1830s; wetnurses were only hired when the mother died. Occasionally a brief and unsentimental birth notice appeared in the \textit{Gazette}, for example ‘On Wednesday night Mrs Cupid safely delivered of a fine boy’ was the way the birth of John Cubitt was announced in 1803.\footnote{SG 16 July 1809, 26 May, 22 December, 1805, 8 May 1803, 21 May 1809; Flynn, \textit{Second Fleet}, entry for Ann Mash; Atkinson and Aveling, \textit{Australians 1838}, pp76-78; see advertisements for wetnurses in early issues of \textit{SG}.}

Childbirth was an event from which men were excluded. The cries of women in labour made them feel uneasy and useless, and there were still some very old fears attached to the event. Something of this emerges in the evidence given by John Howes, a convict who lodged with
Mary Harris in Phillip Street in 1821. He said that after Mary Harris (who was a widow and had a two year old child) was ‘brought to bed’ at about four o’clock in the afternoon, he went ‘backwards and forwards’ all over the town for help. He went first ‘to Major Antill (he being the visiting member of the Sick Society) in order to be put in the way of getting a doctor’. Antill sent him to the Reverend Hill, who sent a note with him to Dr Bland. Bland was not at home, and his ‘young man’, presumably an assistant, only accompanied him as far as the hospital, and then gave him another note for Dr Bowman. Off went John Howes to Woolloomooloo where Bowman lived, only to be told to ask Dr Allan ‘to go down to the woman’. Allan declined saying he was sick. In the meantime, Ann Jones the midwife from Cambridge Street had arrived to attend Mary Harris, together with Mary’s servant Mary Oakes. John Howes said he ‘understood’ the child was stillborn at half past ten, indicating that he was not present at the birth himself, or even at the house.

Mary Harris kept the baby’s body at the house, and the next day Major Antill and his wife called in, presumably on behalf of the ‘Sick Society’ (probably the Benevolent Society):

They went in and saw the child - they ordered Mary Harris to get it buried that evening - I knocked up a bit of a box and Mary Oakes put it in - I took it down to Woolloomooloo and buried it in the sand. I dug a hole about two feet deep...we made the hole with a stick and with our hands.

But the tide came in and washed away the sand and exposed the little box. The body was found later that night, and an inquest was held the next day.99

The indifference of medical gentlemen to Mary Harris’ ordeal and her lodger’s desperate pleadings casts different light on the doctors’ portrayal as humane and caring irrespective of their patients’ rank.100 Clearly the sufferings of an ex-convict woman were of no great

99 Inquest on a stillborn infant, 14 February 1821, CSC R6021 4/1819 p280-1.
100 Hughes lionizes William Redfern in these terms, Fatal Shore, p337-38.
import, and the Antills' blunt 'order' to quickly 'get rid' of the body speaks volumes for the relationship between common people and the elite in their philanthropic endeavours. It was the lodger and the servant who sought help, attended, and tried to bury the child quickly, sadly, without ceremony.

Shahar has written that in the middle ages stillbirths and babies who died before they were baptized were feared by the community. It was thought that their unchristian state would mean that they might come back to haunt the living and they were thus quickly buried in unconsecrated ground. Something of this distant fear seemed to linger among the people of early Sydney. There was a sense that stillbirths were occasions where nature, or perhaps the natural order, had gone monstrously wrong. A child who had never really lived was ill-omened and had to be disposed of quickly, often at night, with as little as possible said about it. This must have been difficult for the mother who was expecting a live baby and who would normally be surrounded by neighbours coming in to help during the lying-in. For stillborns there were no names, no funerals, no notices in the newspapers, no official graves, no loving epitaphs, and if they were discovered it was by accident.

On another occasion a soldier's wife delivered a baby which had died in utero over a week before, according to the midwife. Soon after the difficult birth, the midwife wrapped the body and placed it in a sulphuric acid box with a hinged lid. The father and two of his fellow soldiers took it up to the old burial ground, now closed, in the darkness of night, burying it next to another child they had lost. This would have been the quick end of the matter, except that some 'evil disposed person' thought the small fresh grave a 'plant' of stolen goods and dug it up; an inquest resulted. Here, there were small, private actions of

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101 'The unbaptized infant cast fear into the hearts of the living, and the stake driven into its heart [when it was buried] was intended to prevent it returning to harm them. Dread...of the return of that dead individual who had never belonged to the community of the living is both ancient and universal, but the specific dread inspired by the unbaptized... was implanted by the church itself.' Shahar, *Childhood,* p.52.
care and grieving: the wrapping, and placing of the body in a proper, though closed, burial ground so that it lay close by another lost child.\textsuperscript{102} Other bodies were buried quietly behind walls and in shallow graves, and if and when they were found the finder invariably expressed shock. This is significant, for while the sight of adult dead bodies was still fairly commonplace, the sudden exposure of an infant’s body engendered feelings of horror and dread. It was evidence that something had gone terribly wrong, whether infanticide or stillbirth.

There is evidence that labour itself and the woman giving birth was considered to be somehow in a state of physical uncleanness and moral corruption as well. Again, this has roots in traditional societies where women who died in childbirth were also refused burial in consecrated ground. Possibly it was more a male than a female perspective; birth was a female arena. The sounds of a woman in labour certainly made men feel uneasy. On one occasion a man was reluctant to investigate the groans of a badly wounded girl lying outside his house because he thought she was in labour. Men were particularly unwilling to travel on ships where women would be giving birth because of its ‘bad’ effect. One doctor wrote ‘there is no one matter which so soon contaminates the air in a crowded place and a hot climate as the unavoidable consequences of a woman lying in’. They would lack ‘the necessary means of cleanliness or fresh air’ while other passengers and the ‘unoffending babes’ would ‘experience the effects of foul, contaminated, putrid air’.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{102} Inquest on stillborn male infant, 1 August 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p317.

\textsuperscript{103} HRA, Sir John Fitzpatrick to Mr A. Graham, 26 January 1802, enclosure No 2 in Hobart to King, 30 January 1802, Vol.3 372-73. For discussion see Shahar, Childhood, p51. In the Middle Ages, women who died when pregnant or in labour were not permitted to be buried in a church, and there is evidence that the more zealous priests refused to grant them a Christian burial; sometimes they and their unbaptized infants where buried together with stakes driven through their hearts.
The Anglican rite of churching of women after childbirth expressed a kind of moral parallel to the physical fears; they were ceremonies in which women were ‘cleansed’ spiritually after the presumably corrupting experience. Some Rocks women like Elizabeth Colebrook, Elizabeth Wybrow, Elizabeth Boulton, Alice Murphy, Agnes Thorley and several others attended such ceremonies after giving birth, though many others did not.\textsuperscript{104} It is possible that these were also seen by women as ceremonies to celebrate successful birth, to give some sort of thanks for survival and recovery.

The naming of a newborn child is another area where traditional practices and attitudes are strongly evident. In a majority of cases a firstborn boy was named for his father, a girl for her mother, and subsequent babies were given the names of grandparents, aunts or uncles. Names, then, bespoke the importance of origins, of family ties and the child’s place in it and hence in the world. Names among common people were thus not much varied, and at least until the 1820s paid little heed to fashion. There were dozens of Sarahs, Anns, Janes, Marys and Elizabeths, Johns, James, Williams, Thomas’s and Georges on the Rocks. The modern notion that names could go in and out of fashion was not widely held. Names were less individual markers than signs on constancy and perpetuity, the sign of a family’s survival from past to future.

From the mid 1820s the children of merchants or of the more successful among the native born might occasionally have more elaborate and fanciful names, sometimes two each, such as the children of William Henry Chapman and Ann Chanhells. A daughter born to Andrew and Ann Goodwin in 1838 was named Australia Jubilee. Other people of means named their children for friends they admired, or patrons they wished to flatter. Robert Howe, after his religious conversion, named his children for ‘the strongest influences in his life’: Robert Mansfield, Alfred Australia, Ann Wesley and Mary McLeay commemorated his religious

\textsuperscript{104} St Philip’s Register, CSC R6024, entries for churching of women 1811-1813.
inspirers, his country, his patron. Yet he also sought to perpetuate his own name in the older manner. His first, illegitimate, son by Elizabeth Lee was born in 1819 and named Robert; a second son by his wife Ann Bird was also named Robert (or Robertus).\textsuperscript{105}

Although Stone claims that the traditional naming practices (same-naming, and naming one child after another who died) had disappeared in England in the early eighteenth century, we find similar habits quite common in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Sydney and on the Rocks. James Wilbow, a Rocks constable named two sons by different partners after himself. A variation of this practice of same-naming was Judith Simpson’s calling her three sons after their different fathers. She thus had two sons named James: James Walton and James Lucas. Clearly in this case it was more important that their parentage be recognized than their names be different, individualised.\textsuperscript{106}

It was also common for a new baby to be named for a sibling who had died. Maria Cubitt, born to Daniel Cubitt and Maria Ann Cook in 1799 was named not only for her mother, but for an older sister born in 1793. George Allwright was born two months after his fourteen year old brother George was drowned at Campbells Island in 1811; perhaps his parents felt their older son had in some measure been restored to them. Jane Morley (b1809) was named for a sister who had died in infancy in a fire eight years before. Daniel King and Susan Tirley named their second son Daniel like the first, short-lived baby. In the case of the Hayes family, this practice appears to have spanned the generations. Elizabeth and Michael Hayes lost their youngest child Amelia at some time between 1822 and 1828. Their daughter Mary married publican Francis Girrard in 1824 and bore a daughter in August 1825, naming her Amelia Ann, in remembrance of her infant sister. Michael Hayes died in September 1825

\textsuperscript{105} District Constables’ Notebooks; \textit{Census} 1828; Mutch Index, ML; \textit{ADB}, entry for Robert Howe.

\textsuperscript{106} Stone, \textit{Family, Sex and Marriage}, p57, 257; Flynn, \textit{Second Fleet}, entry for James Wilbow.
(this may have been related to his child's death) and his grandchild Amelia was not listed with her parents in the 1828 Census. Perhaps she too had died, or perhaps the 'Emmaline' Kelly, a child of four living with Elizabeth Hayes and her new husband William Kelly in Essex Lane in 1828 was really the granddaughter, Amelia, given from daughter to mother as a kind of consolation for her loss.  

The idea that names were properly transferable along the chain of being from parents to children and from child to child suggests the fundamental belief that human life was cyclical as well as transient, and that grief, loss and mourning might well turn to restoration, joy and celebration; or the reverse. These practices seem to have been more resilient and survived much longer than historians have thought, and it is possible that in a colonial society, with its severed relationships and lack of old, extensive family networks, there was a need to hold fast longer in an attempt to reassure and reassert the survival of families.

Women whose relationships and places of living were steady, tended to bear their babies at roughly two yearly intervals, suggesting that breastfeeding acted as a partly effective contraceptive. Maria Ann Cook, for example, bore twelve babies between 1793 and 1813 and lost four of them. They arrived roughly every two years and often less, (1793, 1795, 1797, 1799, 1800, 1801, 1803, c1806 1809, 1811, 1812 and 1813). It has been possible to chart the births in another large family, that of Elizabeth Boulton (nee Sandlands), wife of free arrival Thomas Boulton junior, a stonemason of Cumberland Street. Elizabeth spent

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107 See entries under these families' names in Mutch Index, ML; Flynn, Second Fleet, entries for Daniel Cubitt and Joseph Morley; re the Allwrights, SG 5 and 12 January 1811, and Dibbs, 'Notes on Extant records of Thomas Allwright...,' ML Ad 95. Re the Hayes, District Constables' Notebooks, St Mary's Registers 1820-1840s, entries for baptisms of 'Emelia' Hayes, 9 March 1821, and Amelia Ann Girard, born 14 August 1825. There are no records of the deaths of either child, although Michael Hayes omitted Amelia from the account of his children in his letter of January 1825, suggesting she had died. The birth of 'Emmaline Kelly' occurred well before the marriage of Elizabeth Hayes and William Kelly. Elizabeth also bore a son to William in 1827, (see Mutch index) but he was not listed in 1828, so presumably she lost him too.

108 For discussion see Atkinson and Aveling, Australians 1838, p106.
nearly ten of her twenty-four fertile years in pregnancy and giving birth, and practically all of it in breastfeeding and caring for small children. Between the ages of 16 and 40, she bore thirteen children (between 1807 and 1830), and all but one (Elizabeth b. and d. 1811) survived, which appears to be a remarkably low mortality rate. (Another daughter was named Elizabeth Emma in 1826).

The spaces between the births and conceiving again were between one and eighteen months, except for one space of 40 months in the late 1820s. It would seem from the chart that the babies took less milk around 14 to 18 months, and as a result, Elizabeth conceived again. Another interesting pattern is that all were conceived in the second half of the year, and hence born during the autumn and winter. This suggests a life, a household, marked out and measured by the yearly rhythms and cycles of conception and birth. The babies thus also escaped the deadly summer intestinal diseases such as dysentery which were common in Sydney and which killed adults as well as children.109

What is perhaps also significant is the closeness of the births of Elizabeth and Ann. Elizabeth died at eight months, only a month before Ann was born. Although more research is needed, it is possible that babies born very close together were in a more dangerous position than those spaced further apart. Two Cubitt babies born in consecutive years also died in early infancy. Perhaps their mothers suffered physically and were unable to feed them so well. Possibly the apparently already loose supervision even of small children was still more lax. Mothers heavy in pregnancy, busy with work could not watch and be everywhere. The latter end of pregnancy may also have been a dangerous period for toddlers. Ellis Colebrook, the eighteen-month-old son of Thomas Colebrook and Betty Wade fell into the families’ well and drowned in December 1820, just before his sister Eleanor was born in February 1821.110

109 Names and birth and death dates compiled from entries in the Mutch Index, ML.

110 Inquest on Ellis Colebrook an infant, 20 December 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p88; Mutch Index ML.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>EB's Age</th>
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<td>Henry</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>1808</td>
<td></td>
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<td>18</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1809</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Susannah</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9 mths</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>1811</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Elizabeth(d) Ann</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 mths</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mutch Index, Mitchell Library

* denotes estimated conception date
† denotes death
How were children and childhood perceived? Were their lives and development considered in terms of phases, with appropriate clothes and treatment? Babies and small children up to about the age of seven were regarded as ‘infants’. Often no recognition was given to the sex or name of infant children, who were referred to as ‘it’ or as ‘little creatures’ and identified by their parents’ names rather than their own. Boys and girls were also dressed alike in ‘frocks’ or smocks, it appears from pictorial and other evidence until they were about seven, when boys were put in breeches or trousers and girls in dresses (Fig. 50). Infants were considered innocent and helpless and their need for nurturing and protection was recognized, parents obviously took delight in them, and were devastated when they lost them. When William O’Neal’s infant daughter drowned in the family’s well, he was said to have lost ‘a remarkably fine and promising child, the admiration of neighbours, and the delight of her inconsolable parents’. But infants were not considered important members of society; they had not yet grown enough or done enough for the wider community to know them by their names or even by their sex. In the 1828 Census the names of the children are occasionally spelt without a capital letter to indicate this lower status, lined up in order of birth below the father and mother. Young children who died were often described as having been ‘fine’ and ‘promising’, underscoring that their bright potential as adults had been lost.

As Shahar argues, this cannot be interpreted to mean that there was no ‘concept’ of childhood. On the contrary, the ‘junior orders’, as George Howe called them, were, like the other orders and ranks, recognised as having their own integral place in society. But like the children of earlier societies, and unlike our own, Rocks children were not separated from the activities of adults, their time was not strictly regimented by schooling, their games and

111 See pictures reproduced in Cedric Flower, Clothes in Australia - A Pictorial History, Sydney, Kangaroo Press, 1984, fp 1968, pp 17, 27, 32; Rocksman John Hopkins lost his son, John, when ‘the skirt of its frock’ became ‘entangled with the spout of a teakettle’ and the child was scalded, SG 19 June 1808 and Mutch Index; SG 24 July 1808 mentions ‘children’s round-abouts and shifts’ in a list of stolen clothing; re O’Neal child, SG 23 March 1806.
roamings were not constantly supervised by adults. Children were innocent, but they had to learn about life and about how their society functioned. Most of the modest houses of the Rocks had only one or two rooms, so children’s and adults’ lives were not separated. Children witnessed everything which occurred: sex, illness, violence, death, birth, as well as working, cooking, sewing, hospitality, eating, drinking, ironing, singing and dancing, and so on. Recall the words of the constable who intervened to stop Thomas Crump beating Mary Johnson, ‘she and all children crying murder’: the Prentice and Crump children were present and witnesses. ¹¹² In some homes they grew up in close contact with the convicts assigned to their parents as servants, sharing the table and the limited number of rooms. There seems to have been no concern that this might be deleterious.

Parents seem to have enjoyed their children’s company. They were taken in boats on fishing, visiting and timber-gathering trips, despite the dangers of water to people who could not swim. Some were taken to the races with their parents, like the seven year old son of Samuel and Agnes Thorley who wandered onto the track as the horses came thundering down and was badly injured, though he survived. They played amidst the increasingly busy traffic on George Street and around the wharf. In a community with few moral qualms about drinking, they were to be found in pubs and drinking houses, or sent to fetch wine or beer for their parents. George Howe once admonished a publican for being rude to a child sent to fetch wine for her ailing sister. A constable at a trial for pickpocketing said that his child had read a money bill for him in a hotel. One of George Howe’s ‘correspondents’ (probably himself) observed that on Sunday evenings he saw ‘on every avenue...a juvenile multitude, variously amusing themselves...winning dumps from one another’ in gambling games, a sure sign of their inheriting the ‘vices’ of their parents: gaming and not observing the Sabbath. ‘If parents wish to see their children prosper’, he warned on another occasion ‘let them admonish them

¹¹² Papers from Supreme Court committal hearing: Thomas Crump, 24 April 1821 R1975 p188 AONSW.
against the *innocent* amusements of Chuck farthing - because [it] *resembles* gaming, and *Gaming...rank[s] highly in the catalogue of Vices which disgrace mankind.* 'Chuck-farthing’ seems to be yet another means by which children learnt and rehearsed for life as an adult.\(^{113}\)

Children witnessed bloody floggings; they joined the grim processions to the hanging grounds, heard the last speeches of the condemned, confessional or defiant, saw them suspended. Curious children were among the crowd which jostled into the old hospital to see a criminal’s body dissected. Observing and mimicking the rituals of visiting Muslims in their ‘celebration...in honour of the renowned Hassaen’ in 1806, the children ‘succeeded so well in imitating their manners as to give much offence, and frequently to require their instantaneous banishment’. When Elizabeth Farrell heard that her friend’s body had been washed up on the rocks in the Domain, she took her twelve-year-old son and ‘O’Hara’s boy’, the son of her neighbour, down with her to see if it was him. Thomas Wall witnessed his father beating and stabbing his mother, then took refuge with her in a neighbour’s house. Next morning he was sent back into the house, and so was first to see that his father had hanged himself.\(^{114}\)

There are also constant glimpses of children, some quite young, three or four like John Hayes, roaming and playing in groups about the town out of sight of their parents. These were the

\(^{113}\) Inquest on Joshua and Elizabeth Howells, Timothy May and Michael Mileham, 1815, CSC R6021 4/1819 p323. This family drowned while on a Sunday afternoon boat trip to Birchgrove; re Thorley child, SG 20 October 1810; re children sent to hotels, SG 16 March 1806. Sarah Quin sent a boy ‘to Mrs [Catherine] Davis for some rum’, papers from trial of Mary Turley, 1814, CCJ R2390 p288 AONSW; Evidence of Constable William Hubbard, trial of Rose Bryan, 11 August 1822, CJC R1980 p122 AONSW; SG 6 July 1806; 21 August 1808.

children of whom visitors wrote 'nothing is more common than children in the Streets' 115 and for whom Governors predicted moral ruin. Some of the games they played were dangerous by modern standards. They liked the excitement and action of the wharf in particular; gangs of roaming boys wounded one another in stone fights. At Brickfield Hill children amused themselves by igniting and burning out tree stumps in the middle of the road; others let off noisy squibs. Another of their pastimes was to sit in a road way and 'blind' themselves by pouring sand into their eyes. The Gazette reported lamentable incidents of children badly burnt and dying days or weeks later, children falling into the water and drowning by the wharf. A child was run over and killed by the Governor's carriage while playing at 'blindman'. 116

Children, as they always seem to do, also devised some of their own games in imitation of what they saw adults doing. Hence they played at 'flogging' one another, and at farming, two hoeing and one 'directing' (had they been watching government gangs at work?), and inflicting dangerous cuts on one another with hoes. In 1808 a boy was found hanged in an outhouse at the Hawkesbury, a mirror set before him. The Gazette, reporting matter-of-factly, made no comment on the impact that watching hangings had obviously had on this child. People did not seem surprised or worried, then, that innocence of infancy turned into the often brutal and dangerous actions and games of older children. A child teased by another about his having lost an eye promptly attacked his tormenter and put out his eye. On Guy Fawkes day, a 'little multitude' of boys aged between three and seven formed a 'cavalcade' for whom

115 Malaspina, 'Loose Notes...', p150.

116 SG 20 May 1804, report of a child tossed by a bullock near the lower end of the Parade ground in George Street; report of boys of eight or nine wounding one another in stone fights; 1 July 1804, report of two children who nearly drowned when they fell off the wharf; 10 September 1809, account of a three-year-old child who died three weeks after being burnt at a tree stump set alight by a group of young children. Inquest on Thomas Cowup, 5 May 1815: a witness, hearing a gunshot, thought 'Mr [Francis] Greenaway's children were firing off squibs' CSC R6021 4/1819 p45. HRA, Macquarie to Goulburn, 15 December 1817, Vol 9 733-7.
the effigy was such an ‘object of disgust’ that a ‘hundred willing hands’ soon tore it limb from limb to ‘expiate his offence’. There were deep resonances in these actions and rituals; the children learned the ways of their world through them.\textsuperscript{117}

Children probably also played with toys like marbles and dolls, and used what they found around them to create and play games of imagination. Like adults, they enjoyed bonfires, fireworks and illuminations put on for official celebrations. A ‘Galanta Show’ arrived for their amusement in 1804. But while modern commercially manufactured toys of considerable variety (‘Drums and trumpets, harps and fiddles/Mystic cards for solving riddles/coaches, curricles and horses/Infant dolls for infant nurses...’ and so on for eight more lines) were available from dealers like Sergeant James Packer from at least 1804 and earlier, there is little or no evidence that Rocks parents bought such things for their children. The archaeological evidence from Rocks sites yields a plethora of children’s toys from the latter half of the century, but they are practically non-existent in the early period. There is no mention of store-bought toys given to children in the written records. Parents sought to ensure that their children were well-fed and clothed and that they would be able to make a living as adults, to be successful in terms of their own and their parents’ rank. But they seem not to have been familiar the new ideas about children as consumer objects, indulging them with toys and games, educational or entertaining. Those diversions were still left to children themselves, or shared with adults.\textsuperscript{118}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{117} For discussion see Shahar, \textit{Childhood}, p103ff, and Walvin, \textit{A Child’s World} p95ff. Robert Hughes, \textit{Fatal Shore}, pp348, 427; SG 30 October 1803, 3 July 1808, 1 July 1804; re Guy Fawkes day, 11 November 1804, the ‘first Australian Fete of Guy Fawkes day’. In the following year the children’s celebrations included the collection of ‘a contribution of alms...in the name of the culprit, for the purpose of sending him out of this world with \textit{eclat}'. The money, however, seems to have been spent on liquor, as the participants were observed to have been drunk in the afternoon; SG 10 November 1805.

\end{footnotesize}
In considering the needless, often fatal accidents suffered by children during the middle ages, Shahar observes

Medieval people were not, apparently, endowed with imagination about factors which might cause accidents and did not learn from experience; they were, on one hand governed by their instincts and were relatively fatalistic on the other.

The passive resignation to fate, the apparent reliance on "the hope that God, through his saint, would protect them and their children" is perhaps the most troubling and difficult aspect for modern historians to understand. Similar "lack of imagination", or failure to foresee danger, is evident on the early Rocks. While babies and very young infants, the most vulnerable, were restricted to the house and garden or yard, these was not always safe havens. Children were left alone near open fires and were burnt when they were accidentally pushed in or their clothes caught fire or became entangled with a kettle spout. Babies were sometimes fatally scalded when pots of boiling water or food upturned onto their cribs. These children suffered slow and painful deaths. Elizabeth Allwright died at four when she fell into a earthenware vessel filled with ashes and lye in her yard. Her father and mother did not even miss her until about an hour later. The drowning of small children in their own family's wells on the Rocks was also a fairly common occurrence. The baker William O'Neal, constable Thomas Colebrook, Irishwoman Eleanor Flaherty and several others lost children in wells, evidently customarily left uncovered. On each occasion, Howe lamented and raged and beseeched people to cover their wells, but with little effect.

We cannot, as Shahar points out, assess the parenting skills or emotional bonds of people from such accidents alone: that would be like judging today's attitudes from the accident and

119 Shahar, Childhood, p143.

120 Ibid., p139ff; inquest on Elizabeth Allwright, 16 October 1810, CSC R6021 4/1819; household accidents SG 3 June, 1 July, 23 September 1804, 14 July 1805, 1 December 1805, 22 May, 19 June 1808; inquest on Ellis Colebrook an infant, 20 December 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p88; inquest on Martha Flaherty, 22 February 1823, R2233 p67 AONSW; SG 23 March 1806, 26 March 1803, 3 June 1804.
emergency ward of a children’s hospital, or the number of children who drown in backyard swimming pools. Yet among the early Rocks community that sense of fatalism she describes, the resigned outlook that people cannot change the course of life, mingled with that same careless pragmatism (not to bother with a heavy, cumbersome well-cover, for example) as well as the absence of impulse to control children’s time and play, to restrict them, is clearly evident. The now familiar idea of intervention, of the ever increasing control of children’s environments for their protection and benefit seems to be a hallmark of the rise of modernity.

Does this evidence indicate that Rocks parents cared little for their children, that the emotional bonds between parents and children were weak or non-existent? The reaction to the loss or death of a child, and the treatment of disabled and orphaned children suggests dimensions of emotional involvement. This is the evidence that governors and visitors (and historians) did not consider. If children generally were not valued or cared for, why was an ‘orphan, insane and helpless’ girl taken in by friends and cared for over six years? Why did the carpenter Curtis Brand decide to help a young blind boy named Joseph Love by leaving him a house and garden on the Rocks? (Love grew up, married, had a family and sheltered his large family of Goodwin in-laws in this house). Why did single or widowed mothers of the Rocks who made the decision to place their sons in the Orphan School then often try to get them back when their positions improved? Jane Chandler wrote to ask that her son William be apprenticed to her husband - ‘owing to the extreme deafness and other infirmities of the child, she was anxious to have him in her own care’. Rebecca Myers placed two of her children in the orphanages after she arrived in 1822 while she lived with Charles Bradborn as his wife in Gloucester Street. By 1828 she had married him and was established in business as a dealer and had them all back with her.\(^{121}\)

\(^{121}\) SG 5 October 1806. Re Joseph Love and the Goodwin family of Prince Street see Flynn, Second Fleet, entry for Elizabeth Sulley; SG 16 December 1826; District Constables’ Notebooks; Census 1828. Re Jane Appleton/Gammage/Chandler, see her request to the board of the Male Orphan School, Minutes of Meetings, November 1822, CSC R6040 4/400 p52. Re Rebecca Myers see District Constables’ Notebooks, and Census 1828.
While George Howe admonished parents for their laxity, he significantly also claimed that they were too fond of their children, 'a mistaken indulgence', and one reason that children were not sent to school regularly or at all. There were other reasons for this, as we shall see, but concern and affection, or parents simply missing their children, was also evident when in 1804 parents and friends had to be ordered not to visit their children at the orphanage whenever they wished to. They were told to visit only once a month, and not to bring in provisions for them, nothing 'but a few biscuits or a little fruit'.\textsuperscript{122} Clearly, people disliked being separated from their children, sought to maintain close contact with them, and worried about whether they had enough to eat. People thought of the orphanage in the same way they considered the gaol.

Similarly, many children who were really orphaned were kept out of the orphanage if at all possible. A little girl found wandering the streets was taken in by a Rocks woman in 1810, while in many other households orphans and adoptees are listed. One of the strongest pieces of evidence of the growth of the Rocks as a human community despite the tensions, the aggressive and suspicious behaviour, was that children who were orphaned and had no older brothers or sister to care for them, were very often taken in and cared for by other Rocks families. This appears to have been strongest amongst the Irish. Two of the children of Margaret and Patrick Downey of Gloucester Street by 1828 had been taken in by their neighbours Elizabeth Porter and James and Sarah Byrne; there is no trace of the parents. Eliza Finlay, the nine-year-old daughter of Elizabeth Finlay was taken in by George and Charlotte Johnson, lodging-house keepers in George Street in 1822, after her mother was sent to Newcastle for theft. By 1828 she was known as Eliza Johnson.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{122} SG 8 May 1803; 19 February 1804.

\textsuperscript{123} SG 4 August 1810; District Constables' Notebooks; Census 1828; Papers from trials of Elizabeth Finlay, 17 October 1818 (theft), CJC COD 445 p31; 2 January 1822 (receiving stolen goods), R1976 p147; also Sydney Quarter Sessions November 1825 (keeping a disorderly house) R2416 4/8442 p161, AONSW.
When children were lost, search parties were immediately sent out, calling aloud to the ‘little straggler’ then coming together with the ‘afflicted parents’ and ‘joined their lamentations’. When children were found people were overjoyed with relief. There were scenes of frantic efforts to revive children who drowned; terrible, sad scenes of women waiting at the wharves to carry the small, wet, still bodies back to the houses. Occasionally the grief of parents when a child died shows through the official coroner’s inquest. ‘The parents seem very unhappy for the loss of the child’ said the butcher John Allpress quietly of Thomas and Elizabeth Colebrook. He had been passing in Prince Street, and pulled their boy out of the well after he heard the mother’s hoarse cry of panic ‘Where’s my child?’ when she realised, too late, Ellis was missing. George Howe wrote of the grief of a mother, a mantua maker of the Rocks named Katherine (or Kit) Baker whose eleven-year-old daughter died a week after she was ‘violently burnt’ when her clothes caught fire as she was boiling a tea kettle. The mother remained by the child’s side day and night, and refused to embark on the ship she had a passage on, even though she had sold her house and possessions for the voyage.¹²⁴

Many Rocks families endured the loss of one or more of their children through accident or disease. Sometimes, like Katherine Baker, they were forced to watch their children die slowly in agony. From our own perspective, with our hospitals, painkillers, tranquillizers, anaesthetics and so on, the raw exposure to so much pain and horror when so little could be done is difficult to imagine. How could people endure such things and remain human, and carry on their normal lives? Some did succumb to despair, but others drew on the traditional stance combining stoicism, passivity, the resignation to fate as a necessary defence for survival. It did not signify that they were offhand or indifferent to their loss; it did not mean that children did not matter.

¹²⁴ Inquest on Ellis Colebrook an infant, 20 December 1820, CSC R6021 4/1819 p88; inquest on Joshua and Elizabeth Howells, Timothy May and Michael Mileham, 1815, CSC R6021 4/1819 p323. SG 30 October 1803 (search for lost child), 2 February 1806 (attempts to revive a drowned child); re Katherine (or Kit) Baker, SG 21 April, 12, 19, and 26 May 1810.
There are indications, too, that children's lives, short as they were, were worth memorializing, their loss involved mourning. When Maria Ann Cook petitioned the Governor she stated that she was the mother of twelve children. She had thus included, remembered, the four who had died in early infancy along with those who lived.\(^{125}\) If children died in accidents or through unusual diseases their passing was noted in the Gazette. In the early years the language was often plain and matter-of-fact, although it dwelt on 'shocking spectacle' and the doleful nature of such events. Later, there were signs new attitudes - when Robert and Ann Howe lost their first son in 1824, Robert wrote:

**Death:** This morning Robertus Mansfield Howe infant son of the Government Printer.

This sweet little infant was only 16 months old...All admired him for his beauty and he was too lovely to remain long among us - he is gone to 'fairer world on high'...\(^{126}\)

Howe, in so many ways out of his time in early Sydney, was voicing something new: the sentimentalization of children, and death, and the idea that children who died were at least spared 'the evils to come', their innate innocence saved from worldly corruption by death. These were attitudes which would characterise the Victorian years.

In contrast to the alleged carelessness, described by Aries, with which the bodies of dead children were treated in pre-industrial society, in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Sydney many children, even tiny babies a few weeks old, were given funerals, their names and ages written down in the church registers.\(^{127}\) Unlike the stillborn, they were buried in

\(^{125}\) (Maria) Ann Cook, Memorial, 1823, CSC R6051 p256-7.

\(^{126}\) SG 26 February 1824. When Sydney children died in a whooping cough epidemic in 1828, Howe wrote 'It is painful to exercise patience amidst such bereavements, but parents and relatives should congratulate themselves on the melancholy reflection that their little ones... are taken from the evil to come'. The epidemic broke out after the arrival of the Morley, in March 1828.

\(^{127}\) 'The bodies of the poor and of the young children of the rich who were treated like the poor, were sewn into shrouds made of cheap sacking and thrown into big, common graves.' Aries, Hour of our death, p207; St Philip's Register, CSC 6024.
graves or tombs at the burial ground. In at least some cases their names and a few lines, or
even a laboriously rhymed poem, were engraved for them on headstones. Occasionally the
Gazette reprinted an epitaph for a child (accompanied by some sarcastic comments regarding
its worth at poetry), in this case one who died of snakebite in 1805,

it was the subtile serpents bite he cride
then like a Rose but cut he drup’d and died
in life his Fathers glory
and his mothers pride.

The images and sentiments here, as on many such epitaphs, concern the tragedy of the
accident, the awful, inevitable descent to death, the extent of the parents’ loss. This particular
stone was put on display for people to see before it was erected over the grave; people
enjoyed reading or hearing a persons life and death artfully compressed into a neatly rhyming
poem. Perhaps this also suggests that so much effort for a child was something of a novelty.
But the young surgeon Joseph Arnold also transcribed such epitaphs at the burial ground, this
one for two month old Jane Morley who died in a fire:

My parents loss is my Eternal gain
Here I rest Free From Worldly pain
The Fire Snatched my Life away
As I was at my harmless Play.

Something of the sense of unfairness of such a death for an innocent child is conveyed;
’worldly pain’ was probably meant quite literally. Arnold thought this and other epitaphs
’curious’ and ’remarkable’, their quaintness resting upon the spelling and grammar, the way
that the circumstances of death were included, the gloomy funereal tone. These were old
mannerisms and ways, old outlooks still being expressed in the new colony, while they
became antiquated in the old country. They are also further compelling evidence for the
sense of loss and grief experienced by bereaved parents, and of the need to memorialise the
child not only in the names of other living children, but also in cold stone that marked their resting place in death.
The Rising Generation: education, youth and coming of age

But more of the Rocks' children survived the dangers of childhood to learn trades and skills, to meet and marry and, relatively quickly, produce children of their own. By 1822/23, 399 of the Rocks' 458 children had been born in the colony (the remainder had arrived with their parents) although only 37 (less than 3% of the total population, 4.5% of adults) of adults were native born.

The lives of children were considered in terms of roughly seven-year spans: the first seven years were infancy,¹²⁸ the second, between seven and about fourteen, constituted childhood, and the third, between about fourteen and twenty-one, was youth. This latter stage was the bridge between childhood and adult life, and was the period when children learned the work skills necessary for later life. They were also expected at this stage to begin to support themselves, hence to commence the slow process towards separation and independence from their parents. In the modern concept of 'teenage' years, adolescents are considered a clearly distinct, separate group with their own tastes and needs, although still dependent and not expected to work. By contrast the lives of youths in early Sydney were streamed along the same lines as their parents. As Demos wrote of traditional society in Plymouth colony: 'Here was no "awkward age" - but rather the steady lengthening of a young person's shadow, and the whole instinctive process through which one generation yielded imperceptibly to its successor'.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Seven-year-old Mary Grimshaw was referred to as an 'infant', SG 22 January 1804.

The contradictions inherent in their earlier upbringing - the innocent, helpless, yet worldly-wise and sometimes quite brutal child - were greatly magnified once children reached adolescence, the age of physical and sexual maturity. On one hand, they were regarded and treated as foolish and in need of firm control by fathers and mothers, or masters and mistresses, in order to ensure that they would fulfil their duty to learn a trade. Hence if a boy ran away advertisements were immediately placed for his return, cautioning people not to shelter or employ him, much the same response as when convict servants absconded. Most of these were young, thirteen or fourteen, but some parents still portrayed their older offspring in this way. ‘He is a young foolish boy’ claimed William Blue after his nineteen-year-old son William was ‘seduced away’ from him by neighbouring shipowners. ‘He has fallen sacrifice to the imbecility of youth’ pleaded a mother when her nineteen-year-old son was charged with theft and sentenced to four years’ transportation.\(^{130}\)

On the other hand, these attitudes sit oddly with the responsibilities and experiences many adolescents already had. As in their childhood, they were not sheltered from the ways of the world. The person who comforted and cared for the deranged Captain Edward Edwards, listened to his crazed ramblings about devils and rats, cared for his two young children and awoke one morning to find him hanged from a loft rafter, was his fourteen year old daughter, Ann. When Sophia Walbourn committed suicide by throwing herself off the rocks at Miller’s Point, a thirteen-year-old girl raised the alarm and called for a boat, while several frightened men stood by, helpless and bewildered. When George Allwright drowned at thirteen off a boat at Campbell’s Island, the Gazette described him as a ‘little boy’, yet many such ‘little boys’ were allowed to face the rigours and dangers of seafaring life. Another seafaring boy

\(^{130}\) SG 4 August 1805, absconding of thirteen-year old Thomas Silk; 2 August 1807, Ann Harris ‘charged with seducing Thomas Jones from the care of his family’ and sent to the Factory; 6 December 1808, absconding of Thomas Ikin. William Blue, Petition, 28 October 1823, ML Ab31; Mary Giddes, Petition for her son William Brady, 10 May 1823, CSC F3232 4/1869 p74.
witnessed the drowning of the Rocks mariner Andrew Lusk in a terrible storm at Broken Bay, and was himself washed overboard and rescued by Aborigines.\textsuperscript{131} 

In this context, Robert Howe’s tirades against unlicensed drinking houses on the Rocks and their bad effect on youth seem ridiculous. He claimed that ‘the youth of both sexes are attracted to these dens of destruction by the vivid excitation of animal spirits, which music and dancing and unrestrained mirth produces’.\textsuperscript{132} While this indicates that the rising generation were as fond of drinking, dancing and laughing as their parents, Howe’s assertion that young people were corruptible and ought to be protected from such ‘vices’ was entirely foreign to the outlooks of the lower orders.

Yet the lack of clear distinction between child and adult did created unresolved difficulties with regard to sexual maturity, particularly for girls. There was confusion over whether a sexually mature girl of fifteen was a ‘child’ or a ‘woman’. Charlotte Betts (possibly Byfield) who was kept by John and Mary Seabrook for the purposes of prostitution and was obviously exploited by them, was described as a ‘mere child’. Yet other Rocks girls of sixteen and seventeen were marrying, setting up their own households and having babies. Occasionally, as in the cases of Martha and Sophia Lett, Mary Pawley, and Elizabeth Martin, girls were married at fifteen with their parents or guardians’ permission. Hence when Elizabeth Ikin’s sister Emma Crook appeared to run away to sea with her lover Captain Howard at fifteen, there was an endless, passionate confusion of claims and counter-claims from her mother and her alleged abductor as to whether she was a child, and hence abducted, or a sexually mature,

\textsuperscript{131} Inquest on Edward Edwards, 6 November 1818, R2232 p265 AONSW; Inquest on Sophia Walbourn, 3 November 1816, CSC R6021 4/1819 p693; SG 5 and 12 January 1811 (George Allwright), and 26 March 1809, (drowning of Andrew Lusk); Robinson, Hatch and Brood, pp14, 220ff.

\textsuperscript{132} SG 31 March 1827.
if rather immoral woman who had chosen to accompany her lover. Her mother, who was
distraught at her leaving, was accused of having allowed and encouraged Emma to attract the
affections of Howard, and Robert Howe printed a condemnatory editorial on the immorality
and venality of such behaviour. Yet, as we have seen, the sexual practices of women had
pragmatic economic rationale, so that attracting a man of some rank and income was seen as
a positive thing. Would these attitudes have been passed on to daughters when they became
sexually aware? 133

Sexual relations between youths of the same rank do not seem to have caused these
difficulties, and if a pregnancy occurred, the couple often married, either before or after the
birth (see Appendix 5). Some native-born women who were unmarried bore children, and
this seems to have had little effect on their status or livelihood. Maria Ilkin, the daughter of
Obadiah and Sarah Ilkin of Cumberland Street, bore a child to Lieutenant Richard Leyne in
1812. Leyne left the colony in 1813, never to return, and Maria bore another child seven
months after his departure; this child died in infancy. She had been left her mother’s house
in Cumberland Street in the same year and held a licence for an ale-house there from at least
1820. In 1817 she formed a relationship with Ensign Charles Bullivant, and the couple
produced three children before they eventually decided to marry in 1823. Harriet and Louisa
Calcott, of Gloucester, and later Harrington Street, also bore children out of wedlock: Louisa
had a daughter by Ensign Frederick Bedwell in 1820, and Harriet had daughters by Ensign
Edward King (1819), Lieutenant Robert Stirling (1824) and Alexander Scott (1830). Like

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133 SG 31 March 1827; Papers re the abduction of Emma Crook, CSC, R6048 4/1743
p31ff, and see also Howe’s retelling of the incident, SG 20 May 1820; Atkinson and
Aveling argue that ‘Native-born women behaved much like their convict mothers.’,
Australians 1838, p102.
Maria Ikin, they were fortunate in each acquiring a house, and eventually the title to land in Harrington Street which had been leased to their father.\textsuperscript{134}

A rare case where extra-marital pregnancy caused great embarrassment was that of George Terry Howe, Robert Howe’s half-brother. He was nineteen when he ‘became enamoured’ of Sarah Bird, the native born sister of Robert’s wife Ann, and four years his senior. When she fell pregnant in 1824, Robert was mortified, although he himself had fathered an illegitimate child in 1819, for whom he cared deeply. He had since set himself up as a stern and self-righteous preacher of the new morality in the colony, and here was his own brother and apprentice, and his wife’s sister flouting its precepts under his own roof. He quickly applied for a marriage by special licence for the pair, sending his permission as George’s master, saying the matter was ‘of a delicate complexion’ and that ‘it is my wish to be seen in it as little as possible’. The couple were married, settled in Cambridge Street and produced six children in quick succession.\textsuperscript{135} Robert Howe’s sense of shame over such an incident was a sign of things to come; such shame was not common amongst the people around him.

In the area of apprenticeships the responsibilities of the master properly involved ‘moral’ care and educational training as well as learning a trade. In short, the master took the place of the parent, and the child lived in his household and was considered part of the family, in much the same way as had occurred in pre-industrial societies. Some boys followed the trade of their fathers and thus were trained by them, but if not, parents went to considerable trouble

\textsuperscript{134} Graham Thorn and Margaret Miller, ‘The Ikin Family’, unpublished typescript, courtesy Bob Bullivant; Mutch index, ML. See Section 2, note 9.

\textsuperscript{135} Mutch index, ML; Robert Howe to Colonial Secretary, Application for Marriage by Special Licence, 10 September 1824 R6028 p85-90; a family tree showing the relationships of the Howes and the Birds is sketched out on the reverse; ADB entries for Robert and George Terry Howe; Census, 1828.
to arrange apprenticeships, often to a master in the same street in the Rocks, or nearby. The master was also usually of the same rank and civil status as the father.\textsuperscript{136} Girls, if they did not remain in their own households, learning skills from their mothers, sometimes went into service in the big houses in Prince or George Street. Again, they were not far from home, and in the case of Isabella Holden, her parents continued to list her in their own household. Even though she had moved to Prince Street as servant to James and Elizabeth Norris, she was still theirs. Girls who married often remained within walking distance of their parents’ home, such as Honor Chanhells, whose Cumberland Street house stood at the rear of her parents’ house in Cambridge (now Gloucester) Street. Others who established their own households and families on the Rocks include Mary and Susan Pawley, Mary Hayes, Sarah and Elizabeth Prentice, Frances Phillips, Catherine Byrne, and many others. The Calcott sisters, Harriet and Louisa, continued to live with their father Richard after the arrival of their children, and later lived in adjoining cottages in Harrington Street on the family property (see Fig. 41). Native-born women who married, such as Catherine Byrne and Mary Ann Dalton, sometimes kept their maiden names, as their mothers had done. When husbands went to sea, or were convicted and sent away, young wives sometimes returned to their parents’ home with their children.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{136} Karskens, Analysis of the District Constables’ Notebooks; Census, 1828. Re boys’ local apprenticeships, examples include Thomas Colebrook junior, apprenticed to carpenter C. Smedley of Prince Street; Thomas Dunn junior, apprenticed to tanner William Pawley, formerly of the Rocks, by 1828 of Castlereagh Street; James Greene, apprenticed to shoemaker Samuel Evans of Prince Street; Owen Lynch, apprenticed to carpenter George Pashley junior, Harrington Street; John Ward, apprenticed to shoemaker Thomas Jones, Rocks; Robert Whitaker apprenticed to carpenter Michael Gannon, Harrington Street; William Prentice, apprenticed to butcher James Thompson, neighbour and step-father’s former employer.

\textsuperscript{137} For example, Susan Pawley married mariner Joseph Burrell, but was listed with her mother Hannah Pawley in 1828 while Joseph was away at sea. Catherine Byrne, who married mariner John Winch had also remained at her parents’ home in 1828 while John was away at sea. Later they moved into one of the small two-roomed cottages built on the Cribb land in 1834, a few doors down Cumberland Street from her family, see Karskens, ‘Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street Site...Discourse’, pp36, 54.
Besides ensuring that youths were equipped with skills for later life, many propertied Rocks parents were also keen to endow them materially, if they could, with land and houses, or with licences or Government positions. By the time he died, Samuel Thorley, the early Rocks publican, shipowner and landowner, had achieved this ideal. In his simply phrased, dignified will, beginning 'I, Samuel Thorley of sound mind and memory but at present afflicted with bodily pain', he left a farm each to his wife, four surviving children as well as one for his stepson.\[138\]

Conversely, formal schooling was not considered very useful for making a living, and many people did not care to send their children to school. They seemed to prefer to keep their younger children at home, while the primary learning places of the youths were the dockyard, the lumberyard, the workshops, and the forges, ovens and so on at the private houses where they learnt their skills and trades. Harrington Street publican Ann Whitaker flatly refused to send her boys to school in 1823, saying she needed them at home to help at the hotel. The younger, Robert, was however apprenticed to carpenter Michael Gannon, also of Harrington Street, by 1828. Admittedly, opportunities for schooling were very limited in the early years, this perhaps as much the result of lack of demand as lack of teachers. The Rocks had numerous shortlived 'schools' opened and closed at different times in various houses (there

\[138\] Samuel Thorley, Will, 1821, in Thorley Papers, Parnell and Copes Trust, ML A5399. Edward Redmond also left his children well-endowed, see Lang, Home Was Here, p172ff. Richard Byrne in his old age successfully applied for a publican’s licence in 1832, by the following year the hotel, the Ship and Mermaid, was run by his daughter and son-in-law; see Karskens, ‘Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street Site...Discourse’, p36, and Australian 6 April 1832, 12 July 1833. George Talbot and Ann Armdsen seem to have had the prospects of his son George in mind when they sold their house in Cambridge (now Gloucester) Street in 1822 and moved to the new areas at Darling Harbour around Miller Point. By 1838 George Talbot junior was a ship and anchor smith there, and operated six lever wool presses. He continued to live in the area for several decades. See Karskens, ‘Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street Site...Discourse’, p30, and Fitzgerald and Keating, Millers Point, pp29, 31, 57.
were no purpose-built schools) by people like the brothers John and James Kenny, who promised to teach children ‘Reading Writing Vulgar and Decimal Arithmetic mensuration and book-keeping according to the Italian mode’ in 1805. Robert Shrieves advertised a school at his house in 1807 designed to fit in with the work patterns of youths ‘of both sexes’. It was expressly for apprentices, was conducted between 5 and 7 in the evening ‘in useful and necessary branches of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic’, again practical subjects with practical use. Teacher Daniel Thurston and his wife Jane kept a small boarding school with only four children, along with their own two, in Cumberland Street in 1823. This was perhaps as much a place for these children to live as a school. By 1828 Daniel Thurston was teaching school at Richmond, but had left his own children in the care of his brother, Rocks publican William Thurston.139

Sunday and day schools were opened during the Macquarie period but were little and irregularly attended. Thomas Bowden reported in 1820 that his school was taught ‘on the Lancastrian plan’ using only Bibles and testaments, but that children were not in regular attendance ‘owing to inattention on the part of the parents’. The Reverend William Cowper confessed that it was ‘not very flattering...to observe that the whole under tuition in Sydney does not appear to be more than in the year 1813’, and he blamed this on ‘the very great importation of immorality in the late years’. It seems more likely that parents and children were apparently not accustomed to, and not much interested in the idea of regular, routine timetabled attendance, or in an education limited to the scriptures. Even as late as 1827 the roll-book of St Philip’s Infant School, which many Rocks children attended, shows rather chaotic (by modern standards) arrangement. Pupils of all ages, some as young as eighteen months (one wonders how, and what they were taught), enrolled at various times during the

139 See SG 8 May 1803, 6 October 1805, 16, 30 August 1807; William Cape to Colonial Secretary re the Sydney Academy, 24 September 1823, CSC R6059 4/1772 p139. Karskens, Analysis of District Constables’ Notebooks.
year. Many attended very irregularly and very little according to their own and their parents’ inclination.  

By the 1820s there were also some rather elaborately named schools in Prince Street, such as John Dunmore Lang’s ‘Caledonian Academy’, opened in 1826, which offered Latin and Greek as well as writing and arithmetic. Captain John Beveridge’s ‘Mercantile and Naval Academy’ offered to take ‘young gentlemen’ as both boarders and day-scholars and teach them geography, geometry, Navigation and nautical astronomy as well as the more rudimentary subjects. Mrs Thompkins offered a school for the ‘education of young ladies’. These were designed to appeal to ‘respectable’ inhabitants, the small but growing ‘middle’ class of merchants, sea captains, wealthy business and professional people who were adopting new ideas on the worth and conduct of education for children. Nevertheless, it seems that these were also shortlived establishments.

The schools established by the educated and eloquent convict Richard Archbold were more successful, and encapsulated something of the growth of a new, more modern attitude to both education and children. He started in 1814, while still a recently arrived convict, at No 7 Gloucester Street, with a day school as well as ‘an evening academy for the improvement of those at a more advanced age’, teaching reading, writing and arithmetic as well as bookkeeping. In the following year he moved to Cambridge Street, and his program for education had become more ambitious. He observed that ‘a total ignorance of the heavenly bodies, of

140 Brian Fletcher, ‘Religion and Education’, in James Broadbent and Joy Hughes (eds.), The Age of Macquarie, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press and Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1992, pp82-87; Bigge, Report, Appendix, Evidence of Thomas Bowden, 1821, BT Box 8 pp3329-32; Evidence of William Cowper, 1820, BT Box 20 p3528; St Philip’s Infants School Register, 1827-1831, ML A3099. Re John Dunmore Lang’s school, SG June 14, July 18 1826; Beveridge’s and Thompkins’ schools, SG 14 June, 1 and 18 July 1827. Eden Hewitt had also opened an evening school in Prince Street in 1816, SG 28 December 1816.
Fig. 50: Engraving of a Sydney boys' school, 1838. The picture contrasts the uniform orderliness of the pupils with the games played in the street by the children in the foreground - handstands, hoops, chasing, sword-fights. The smallest still wear the smocks in which both girls and boys seem to have been dressed until the age of seven.

the actions and vicissitudes of the earth, seems to pervade the colonial Generation’ and in the absence of globes, offered to use his own drawings and designs to ‘render pupils competent to look with intelligence and useful calculation on Maps: and without shapeless wonder on the Starry Heavens’. The substitution of scientific order, knowledge, usefulness for the ignorant ‘shapeless wonder’ of the rising generation: what more eloquent juxtaposition of old and new outlooks can be found?

In subsequent years his boarding school was also advertised as being ‘in a pleasant healthy situation, where they will have no Access to the Streets’ (my emphasis). In 1825 he moved his family away from the town altogether, probably to Hunter’s Hill, saying he was ‘convinced that a daily school, open to the promiscuous attendance of children’ (like St Philip’s) and ‘having access to the streets’ was ‘inimical to [their] morals and at variance with every other improvement’. He was speaking also in relation to his own four (later five) children. This concern over the child in contact with and free to roam ‘the street’ (a metaphor for all the aspects of the urban adult world to which children were exposed) was new (Fig. 50). Archbold represented the coming change, a complete reversal in attitudes to children: his school would confine their bodies and open their minds. In this scheme, children ought not be part of the adult world, but separated and sheltered from it. Such beliefs would characterise the later Victorian middle classes and lead to their obsession with the lives of city worker’s children.¹⁴¹

As they reached adulthood, these children of transported convicts continued to arouse considerable interest in observers. They were generally celebrated as ‘remarkable for

¹⁴¹ SG 25 June 1814, 15 April 1815, 13 July 1816, 31 July 1819, 29 December 1825. Archbold married illiterate native-born Rocks woman Mary Pawley, daughter of publican Hannah Pawley. Besides their school, they at various times ran the Rising Sun Hotel, a tobacco shop, a store, and a brewery in Charlotte Place, before becoming landowners at Hunters Hill.
sedateness of character, sobriety of conduct, diligence in business, [a] delicate sense of honesty for which they have been so eminently conspicuous’. Emancipists proclaimed their children the strongest evidence for their own worth, claiming in their 1821 petition that there was ‘not a more sober, industrious and Loyal race of Youth in any part of Your Majesty’s Empire’. As Robinson points out, these favourable characteristics were considered evidence of the ‘triumph of natural morality over the degradation of convict parentage, convict society’.

That the convicts and ex-convicts of the Rocks were concerned for their children’s welfare, particularly in the material sense, is clear. But as we have seen, mothers and fathers who were steady and comfortable members of the lower orders and brought up large families could also drink to excess, become violent, insult or beat their wives and neighbours, enjoyed gaming and carousing, and occasionally landed in court, and so on. ‘Vice’ and ‘family life’ were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Further, it is also evident that Rocks children inherited many of their parents’ outlooks and habits, not just those that might be labelled ‘good’. In this sense it is difficult to sustain Robinson’s argument that their parents’ experience and the ‘invisible cultural baggage’ of moral codes, fears, hopes, likes and dislikes, priorities and prejudices did not shape the mentalité of the children; it is obvious that they did. The values and priorities of the rising generation were shaped by the similar parameters as those of their parents: economic urgency, hard-headed and pragmatic decisions ensuring, as a priority, material well-being. Children born into the culture of the lower orders learned the ways and the shape of that culture from their parents and the society around them, no part of which was hidden from them. Further, their fates were as varied as their parents’: not all

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143 Robinson, Hatch and Brood, p11 and loc. cit.
were 'comely lasses' and 'stout lads', not all were sober, industrious and law-abiding. And in many cases, and in spite of their parents' best efforts, their lives were tossed about by the vagaries of economic conditions and the unreliable 'transience of life' in the same way that those of their parents' had been. As we saw in the stories of Elizabeth Hayes nee Baker and Elizabeth Johnston nee Ellard, they too had to deal with suffering and loss, anger, frustration, poverty and ill-health. What is rather distinctive is a certain independence of character. Their petitions largely (though not always) lack the tone of exaggerated, even cringing, deference which marks many of the petitions of the older generation.

Consider the early adulthood of three of the eight surviving Cubitt children, Charlotte, Daniel and John. Their father Daniel had been a butcher, carter, dealer, publican, property-owner, the Gaoler at Sydney, town crier and later Master of the Row Guard, and the family seems to have been fairly well-off. But Daniel had also been convicted of defamation for his 'slanderous imputation, malicious and highly ungrateful sentiments' towards the surgeon John Harris; like the convicts generally, he lacked meek and deferential manners. His wife Maria Ann left him in 1823 because of his abusive behaviour. He was in dispute with neighbour Ann Bradley in 1810 over property boundaries. During his term as Gaoler he was described as acting 'with an over officious zeal to show himself assiduous'.

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144 Flynn, *Second Fleet*, entry for Daniel Cubitt; SG 20 November, 4 December 1803, 10 and 17 November 1805, 17 July 1808, February 1809 (hotel licence), 14 February 1809, 19 April 1817 (hotel licence), 10 March 1821; Cubitt's death was reported in the *Australian* 19 February 1831. See also CSC, R6042 4/1723 p17 (work as Town Crier); F3001 4/1821 No 32 (dispute with Ann Bradley); R6002 4/3490C p61 (appointment as gaoler); R6049 4/1744 p170 (appointment as Master of the Row Guard Boat); R6051 4/1749 pp256-7 (Maria Ann Cook's complaint); and Index, 1788-1825. Further data is indexed in the ML manuscripts catalogue. James Hardy Vaux, *Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux, Written by Himself*, London, W. Clowes, 1819, p278. Vaux was listed as living on the Rocks in 1822 with Francis Sharkey.
His son, Daniel junior, at twenty worked alongside him on the Row Guard, patrolling the harbour, searching for stowaways, deserting seamen and smuggled goods. But this does not mean that Daniel junior was a paragon of deferential, law-abiding citizenry. There were occasional complaints about their non-attendance at the Docksyard, and Daniel junior was demoted to Coxswain after ‘insolence’ towards a ships’ officer in 1822. John Campbell MacDougall, the midshipman off the Dauntless, claimed that he had returned to the wharf in the early hours one morning, and ‘went into the Docksyard...in order to be put on board’ his ship. He found Daniel junior asleep in the ‘skin sheets’, who, on being roused and ordered to row MacDougall out to his ship, simply refused and rolled over. Another man was fetched and remonstrated with him, but Daniel, angry at having been woken, still refused, saying that he was the Master of the boat and would not go out. MacDougall was incensed by this defiance ‘and showed him he was an officer’ (a superior one) ‘and produced his uniform which was under his great coat’. This had no effect on Daniel apart from evincing a torrent of abuse at the officer, shouting ‘among other terms [that] he did not have any more use for [me] than for the fifth wheel of a coach’. ‘Mr Cubitt’ added MacDougall ‘was intoxicated at the time’. Daniel was thereafter not ‘considered a fit person to be continued any longer in the service of the Government Row Guard Boat’. Brisbane ordered that he be made coxswain instead and placed on the round-the-clock harbour watch with other Rocksmen Thomas Beddoon and George Day. He resigned this position in 1823, claiming to be in poor health (at 23!) and recommending his brother John in his place.145

John Cubitt, born in 1803, was apprenticed to George Howe as a printer at the Gazette office near the wharf in George Street. When Howe died in 1821, his son Robert made John a

journeyman at 75 pounds a year, even though three years of his apprenticeship remained unexpired. Robert Howe, after his conversion to Wesleyan Methodism in 1820, insisted that his workers also observe his newly adopted moral and social codes. He made John, who was 18, promise to amend his ‘rather indecorous behaviour’ in return for the position of overseer ‘with a view to stimulating him to a sober and industrious life’. But a few months later John’s request for a five pound advance was refused, and in response he failed to attend ‘his hour’s usual and important duty of overseership’ on Sunday, presumably at the Prince Street chapel, and then threatened to stop work. Howe immediately fired him, and upon receiving the letter, John rushed into the Gazette office and began a rampage of destruction, running ‘to the frames and cases in which the types are bedded and overturned them with the celerity of a demon’. He was restrained, arrested, forgiven and reinstated, but eight months later, together with an old, almost blind workmate George Scott, he deserted the office.

Out of work again, John knew precisely what would win his job back. He sent an elegantly worded, deferential letter to Howe expressing sorrow for his actions and deep gratitude for Howe’s intercession on his behalf, thus acknowledging his master’s power over him. It worked. Howe was convinced of Cubitt’s penitence and immediately wrote to the Clerk of the Peace saying he would drop the charges, since Cubitt would otherwise be ‘forever deprived of his livelihood at his profession and is reduced to the most abject and servile dependence on his father for support’ and adding, in the Christian spirit of the father of the prodigal son, that

> should time assure me that Reformation be wrought in the unhappy youth that it is my intention...to receive him once more with favour, to save him from penury and starvation.

But although John needed a job, he did not see obedience, piousness and loyalty as part of his duties. In 1823 it appears he again left to sail to India and in 1825 he defected
permanently to join W.C. Wentworth’s rival newspaper the *Australian*. Robert Howe must have considered this the ultimate betrayal.\textsuperscript{146}

Their sister Charlotte had borne a son in May 1820 at about 17. She married the father, an ex-convict gardener Thomas Curry who was ten years older than her, in October the same year. (Interestingly, their witnesses were her brother John, and Elizabeth Lee, the mother of Robert Howe’s illegitimate son). We have seen that Thomas was unhappy at her independent ways, for she continued to stay over at the house of her friends the Rushtons rather than with him. In 1822 he was convicted of stealing a gold watch from old Thomas Rushton, and sentenced to hang. Charlotte presented a deferential petition ‘on bended knees’ for his remission, ‘equally as a Husband...and a Father to his two infant babes’. This, together with his father-in-law’s public position, won him a reprieve and he was shipped to Newcastle instead. But Charlotte refused to go with him. Obviously she did not consider her wifely duties extended that far, even when Thomas fell ill and a Newcastle doctor specifically asked that she and the child be sent for. He died there, alone, in 1824.

By 1822 she and young Thomas were again living with her parents in Harrington Street. Her second son George was born in February that year but lived only eight weeks. Her mother left her father the following year, and her mother’s petition for protection claimed that she had been abused by both Daniel and Charlotte, and that Charlotte ‘habits herself in prostitution’. Perhaps Maria Ann meant that Charlotte was promiscuous; or perhaps that she did earn her living through prostitution. By 1825 Charlotte had lost both her children - her

\textsuperscript{146} SG 24 November 1821, 5 July 1822, 30 April 1827; *Australian* 6 January 1825. Case papers, John Cubitt, November 1822, including Cubitt’s memorial and Robert Howe’s letter to William Freeman, Clerk of the Peace, CJC R1976 p295ff AONSW; Daniel Cubitt jun. to Nicholson, 29 May 1823 CSC R6058 4/1771 p308. By 1828 he was living with his father. He died on 5 November 1836, aged about thirty-six, *Australian* 8 November 1836.
first-born died in October. She was by then angry and violent, and was twice arrested in April for hurling abuse and stones at George Morris’ Australia hotel in a drunken rage, shattering his windows and sending the patrons ducking for cover. Her guarantors were her brother-in-law William Potter and a baker named James Warman, but not her father. A month after the death of her son, she applied to marry one Charles Wood, but by 1828 was living with a Rocks nailer named Thomas Dodd in Harrington Street.147

These stories of the native born must qualify the rather flat and stereotypical images of the sober, industrious, successful and law abiding rising generation. All three Cubitts strongly displayed the stance of the convict generation, the stance of their parents. Their actions revealed the same disdain for authority, whether of rank superior, master, or husband; the sometimes violent, often abusive behaviour; and the lack of meekness and deferential gestures, except when they thought they might be advantaged by it, for example in the petitions which were used so cleverly.

There was clearly something in Robert Howe’s manner, probably his insistence on interfering in their private moral lives, which drove his workers to abscond: his native-born step-brother Horatio Spencer Wills also fled his authority. Wills was apprenticed to Robert after his mother Sarah Wills’ death in 1823, but they quarrelled, and he absconded three times. On the one occasion he was taken to court he was defended by his master’s sharp-tongued

147 Mutch Index, ML; District Constable’s Notebooks; SG 7 April, 29 May 1825. Case papers, Charlotte Curry, May 1825, SQS R2415 4/8440 p327. Charlotte Curry, Petition on behalf of Thomas Curry, 1822, CSC R6056 4/1763 p155; Curry’s sentence commuted to transportation, CSC R6070 4/1265; Charlotte permitted to go with her husband, CSC R6009 4/3505 p230; Thomas in hospital at Newcastle, request that Charlotte be sent to join him, John Robertson, Commandant, to Goulburn, 28 March 1824, CSC R6068 4/1815 pp361-2; Maria Ann Cook, petition c1825, CSC R6051 4/1749 pp256-7; Charlotte Curry application to marry Charles Wood at Sydney, 7 November 1825, CSC R6064 4/1788 p97. Census, 1828. Compare to account given in Robinson, Hatch and Brood, pp 164-5.
adversary William Charles Wentworth, which must have been galling for Howe. Yet, despite all this, it was the native-born, such as these, whom Robert Howe himself portrayed as so law-abiding, the embodiment of the young colony’s promise.  

It is also important to note that not all young women fitted the idealised version of innocence, inexperience, beauty and gentleness which Wentworth himself celebrated in the execrable lines: ‘Thy blue ey’d daughters with flaxen hair/And taper ankle, do they bloom less fair/Than those of Europe?’ But looks were one thing, behaviour quite another. In real life, as we have seen, many, like Charlotte Cubitt, experienced a great deal at a young age, and their behaviour cannot be described as refined, polite, or milk-and-water meekness. Sixteen year old Mary Kearns wanted some fancy hats so badly that she tried to defraud the dealer Simeon Lord. Her brother informed on her, her father refused to pay for the hats, and she was sent to the Factory for six months. Wentworth, reporting the doings of the Sydney ‘Fancy’, chronicled a fight at Brickfield Hill between two women, one a ‘towny’ (possibly an ex-convict) and the other ‘of currency worth’. Some of the native born at least had inherited their parents liking of fighting. Mary Chipp (b1795) was the subject of an attempted rape at 13, was taken to court for savagely attacking another girl (Elizabeth Jones) at 22, lost a husband suddenly in 1824, and in 1829 enraged a publican at the races by throwing a glass of beer in another patron’s face, for which she was severely beaten and thrown out of the tent. Her sister Sarah married Mark Byfield, a Rocks publican who was convicted in 1827 for receiving stolen meat and sent to gaol. Sarah herself was accused of receiving stolen combs, but was acquitted. She was supporting herself and her two children as a dressmaker in 1828, and went to court in 1829 with a complaint that she had been knocked down in the street by two men. But the constables she went to with her mouth cut and bloody and her

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148 ADB entry for Horatio Spencer Howe Wills.
‘hair hanging about her shoulders’ said she had been ‘much in liquor’ (she had been visiting her sister) and the case was dismissed.\textsuperscript{149}

Certain old prejudices also lived on in the native born: the simmering distrust and dislike between Irish and English were occasionally forcefully expressed by young men who had never seen Ireland or England. Young Thomas Saunders, son of one-time Rocks bakers and Prospect small-farmers, called his neighbour Margaret Downey an ‘Irish bitch’ before he violently knocked her down at his mother’s bidding. Daniel Cubitt junior exploded in rage when an Irish constable told him to go home late one night.\textsuperscript{150}

The views of the native-born on the constabulary were said to be negative, for like their parents, they held constables in low esteem. A native-born police force proposed in 1824 by Governor Brisbane failed. Robert Howe noticed that their ‘hatred of police matters and all connected with them’ had been ‘imbibed’ from their ‘parents and guardians, even in infancy’. He also pointed out, correctly, that the ‘native youth almost invariably aspires to a profession, however humble; he is rightly led to believe that a trade...will carry him through life’. This value placed on skills was something they also ‘imbibed’ from their parents. Robinson claims

\textsuperscript{149} W. C. Wentworth, ‘Australasia: A Poem’ 1823, cited in Robinson, Hatch and Brood, p145. Re Mary Kearns, see trial papers, 19 September 1812, CJC R2390 p225 AONSW. Re Mary Chipp/Boyle/Ward, see papers from trial of Henry Seyers, June 1809, CJC R2652 p131 AONSW, and SG 11 June 1809; papers from trial of Mary Chipp and Solomon Davis, 23 June 1818, COD 443 p129 AONSW; papers from trial of Richard Crampton, SQS SC T29A 29/177, CP T140, 108 AONSW; SG 15 July 1824. Re Sarah Chip/Byfield, SG 26 November 1827, 3 December 1827, 5 March 1829; Karskens, Analysis of District Constable’s Notebooks. Another example is Charlotte Walker Beeby, a native-born woman who married young, lived on the Rocks, and had no qualms over spending the night with William Sibley and stealing his money, Mutch Index, ML and Australian 29 August 1828.

\textsuperscript{150} Papers from trial of Thomas Saunders junior, 17 February 1822, CJC R1822 p170 AONSW. Statement of Thomas Dunne, 6 April 1822, CSC R6054 4/1759 pp40-43a.
the dislike for police-work is incorrect, citing the fact that some native born (though she does not say how many) were themselves working in the constabulary in 1828, and that they were sometimes involved in chasing bushrangers. But respect for the law cannot be equated with serving as a constable. This fails to recognize the deep ambiguity in the position in the community of constables, whose job it was to interfere in many common pleasures and pastimes. Further, the traditionally low status of the ordinary constable, as we shall see in Section IV, meant that generally men of indifferent character took the job on as a last resort, and they were not much liked or respected. This dislike had more to do with traditional outlooks than with the convictism of the parents.\footnote{SG 20 January 1825; Robinson, Hatch and Brood, pp15, 275ff.}

With regard to their reputed ‘respect for the law’ and the implication of sober orderliness, as opposed to riotous disorderliness, the data about the native born suggests that drinking and disorder, and occasionally violent behaviour were not shunned. While the native-born were apparently rarely tried for \textit{criminal} offences, further research into the actual numbers and proportions of those who came before magistrates for misdemeanours as well as before the criminal courts might throw more light on their actual, rather than their reputed, behaviour.\footnote{Robinson, Hatch and Brood, pp16, 150-51, 190, 277-8; Hughes, Fatal Shore, pp356-7, 637, cites the small proportions of those criminally convicted who were native-born, from Sir William Burton’s, ‘State of Society and the State of Crime in New South Wales, During Six Years Residence in that Colony’, in Colonial Magazine and Commercial-Maritime Journal, Vol 1, January to April 1840 421-40, Vol 2 34-54.}

Continuity is also evident in the trades taken up by boys. Often they followed the same trades as their fathers, and sometimes they worked with them. Owen and James Lynch both became carpenters like their father Thomas. George Phillips and his son George worked together as carters, and George Barnett and George junior as watermen. Thomas Crump, after
he separated from Mary Johnston, went up to Wiseman’s Ferry to live and work at
boat-building with Thomas, the eldest son of his first marriage. James MacNeale a
bucklemaker, worked with his coachbuilder son John James in 1828; earlier, they had been
employed together as servants to publican William Thurston. As we have seen, boys who had
lost fathers were placed in the orphanage mainly so that they would be found good
apprenticeships, and there is evidence that even in adolescence, these boys, like the men from
whom they had learnt, identified themselves according to their trades. An 1820 petition from
the orphan school boys complaining of starvation, overwork and exploitation was signed by
each boy with his trade listed, hence ‘J.Chapman carpenter’. Here, too, we see the youths,
not as innocent, poor, unprotected, inarticulate orphans, but already quite well-aware of unfair
treatment, and prepared to complain officially. Again this was the result of their upbringing,
and their knowledge of the ways of the world.\textsuperscript{153}

Such feistiness was also apparent in words and actions of William Henry Chapman, the son
of Ann Mash and William Chapman. He had been apprenticed in 1817 for seven years in the
Government Dockyard as a shipwright, but after five seems to have considered himself
competent. Having reached the age of 21, he applied to be released from his indentures and
allowed to sail with the Reverend Lawry on a mission to Tongatabu (Tonga). This was
refused, but his indentures were given up to him in June that year, even though Richard Tress
at the dockyard had judged him not yet fully competent ‘in the various branches of
shipbuilding’. Whether or not he actually sailed is unclear, but in January 1823 he married
Ann Chanhells, the twenty year old daughter of a Gloucester Street blacksmith. He already
listed himself as a ‘shipwright’. In 1825 he was among the Rocks men considered eligible
for jury duty, and was listed as a shipwright of Cambridge Street. Later he and his growing

\textsuperscript{153} Census, 1828; evidence of George Phillips and George Barnett junior at trial of Peter
Ryan, 8 July 1822, CCJ R1976 p241 AONS; Petition from Orphan boys 1820 CSC
R6040 4/400 p45.
family moved to the newly opened areas of Darling Harbour at Millers Point, where they built a house and established a shipyard and wharf. By the 1830s they had prospered and moved away from the sea, the wharves and the ships, the source of their wealth, settling into the newly fashionable area around the race course on the other side of the town in 1832. They subdivided their Darling Harbour land in 1837 and sold the wharf in 1839; the wharf alone brought them 6,200 pounds. They later became shipowners and pastoralists of the Darling Downs; William was invited to an inaugural Mayoral dinner in 1842.154

The younger Chapmans were thus capable and ambitious; their success was the kind of story considered typical of the rising generation. It is clear also that William Henry considered the end of the third seven-year span of his life, his twenty-first year, to mark his coming of age, apprenticed or not. It was the proper time for courting, for starting a family, for setting up in one’s own trade. There are many examples of this consciousness of coming of age among the young men with ambitions and prospects, although the actual ages differ. William Thorn junior, son the Chief Constable and long-time Rocks resident, was 25 when he requested a land grant. He too became Chief Constable, at Parramatta. Daniel Eagan, the son of Mary Bryant and Bryan Eagan, born in 1802, described himself at nineteen in 1821 as free-born of the colony, has served his apprenticeship in His Majesty’s Dockyard as shipwright and boat builder, being anxious to possess a place for the performance of his avocation as well as that of erecting a dwelling house for himself.

154 Mutch Index, ML; William Henry Chapman, Memorial 29 April 1822 CSC 4/1760 p52-6; re his indentures, see CSC R6008 4/3504A p491 (February 1822), and R6009 4/3505 p388 (June 1822; statement of Richard Tress re his competence, 24 May 1822 CSC R6053 4/1756 p127; on 1825 jury list CSC R6062 4/1782 p111ff. Australian 23 January 1829, 17 February 1834, 7 November 1834, 19 September, 31 October 1839, 23 December 1842; Mackaness Papers, re land purchased on the Racecourse, 1832, ML A317 p91; re land on the Darling Downs, NSW Commissioner of Crown Lands, Letter Book, 1843-48, ML A1764-2 p341-2. See also Robinson, Hatch and Brood. She states William Henry was the son of Henry Chapman on p134, but (as she also states on p220) William Chapman and Ann Mash were his parents, for whom see Flynn, Second Fleet.
Three years later he had saved enough ‘by the profits of his trade’ to ‘enter upon a farm’, and by 1825, at 23 had been appointed Master of the Dockyard, and applied for land at Broken Bay or Brisbane Water. In contrast to the petitions forwarded by the Cubitt children in their times of trouble, all these petitions expressed self-confidence, they were quite straightforward, with not a shred of the elaborate deferential phrases of the first convict generation. Eagan became a wealthy shipowner and trader and was later elected an alderman in the inaugural Sydney Corporation.155

William Welsh junior, the son of Gloucester Street publicans William and Eleanor Welsh, hankered to be independent. In 1824, he claimed to have ‘attained the age of manhood, is now desirous of settling himself apart from his parents’ and wanted his own allotment on which to build a house. But he was told there was no vacant land available in Sydney. A year after his father died in 1825, he advertised publicly that, at 21, he had now come of age and was taking over the management of his father’s estate, at the same time releasing Thomas Dunne and John Cullen ‘the friends of my later Father and Mother’ from ‘all further interference’. He became a publican, like his father, and in the 1830s moved to Bunker’s Hill.156


156 William Welsh, Memorial, 1 April 1824, CSC F3115 4/1840A No 1021 pp89-96; on 1825 jury list, CSC R6062 4/1782 p111ff. SG 29 July 1826; Australian, 7 May 1828, 16 May 1834, 6 June 1837. The Welshs were friends and business partners of Richard and Mary Archbold, acting as sponsors at the baptisms of one another's children, see St Mary’s Registers. William and Richard rented a Government windmill together in 1825 (Australian 10 May 1825), and William took care of Richard’s property dealings in Charlotte Place in 1826 (SG 29 July 1826).
For young native born women who had less formal apprenticeships in the female trades and callings, coming of age was probably less firmly tied to actual age than to the age when they married. Although wider research is needed in this field, on the Rocks the marriage age of the native born women seems to have been very young by the standards of the day. In England both young men and women waited until they were in their mid to late twenties to marry, so as to ensure that they could support a household and a family independent of their parents. Studies of the American colonies show a similar high marital age for men, but a lower one for women (between about 19 and 20), and the latter pattern seems to have been exaggerated in Sydney. Many native born girls, whether of the Rocks or settling there after marriage, were married at sixteen, seventeen and eighteen. The Lett daughters, Martha and Sophia, were both married at fifteen. The Cubitt daughters all married ex-convicts at early ages – Charlotte at 19, Hannah at 17, Elizabeth at 18 and Caroline at 16 (See Appendix 5). So it was that Maria Hughes nee Henry, at nineteen, was married, had a seven-month old-baby, a household at the north end of Cumberland Street and a recently-arrived convict husband assigned to her. This apparent early marriage age was not traditional, but a function of the colonial urban life created by their parents, the imbalance in the sex ratio, the constant arrival of strangers, the government system of indulgences which provided land, jobs and licences. Children were not tethered to their parents economically until the parents died, and it is likely that those who stayed in or returned to their parent’s households did so out of choice. Early marriage also bespeaks a distinctive outlook of optimism - the belief that it was possible, in this town, to leave one’s parents and support oneself and a family decently relatively early in life.157

157 Stone states that the average marriage age in England was high in the sixteenth century, and still higher in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rising from 27 to 28 for men and 25 to 27 for women; see Stone, Family, Sex and Marriage, p42. Peter Laslett, arguing from research into Canterbury marriages in the seventeenth century, shows brides’ ages a little lower, at 24, though still high for grooms, at nearly 28. See The World we have lost, p81ff. In the American colonies, the average age at marriage was also ‘higher than has usually been imagined’. Demos shows that in Plymouth in the seventeenth century, the mean age for men fell from 27 to 24.6 but
Despite these obvious impulses to be free and independent, the bonds of family and local community also held fast. It was common for adolescent and adult children to live with their parents until they were married, and even to return to their parents when apprenticeships were completed, or marriages ended through separation or death. In some cases households comprised three generations, though this was more exceptional. There is some evidence to show that the Rocks children preferred to live in the urban environment where they grew up, close by their parents, or they moved to the adjacent neighbourhoods of Millers Point or Bunker’s Hill, which were opening up in the 1820s. Some sons and daughters of long-time Rocks residents intermarried, like the Martins and the Traynors, Pashleys and the Kearns, the Prentices and the Cranes (see Appendix 5), although daughters were also likely to marry skilled, moneyed or educated ex-convicts with prospects in life, often older than they were. Neither age nor convict status mattered so much; again this was the same pragmatism as their mothers had exercised in choosing their partners.\footnote{158}

What is strongly suggested in all these aspects is cultural continuity between the first and second generations. This evidence, a fraction of that available, does not by any means detract from the achievements of the rising generation, the families, households, businesses and trades they, many following the example of parents, established so successfully. But it does add the human and the cultural dimension, suggesting that a modern ideology of strict sobriety, orderliness, adherence to the work ethic, obedience and so on, had not been integral to that success any more than it had been in their parents’ lives. Despite their advantages, too, the

\footnote{158} Robinson, \textit{Hatch and Brood}, Chapter 6; Atkinson and Aveling, \textit{Australians 1838}, p102.
rising generation still encountered the ambivalences and struggles inherent in the ranked and gendered social structure, and they dealt with the struggles of growing up, and the pain of personal disappointment and loss, with much the same mentalité and stances as their parents.