

An archaeology of improvisation: convict artefacts from Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney, 1819–1848

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Excavations during the early 1980s at Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney recovered over 120,000 artefacts. Approximately 90 per cent related to the post-1848 uses of the site as Sydney's female Immigration Depot, the Hyde Park Asylum for aged and destitute women, and courts and government offices. This paper presents an analysis of the small proportion relating to the convicts employed as government workers between 1819 and 1848, the first and most significant occupation of the site. The author considers the spatial distribution of identifiable convict artefacts and argues that previously unrecognised areas of in situ convict deposits survived the 1848 installation of new ceilings, which removed most of the convict period deposits. By linking the archaeological evidence with historical sources, the convict artefacts reveal new perspectives on how convicts at the Barracks resisted government regulations. Improvisation allowed them to adapt and respond to their human needs, minimise the impact of the penal system, and make-do in their situation of confinement and segregation from society.

INTRODUCTION

Hyde Park Barracks (HPB) in Sydney was the centre of convict accommodation and administration in the early colony of New South Wales. The complex is now a museum and World Heritage site, globally significant for the central role it played in the forced migration of British criminals. Today, HPB still enjoys the limelight as one of Australia's most visited heritage places. Archaeological excavations during the early 1980s recovered over 120,000 artefacts from all phases of the site's history, with an estimated 90 per cent relating to post-1848 uses of the site as an immigration depot, destitute asylum and courts and government offices. The collection is now considered one of the world's most important archives of nineteenth-century institutional material culture.

This paper presents an analysis of the relatively small proportion of the assemblage associated with the convict phase of the site's history. Substantial analysis of the post-1848 underfloor assemblage conducted by Peter Davies, Penny Crook and Tim Murray was completed in 2011 as part of the 'Exploring the Archaeology of the Modern City' project at La Trobe University (Crook and Murray 2006; Davies *et al.* 2013; Davies 2013). This study provided the first extensive archaeological analysis of the post-1848 assemblage, and broadened understanding of the daily life and institutional confinement of the tens of thousands of women who passed through the immigration depot and asylum. The present study is intended to be a pre-1848 convict-period counterpart to the La Trobe analysis of the post-1848 material.

The well-documented history and clear structural analysis of the building's ceilings means it is certain that most of the assemblage from HPB relates to the post-1848 occupants. Due to the more substantial post-1848 deposition of material, it has been long recognised that it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify definitively all of the convict period deposits. As Gojak (2001:76) noted: 'it is difficult to believe that there will ever be a highly precise archaeology of the convict period of the Barracks produced'.

Despite widespread interest, the convict period artefacts of HPB have not been the subject of any previous detailed archaeological study or publication, with the exception of a minor study by Starr and Bogle (1998) which considered how

HPB convicts may have recycled bones from meat rations to manufacture gaming pieces. Given the central importance of the convict period to the site's World Heritage listing, and the ongoing fascination and public interest in convict life at the Barracks, a holistic analysis of the convict artefacts is much needed. HPB is extremely well documented in historical sources, but the few items of material culture left behind by HPB convicts have much to tell us about how individuals coped in a system that enforced restrictions and regulations.

The striped convict shirt (UF51) recovered from HPB has already achieved iconic status, and is often referred to in literature on textiles and convict clothing (e.g. Cameron 2014), but the assemblage has much more convict material culture to reveal beyond the convict shirt. Although comprising a small number in relation to the whole HPB assemblage, the convict artefacts form a discrete and well provenanced group. Many of the more evocative convict artefacts have come from within the dormitory building, including rare textiles and paper artefacts that survived due to the dry sub-floor conditions.

As an emblem of the experience of convictism (Bogle 1999), HPB is celebrated in the context of Australia's fascination with its convict past, and even recognised for its role in the construction of national identity through the unique history of confinement in colonial Australia (Casella and Fredericksen 2004). Archaeological evidence gives us a special opportunity to further our understanding of convict origins (Connah 1988) and the possibility to 'change and clarify our notions of convictness that history imbues in the material' (Winkworth 1990:15). Australian and international visitors alike are fascinated by the convict story, and for the millions of Australians who are descendants of convicts, HPB provides tangible evidence and insight into their ancestor's personal experiences. Indeed, the everyday objects left behind at HPB were worn, torn, manufactured, traded, won and lost by these convict ancestors.

Individually, the artefacts reveal aspects of the personal experiences of male convicts working in government employment between 1819 and 1848. As a group, however, the convict material culture provides clear evidence of the control imposed on the 'government men' by requiring them to live in the Barracks. The artefacts also provide evidence of an illicit trade network that allowed the convicts to obtain small items for personal consumption and comfort, and more broadly to peacefully resist government regulations and control through ingenuity and improvisation.

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Historical background

Designed by emancipated convict architect Francis Greenway, HPB was built by convict labour between 1817 and 1819 to provide accommodation for convicts working for the government. HPB received many of the newly transported convicts to NSW and became the principal administrative hub for the penal system of the colony, where an estimated 50,000 convicts were accommodated, processed, tried and punished between 1819 and 1848 (Sydney Living Museums 2014). The construction of the Barracks was the initiative of the colony's fifth governor, Lachlan Macquarie, who sought to gain control over the unmarried male convicts by providing accommodation, clothing and cooked rations, and to use this workforce to its full potential. Convict work hours had previously been difficult to control, as men were allowed to establish their own homes where they enjoyed greater freedoms and had greater access to material possessions. Similarly, even after HPB was opened, married convicts, who were not required to live in barracks, and those assigned to work for private individuals, also had different degrees of free time and varied material circumstances.

Between 1788 and 1840, Sydney Cove was the landing point for 80,000 of the 166,000 convicts who arrived in the Australian colonies. For an estimated 50,000 of these prisoners, HPB was their first destination after disembarking from the transport ships (see records in HPBM c.1990; Cozens 1848:110). From 1830 the northern range of the HPB compound housed a Court of General Sessions where secondary sentences were handed out, and from that time HPB provided much more than accommodation. It was an administrative crossroads where convicts were mustered, assigned to private landowners, tried in court, held in transit to other penal settlements and work sites, and flogged or held in solitary confinement.

Convict transportation to NSW ended in 1840 and the last few remaining occupants were removed to Cockatoo Island by 1848. With increasing numbers of free immigrants arriving in the colony, HPB was converted into Sydney's female Immigration Depot, temporarily housing at least 40,000 unaccompanied women and their children between 1848 and 1886 (Starr 2014). From 1862, the top floor (Level 3) of the dormitory building at HPB also housed the Hyde Park Asylum for aged, destitute and infirm women. By 1886 the entire site was turned over to courts and government offices and it operated as an important legal hub for Sydney for most of the twentieth century (Sydney Living Museums 2014).

When restoration of the building began in 1979, artefacts were revealed in the wall and floor cavities of the dormitory building and in the service trenches within the courtyard, resulting in Sydney's first large-scale public archaeological excavation between 1980 and 1981, and subsequent excavations in perimeter buildings in 1981–1984 and 1994 (Burritt 1981; Graves 1994, 1995; Higginbotham 1981; Mider 1996; Pinder 1983; Potter 1981; Varman 1983; Wilson 1983, 1986). In 1984, HPB was opened as a museum by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Transferred to the Historic Houses Trust of NSW in 1990, the museum continues to attract a diverse local, interstate and international visitation. In 2010 HPB was one of the 11 most prominent convict sites around Australia recognised in a serial listing on the UNESCO World Heritage List for their outstanding universal significance and key role in the most ambitious and longest-running scheme for the forced migration of criminals in human history.

Archaeology of the convict experience

Recent historical analyses have shown how convicts made Sydney their own, and transformed the landscape – 'Sydney

Cove was a canvas for the convicts' (Karskens 2009:178). McLaren (2013) has shown that historical sources reveal how convicts attempted to advance their colonial standing by engaging in illicit activities such as gambling on racing, cockfighting and boxing, and how they accessed tools, clothing, materials, provisions and other goods through petty theft at work and places of public and private storage, which in turn provided goods for black market trade and sale. Historical documents suggest that Barracks convicts were also involved in these illicit activities, and the archaeological evidence has the potential to test the accuracy of these historical accounts.

The excavation of convict sites, study of convict-built structures and analysis of archaeological finds reflecting convict life have provided popular subjects for numerous studies and various authors have presented useful overviews of such research (Casella and Fredericksen 2004; Connah 1988; Gibbs 2001, 2012; Gojak 2001; Tuffin 2013). Both Gojak (2001) and Gibbs (2012) have pointed out how this research most frequently relates to studies of convict experience and studies of punishment and penal institutions, rather than broader discussions about the nature of convict society. Connah (1988) suggested that archaeologists consider how the evidence might reflect the movement of convicts up through the system towards freedom, or down to secondary or capital punishment. Winkworth (1990:15) also identified key issues for consideration in the study of convict material culture: 'separation, distinction, hierarchy, containment, control, restraint, categorisation and segregation'.

Artefacts recovered from convict residences in urban contexts have provided a clear picture of everyday life for convicts living out of barracks. Excavation of convict huts from the 1790s at Parramatta, for example, indicated that the material culture used there by convicts reflected typical low-status household assemblages of the period (Higginbotham 1987, 1994). A scarcity of artefactual evidence was interpreted as evidence of the scarcity of convict possessions, confirming what is known from historical sources (Higginbotham 1986).

Material culture from convict households from the Cumberland/Gloucester Street site at the Rocks, Sydney allowed radical new insights into domestic consumption by convicts and their families during the period 1790–1830 (Godden Mackay Logan 1999; Karskens 2002, 2003). What survived was in stark contrast to the expectation of 'ball and chain, the wooden bowl and barred windows' (Karskens 2002). These convicts had a surprisingly high quality of life, with refined, decorative tableware and other domestic comforts, and a more diverse diet than that available to many people in England. Convicts living in these residences enjoyed relative freedom, access to material possessions and personal expression in the goods they kept with them.

Studies of convict life in penal institutions and at work sites present a different picture, with the institutional environment producing an entirely different set of artefacts. Greg Jackman's (2001) work at the Point Puer penal settlement in Van Diemen's Land has provided new perspectives on how discipline and education structured life for the convict boys at this settlement, with artefacts such as writing slates and pencils reflecting classroom control. The author's own detailed analysis of the assemblage from the convict hospital privy on Norfolk Island (Starr 1997, 2001) revealed how the artefacts reflected relatively high standards of medical care, as well as discipline, control and convict resistance in relation to health care.

A growing body of literature examines convict resistance at labour and work sites (Atkinson 1979; Dunning and Maxwell-Stuart 2004; Karskens 1986; Maxwell-Stuart 1999; Roberts 2000). More broadly, Robbins (2003, 2005) has noted

how convicts resisted this control and 'mitigated the authority of the state in their daily lives, both at work and domestically' – a process he refers to as 'spatial escape' (2005:81). He demonstrates that convicts were surprisingly influential in controlling their own work experiences through collective bargaining strategies. The handcrafts of prisoners in non-Australian contexts also clearly demonstrate this concept of 'escape'. Prisoners on the British prison hulks in Bermuda produced hand-carved chess pieces, crosses and rosary beads, jewellery, utensils, pipe tamps, and other items from limestone, coral, wood, slate and bone which were traded in the hulks (Addams 1990).

Casella's analysis of institutional material culture from the Ross Female Factory in Tasmania has revealed how objects were exchanged and valued differently by female convicts inside the Factory (Casella 1996, 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002). The material evidence represented insubordination by the convict women and evidence of a socio-economic system that operated outside the control of authorities. Casella (2000) concluded that buttons, coins, alcohol bottles and clay tobacco pipes, as well as sexual favours, provided commodities for a black market economy. A further institutional study by Dirks (2013) of the assemblage from the Prisoner Barracks (1833–1877) at Port Arthur, Tasmania has also considered convict consumption and the impact of hierarchy on convict and administrator ways of life, concluding that the material culture reflects adaptation and making-do.

Studies of early colonial material culture artefact types have also provided further clues about convicts as consumers and producers of consumable colonial products. Stocks (2008) outlined a cottage industry of bone button-making in Parramatta. Investigations of early colonial and convict-manufactured ceramics from various sites in Sydney, including Thomas Ball's pottery on Brickfield Hill (c.1801–1823) have revealed manufacturing techniques and consumption patterns in the early colony (Casey 1999; Casey and Lowe 2011; Pitt 2010; White 2008). Studies of clay tobacco pipes (Dane and Morrison 1979; Gojak 1995; Gojak and Stuart 1999) have proven useful for comparison with pipes from other convict contexts. Baloh's (2010) analysis of records from a Parramatta store from 1803–1821, and archaeological evidence from nearby sites, tracked patterns in purchases and consumption, showing how a range of alternative economic arrangements and transactions occurred between convicts and free settlers.

Historical evidence of convict material culture and its deposition at HPB

Reams of historical documents in the archives track almost every aspect of the official lives of convicts including arrival, assignment, trial and secondary sentencing, punishment, hospital care, movement between penal establishments, tickets of leave and pardons, and even death. What little is known of their unofficial lives comes from other sources such as newspaper accounts and convict narratives. However, there is still much missing from our understanding of how individuals made a living and found ways to endure the system, through the inevitable black market economy, illicit activities, making-do and personal consumption.

Twelve dormitories containing hammocks strung up on timber structures accommodated the convicts at HPB. Built to accommodate 600 men, French Canadian convict François-Maurice Lepailleur recorded there were at times as many as 1500 occupants (Greenwood 1980:24), with the extra men sleeping on blankets on the floor (Select Committee on Security of Life and Property 1844:48). These men presumably had few material possessions, although they

certainly had access to government property for daily use. This included clothing issued from the Barracks store, mess utensils, work tools and equipment, and other items such as dormitory lamps and bedding. A list of stores, clothing and other articles at HPB on 11 November 1847, just before its closure as a convict establishment (McLean 1847), gives an indication of the items in use during the convict period. The list included clothing such as shirts, pants, jackets, vests and shoes, as well as mess items such as tin plates, and items that might have been used in the dormitories such as water buckets, sweeping brushes, barber's combs and razors, padlock keys, lanterns, lamps, and urine tubs.

Aside from this official government property, however, convicts at the Barracks seem to have acquired other useful objects through manufacture, trade, purchase or theft. As Casella (2000) noted, black market exchange networks exist in all penal institutions, and the evidence shows that HPB was no different. HPB was not a prison, however, and the convicts spent their days at various locations around Sydney where they had opportunities to trade objects between themselves and others around the town. Despite this relative freedom, HPB convict inmates were in theory subjected to strict regulations, and were variously punished for breaking these rules. In such an environment, inmates would have few possessions, with authorities tightly controlling the possession of contraband. As Gojak (2001:76) notes, a prison environment does not typically allow for 'unauthorised archaeological evidence that may reveal more about the lives of convicts and how they coped'.

Some convicts arrived in the colony with minor possessions, some even bringing luggage in trunks, such as the painted green convict box from 1813 that survives in the collection of the Australian National Maritime Museum. Those who arrived at the Barracks with possessions were theoretically protected by item 26 of the *Instructions for the Guidance of the Superintendent and Subordinate Officers, of the Establishment of Convicts in Hyde Park Barracks*, which required the Superintendent to keep 'an accurate account of all articles of property of wearing apparel brought out with Convicts, which may be placed under his charge for safe custody, to enable him to return the same to the rightful owners when they may become entitled to receive them back' (NSW Government 1825:9-10).

Upon entering or leaving the Barracks gates, all prisoners were to be searched (*Sydney Gazette* 1 May 1819:1):

... in Order to prevent them from purloining any of the Government Property belonging to the Establishment, or robbing their fellow Prisoners ... there seldom can be any Excuse for their carrying Bundles, Parcels, or Boxes out of the Barracks.

This regulation suggests that leaving or returning to the Barracks with any illicit objects would have been difficult for the convicts, without bribing the overseers. In theory, then, there was little opportunity for convicts to accumulate personal possessions, and the artefacts recovered from HPB can be used to test this observation based on the historical sources.

The dormitories, passages and staircases of HPB were meant to be swept twice a day and washed once a week, and 'all dirt and soil removed at the proper hours' (NSW Government 1825:15). If this strict regime was maintained, there may have been no possibility for convicts to leave small possessions on the floor or near their hammocks. In their dormitories, where there were no cupboards, the underfloor cavities provided convenient storage. Minor repairs and renovations including work on the floorboards were carried out in the 1830s and 1840s (Thorp 1980), suggesting that some of the boards were loose for periods between repairs and could

easily have been lifted by convicts for the purpose of concealing possessions.

Historical sources from the 1840s provide key evidence for how convicts deliberately concealed stolen items at HPB. A robbery-turned-murder committed at the private residence of Mr Noble in Clarence Street, Sydney in 1844 by three Barracks' convicts sheds light on the trafficking of weapons and illicit items brought into HPB. Leading up to the robbery, convict George Vigors prepared the weapons. Another Barracks convict, Robert Malcolm, told the HPB court 'he said I have got a Sovereign and I want you to go and purchase me a pistol or two' (Clerk of the Peace 1844:1). Malcolm explained how he first acquired one pistol and then 'I brought the pistol into Barracks with me next evening and the powder and gave them to Vigors'. During the robbery, the pistol was not used, but instead, Vigors stabbed a woman with his shoemaker's knife.

In another case the following year, three Barracks convicts, John Cunningham, Francis Cavanagh and Darby Carr were among a work gang carrying Governor Gipps' furniture and household items from the first Government House to the newly built 'Governor's residence' above Bennelong Point to the east. During the move, a cedar box was prised open and its contents – a cash box containing silver, jewellery and six £50 notes – went missing. An investigation uncovered some of the cash 'concealed in a chasm in the wall of one of the sleeping apartments in Hyde Park Barracks' (*Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* 28 June 1845:3).

Throughout the building's history, the underfloor cavities appear to have been convenient receptacles for receiving rubbish swept across the floorboards, as well as providing homes for rats that stole textiles and other refuse from the dormitories to make their nests. Large and valuable items

appear to have been deliberately hidden under the dormitory floorboards as a place of temporary or long-term storage, with the intention of later retrieval, to avoid theft by other occupants or discovery by authorities.

Architecture and archaeology at HPB

Archaeological excavations at Hyde Park Barracks, conducted between 1980 and 1984, have included the excavation of trenches under Level 1 (ground floor) of the dormitory building and trenches in the courtyard and under the floors of the northern perimeter buildings (Figure 1). Excavations between 1980 and 1981 also included the recovery of sub-floor deposits from Levels 2 and 3 within the dormitory building. The building's floors were constructed with east-west timber beams subdivided by north-south joists, which divided the subfloor areas into joist spaces (Figure 2) where debris accumulated throughout the building's history. More than 80,000 artefacts were recovered from the underfloor areas of Levels 2 and 3, with individual items and groups of items catalogued using the prefix UF, and the context documented according to joist group (JG) and joist space (JS) numbers. About 35,000 artefacts were recovered from the underground trenches, and catalogued with the prefix UG, with contexts recorded by trench number and stratigraphic unit.

In the underground contexts, deposits accumulated from 1817 and remained largely undisturbed, allowing convict period material to survive in these areas. However, in the underfloor deposits (Levels 2 and 3), renovations in 1848 for the conversion of the building into the Immigration Depot involved the removal of the original lath and plaster ceilings for the installation of new cedar tongue and groove ceiling boards (Potter c.1981:48). The original 1819 ceilings were a mix of lath and plaster and exposed whitewashed timber

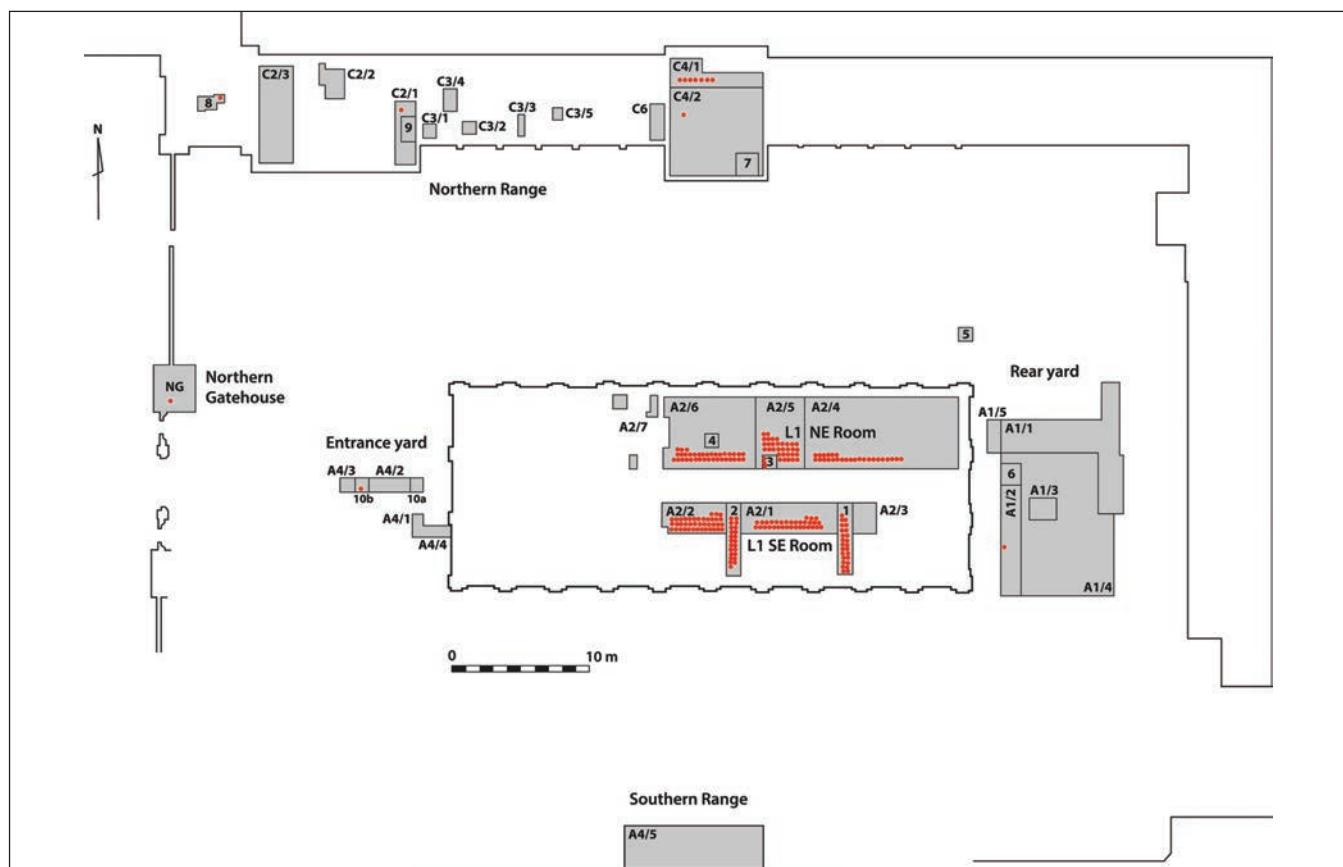
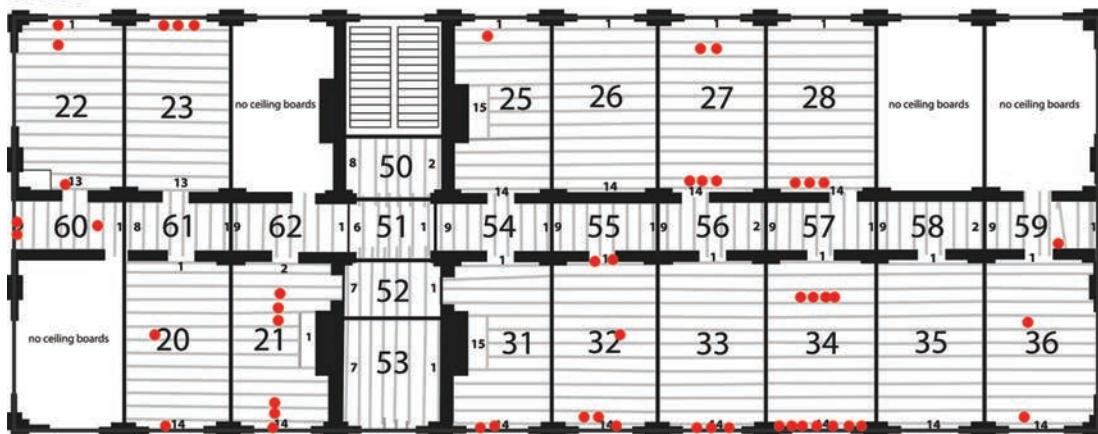


Figure 1: Plan of HPB underground trenches, with red dots showing contexts of individual convict artefacts identified in this study. Individual numbers = Stage 1 excavations (1980); letter prefix e.g. A2/6 = Stage 2 excavations (1981) (F. Starr after Davies et al. 2013:20).

Level 2



Level 3

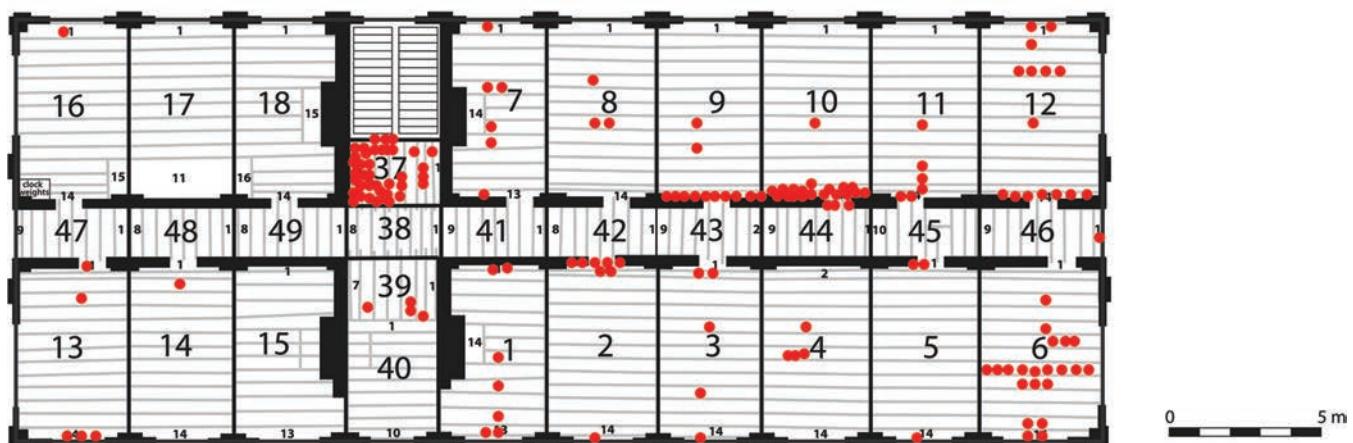


Figure 2. Plan of HPB underfloor joist spaces, dormitory building Levels 2 and 3, with red dots showing contexts of individual convict artefacts identified in this study. Large numbers represent joist groups ('JG') and small numbers represent joist spaces ('JS') (F. Starr, after Davies et al. 2013:15).

beams (Varman 1981:22), and butted floorboards were laid over the joists, creating small sub-floor cavities where convict debris could have accumulated. It is assumed, however, that the installation of new ceilings resulted in the removal of the convict period sub-floor deposits. The installation of these new ceilings in most areas of the building provides a *terminus post quem* of 1848 for deposition of most of the material recovered in 1980–1981, that is, after the end of the convict period. However, a small number of artefacts from these contexts certainly originate from the convict period, indicating that some of the convict period deposits may have survived the installation of new ceilings.

The spatial distribution of datable artefacts published by Crook and Murray (2006) showed an accumulation of artefacts with convict-era manufacture dates in distinct areas – many at the north and south extremities of joist groups. This plotting of datable pre-1848 artefacts strongly suggests that areas of convict-period deposits remained *in situ* when the ceiling boards were installed in 1848. This throws some uncertainty on the deposition of the artefacts in certain areas, and the post-deposition processes that might have allowed the movement of convict-period artefacts to be moved to other underfloor areas.

The 1819 lath and plaster ceilings are known to have survived intact in certain areas – joist groups ('JG') 37 (below Level 3 landing), JG59 (below Level 2 hall eastern end), JG60, 61 and 62 (below Level 2 western hall) and behind the clock weight case (Varman 1981:22). In his structural report, Varman (1981) also noted that in some rooms, where lath and plaster ceilings were removed, fragments of lath and plaster survived on either side of the principal beams (for example in

the ceilings of the north-western room and south-western rooms on the ground floor). Higginbotham (1981) also noted that there were 'visible remains of lath and plaster', including *in situ* laths and staining in numerous areas (such as JG29, 30, 21 and 22), even where 1848 ceilings had been installed, including JG7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (1981:74–75). Mider (1996:4) also noted that the spaces immediately beneath the window sills possess a *terminus post quem* of 1819, which would allow the survival of convict period deposits in these areas.

The architecture below the windows can still be viewed today from the north-western room of Level 1, where part of the ceiling has been removed, and the joists and floorboards of Level 2 above have been left partially exposed. A 'half' sized joist space between the pilasters (below the window) is visible, where fragments of the lath and plaster may have been retained, allowing pre-1848 deposits to survive.

Methodology

The author undertook a significance assessment of the HPB archaeological collection in 2014 that identified 500 of the most significant artefacts from the underfloor and underground assemblages, for the purposes of assessing the collection for financial valuation. A range of criteria determined the selection of these artefacts for the 'A-list', including integrity, condition, rarity (within and without the assemblage), representativeness, market value or interest to collectors, scope for research through inscriptions, dates and maker's marks, display and interpretive potential, type series

examples, associations with other significant artefacts, education value, and ‘curiosity factor’. The identification process included artefacts from all periods of the site’s history, but drew attention to the quantity of identifiable convict-period artefacts within the assemblage.

For the present study, the author continued the identification of convict artefacts beyond those identified for the initial significance list, resulting in at least 572 artefacts as probably relating to the convict occupants of HPB (Table 1). Many of these met the significance listing criteria, and many were identified according to diagnostic characteristics such as maker’s marks, dates, inscriptions and design. Fragments of clothing, such as those stamped with broad arrows, or scraps of the iconic striped convict shirting fabric, were easily identifiable as convict period. Others such as scraps of coarse unbleached linen were included on the list after careful comparison of the weave and colour of more securely identifiable convict uniform fragments. These marks and design features are considered to be intrinsic convict-period characteristics of artefacts that might only appear in an institutional context such as a penal site. Other artefacts without such characteristics were included in the list due to their context or association with other artefacts that suggests convict manufacture, alteration or use. Tobacco pipes, coins and bottles with convict period maker’s marks and dates of manufacture were assigned to the list. Their use and deposition during the convict period is considered most likely but the possibility of curation and later deposition is not discounted. Bone buttons of the types known to survive on convict clothing in museum collections were also added to the list. The list, however, is in no way intended to be definitive of all convict period artefacts in the HPB assemblage, but represents those artefacts that can be most easily dated to the convict occupation.

Table 1. Totals of artefact types identified as convict period, and included in this study.

Convict artefact types	Total
book	2
button (bone)	256
clothing (convict uniform)	31
coin (dating 1797–1838)	29
food	2
gaming	30
hammock	20
handcraft	1
hat (woven cabbage tree leaves)	34
musical instrument	2
smoking	165 (MNI from 221 fragments)
TOTAL	572



Figure 3: Convict shirts UF51 (left) and UF8114 (right), HPBM collection (Jamie North, Sydney Living Museums).

Distribution

Artefacts identified in this study as dating from the convict period were recovered from all areas of the underground trench excavations of HPB (Figure 1), where many of the deposits that accumulated during the convict period remained intact and largely undisturbed.

The underfloor deposits, which we know retained far fewer convict period artefacts due to the replacement of ceilings, nevertheless reveal an interesting pattern when convict period artefacts identified in this study are plotted on the floor plan (see Figure 2). They tend to appear in clusters in certain areas, suggesting that certain subfloor areas retained convict period deposits – in particular the extremities of the rooms – under the doors to the internal hall (for example JG2, 5, 9, 10, 11 and 12) and under the windows (for example JG1, 6, 20, 21, 23, 27, 31 and 36). While the lath and plaster ceilings and sub-floor convict period deposits were removed from most areas in 1848, the half joist space between the structural east-west bearers and the nearest adjacent joists seem to have retained convict-period deposits.

Figure 2 indicates that some early artefacts were also recovered from further into the centre of the dormitory spaces, which may be explained by post-1848 occupants finding them in the building or elsewhere and losing them again above the 1848 ceilings, or disturbance by rodents moving objects from one joist space to the next. Some artefacts such as early coins may not have been deposited during the convict period at all, but curated by the women for some decades before loss.

THE CONVICT ARTEFACTS

Convict shirts

Perhaps the most significant and charismatic of the convict artefacts recovered at HPB are two convict shirts (Figure 3). Discovered under the floor of Level 3 during restoration by the Public Works Department in 1979, the exact context of convict shirt (UF51) was unfortunately lost. Another convict shirt (UF8114), in poorer condition than UF51, was recovered from Level 3 in an underfloor cavity (JG1 JS12). These two shirts were manufactured using a variety of plain weave unbleached cotton, with blue weft stripes of alternating width. The more intact shirt (UF51) has two three-hole bone buttons to fasten the collar, single gathered cuffs with button holes on either side for some type of cufflink or linked button (none intact on the shirt), and a red stamp or stencil – ‘BO/↑’(Board of Ordnance) at lower right front. This shirt has perspiration stains on the back and under the arms, a repair on one arm, and the neck opening was torn and repaired. The second shirt (UF8114) has one arm missing and a large repair patch on one shoulder. In addition to the two shirts, various scraps of



convict shirt blue striped cotton were recovered from several underfloor contexts, including scraps contained in bundles UF4802 and UF11635 (both from JG10 JS14) and UF3972 (JG37 JS3).

Worn, torn, stained and patched, these government-issue shirts have evidently come off the convicts' backs. They are rare survivors of the convict 'slop' clothing produced by the hundreds of thousands in the convict era. Such shirts were just one part of the standard government bi-annual allowance to male convicts. The *Instructions for the Guidance of the Superintendent and Subordinate Officers, of the Establishment of Convicts in Hyde Park Barracks* (NSW Government 1825:11) indicate that Barracks convicts were to be supplied with four such shirts per year, two jackets, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of shoes, 'a due proportion of which is to be delivered to him at the end of every six months'. By 1832, however, the official allowance of clothing seems to have been reduced, with those working in iron gangs receiving 'two Parramatta frocks; Two Parramatta Trowsers; Three striped shirts; Three Pairs of Shoes; One Straw Hat and Cap' (Colonial Secretary 1834:22). Gipps (1844) noted that HPB convicts received two shirts and two pairs of shoes issued per year 'because they rarely stayed more than six months in that establishment'.

For many years it has been thought that the striped cotton fabric of the HPB convict shirts was spun and woven in India. Recent research however more strongly suggests an English manufacture. From the 1820s some convict clothing was supplied from England, although Major Druitt (1822, cited in Ritchie 1971:15) noted that when these were not available from the stores, uniforms of 'colonial manufacture' were issued to the convicts – in particular 'a shirt of linen' probably made up at the lumberyard in Sydney. He also suggested that 'it would be very expedient to have a regular supply of ... striped calico shirts for summer use from England'. Druitt mentioned that he had lately had made several hundred shirts from shirting found in the Commissariat stores.

In 1834, the Commissariat Department ordered 18,000 yards of striped cotton for shirting from England (Commissariat Department 1832–1835a). In the 1830s, the colonial government called for tenders for the supply of men's striped shirts for convicts. Stores records at this time indicate that 'shirting' fabric and 'dead eye' bone buttons were being issued to the Parramatta Female Factory for the female prisoners to convert into convict uniform shirts (Commissariat Department 1832–1835b; Ordnance Storekeeper 1839–1842).

By the 1830s there were 11 private cloth mills operating in NSW, which may have manufactured cloth for slop clothing (Maynard 1994:35). By this time, however cotton and fustian (linen and cotton blend) textiles were being mass-produced in numerous mills in both Manchester and Lancashire, England (Aspin 1981). Recent re-examination of the weave of convict shirt UF51 (Evans 2015) revealed it was manufactured with a smooth thread, of even thickness, indicating that it is a machine spun thread. As the sub-continent industry still relied on hand-spinning, this evidence points to the fabric having been manufactured in England. Furthermore, as the raw cotton for the mass-production of English textiles was supplied by the cotton plantations of the American south (Aspin 1981; Riello 2013), the cotton used to manufacture these convict shirts was most likely cultivated by slave labour.

The two HPB shirts and one other similar shirt (marked 'BPC') recovered from a wall cavity in the Commandant's Cottage at South Bridgewater, Granton, Tasmania (dating between 1830 and 1849) are the only known convict shirts of this type to survive in Australia (Clark *et al.* 2012). Worn and worn-out by the convicts, these rare survivors are perhaps the most personal tangible evidence of convict lives available to

us today, and these examples from HPB are unique amongst the surviving convict clothing in museum collections, for their clear provenance to a convict site.

Convicts at all Australian penal colonies were issued with uniforms throughout the entire penal era (Maynard 1994). By enforcing the wearing of standard uniforms, many branded with the broad arrow or conspicuous by their yellow colour or parti-colour design, the government made convicts immediately recognisable. Young (1988) discusses the emasculating function of the convict uniform in relation to how it removed their independence as free men, and demanded their subjection to government control. Davies (2013) also outlines the ability of authorities to control through the use of uniforms, and to proclaim the status of the inmates as confined to an institution.

Theft of all property, and in particular shirts, appears to have been rife at HPB. Inspections of prisoners leaving and entering the Barracks were conducted at the gates 'to prevent them from purloining Government property, or robbing their fellow-prisoners' (NSW Government 1825:12). Druitt (1822, in Ritchie 1971:13) noted in his evidence to the Bigge Report that convicts were attempting to smuggle extra [stolen?] slop clothing out of the Barracks, by wearing doubles, and Bigge (1822:33) reported that 'Robberies amongst the convicts in the Barracks of their clothes and bedding, and concealment of it, are very frequent ... they cast them over the barrack wall to persons who are ready to receive them on the other side'.

HPB convict Charles Cozens (1848:118–119) also noted how shirts were valued:

Saturday afternoon was set apart for the men to wash their shirts, which did not occupy long, as their wardrobe was chiefly confined to what they carried on their backs. The shirt, however, must be clean on Sunday's parade under pain of punishment. When washed, it was usually dried on the shoulders of the owners, over the jackets, to avoid any experiments in the slight-of-hand conveyancing, as, so sure as any novice ... happened to suspend his shirt ... from a peg or paling, and only for one moment turn his back on it, his face would never more look on it.

These broad-arrow stamped uniform shirts allowed the colonial government to mark the convicts, making them immediately recognisable as government men, the hand of government control and authority constantly weighing heavy on their shoulders. Historical sources tell us, however, that convicts found ways to subvert the imposition of government uniforms. Convicts are known, for example, to have escaped in the evenings over the HPB compound wall, leaving their 'slop' clothing at the base of the wall and wearing regular clothing (perhaps stolen or obtained with gambling profits) so as not to be recognised at the public houses where they were headed (Lewis 1844:94). The physical evidence on the shirts themselves, however, indicates that the uniforms were also valued, presumably since losing it would result in punishment. Their convict owners mended and patched them and perhaps stashed them as spares for safe keeping, or for recycling scraps of the fabric for other uses.

Bone buttons

Over 250 bone buttons were recovered from HPB, including mainly one, three, four and five hole sew-through types, which were typically used on clothing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, with the single and five hole being the earliest types (Lindbergh 1999:51; Noel-Hume 1969:90). Convict 'slop' clothing commonly employed simple medium-sized four-hole and five-hole bone buttons, as seen on jackets, waistcoats and trousers in public collections, or smaller three-hole or '3-way' buttons (as seen intact on the collar of the HPB



Figure 4: Convict uniform buttons, HPBM collection (Jamie North).

convict shirt), such as those in Figure 4. The 155 bone buttons recovered from HPB Levels 2 and 3 underfloor areas included 47 single-hole, 5 two-hole, 27 three-hole, 70 four-hole, and 6 five-hole buttons. Of these, 109 were recovered from areas considered to have intact convict period deposits (38 buttons from JG37 and 71 buttons from various JG in peripheral joist spaces – JS1, 2, 13, 14). Some of the remainder, recovered from joist spaces with 1848 ceilings below, may have been attached to inexpensive clothing of the immigrant and asylum women, or attached to convict clothing deposited in peripheral joist spaces that was subsequently moved by rats to the internal joist spaces.

From the underground trenches on Level 1 of the dormitory building, 101 bone buttons were recovered, including 30 one-hole, 12 three-hole (as on the UF51 convict shirt collar), 52 four-hole, 6 five-hole buttons, and 1 button fragment with unknown holes. Many of these buttons were probably accidentally lost beneath the floor, although such substantial numbers of convict uniform buttons may also indicate deliberate concealment for secondary uses. Female convicts at the Ross Female Factory, for example, are also thought to have concealed collections of buttons below the floors for use in trade or as gaming tokens (Casella 2000).

Convict shoe

A rare complete leather shoe (UF56) was recovered from a joist space near the internal doorway of the north-eastern dormitory on Level 2 (JG27 JS13) (Figure 5). The shoe is straight-lasted, having been made to the same design as the left shoe, but its wear pattern indicates that it has been worn on a right foot. It has a square toe, high toe spring, seven pairs of



Figure 5: Convict shoe (UF56), HPBM collection (Jamie North).

roughly-made lace holes and a welted construction. It has been stamped on the inside sole with 'B↑O' (Board of Ordnance), confirming its manufacture before 1855 when the Board of Ordnance was disbanded, and a broad arrow indicating government property. It is very similar in construction to another example in the National Museum of Australia collection, found at Granton, Hobart, Tasmania.

In 1826 a Board of Inquiry recommended that shoemaking and tailoring workshops be established at HPB, with the leather for the boots and shoes imported from Britain (Bosworth 1988:16; Maynard 1994:37). These workshops did not work to capacity and by the early 1830s the Commissariat Office (1831) advertised for contractors to make up 5000 pairs of convict shoes from materials in the store that were already cut out, and 'The upper and sole leather being marked thus B ↑ O'. Interested parties could obtain information from the 'shoemakers' establishment at Hyde Park Barracks'. Perhaps there was a shortage of shoemaking convicts in 1831 when this advertisement was placed, but generally throughout the convict period there were at least 380 convict shoemakers, cobblers and cordwainers who worked at the Barracks at various times, and who seem to have been hand-picked on arrival for the in-house shoemaking establishment (Historic Houses Trust of NSW c.1990). Completed shoes were also supplied from England. In 1834, for example, 25,000 pairs of men's shoes were ordered from England (Commissariat Department 1832–1835a). It is unknown where the shoe found on Level 2 was manufactured although it is very possible it was manufactured at HPB.

The UF56 shoe was found in JS13 (the second most peripheral cavity in the JG) and was too large to have slipped through the cracks, meaning it may have been concealed beneath a loose board for safekeeping by a convict. Alternative theories include that it was found in the building and concealed by a worker during building renovations in 1848, or by one of the immigrant women, for the purpose of warding off evil spirits. This is considered a widespread practice in the UK throughout the nineteenth century, with a few potential cases also identified in Australia (Evans 2004).

Convicts working in stone quarries, cutting grass and wood, driving bullocks or carting, each received a new pair of shoes every three months, but all others received only two pairs per year (Druitt 1822, in Ritchie 1971:15). Shoes were therefore presumably a valuable commodity for government convicts, and this example found at HPB may have been found or stolen and concealed as a valuable spare, or as a trade item. Druitt (1822, in Ritchie 1971:16) observed, however, what many HPB convicts did with this valuable commodity after they were issued: 'the change of good shoes for bad ones, by which the men receive a small difference in money from the inhabitants of the town'. Indeed in Augustus Earle's (1830) well-known depiction of a convict gang at the HPB gates, some of the convicts are not wearing any shoes at all – perhaps having traded them in this way. One of the convicts is wearing only one shoe.

Secondary punishment suit fragments

A pair of makeshift braces (UF53) were recovered from under one of the hallway doors on Level 3 (JG10 JS14) (Figure 6). Constructed from two recycled strips of coarse linen, the longer strip (80 cm) of these braces has eight hand-sewn button holes and fragments of yellow woollen 'Parramatta' cloth; one of the fabrics manufactured by female convicts at the Parramatta Female Factory (Stenning 1986), where spinners produced 30,000 yards of coarse wool annually (Maynard 1994:34). Linen or cotton strips, such as those used for the braces, are seen on the side seam and waistband linings of the pants of the government-issue yellow and brown/black

punishment suit – a few rare examples surviving in public collections (Manera n.d.). Issued to convicts undergoing secondary sentences, the sides of these pants were fastened with buttons, which allowed the wearer to fit the pants on over the leg irons that were fixed on with rivets around his ankles. The pants that included these side seam strips were most likely made by female convicts at Parramatta, where women of the first and second classes of the Female Factory made ‘slop’ clothing and gaol clothes (Maynard 1994:37).



Figure 6: Braces (UF53), HPBM collection (Jamie North).

The shorter strip is 79cm long and has been constructed from two strips of the same coarse linen sewn together, but with only two button holes, one at either end. There is a small amount of indecipherable writing in brown ink at one end of the longer strip. The braces have button holes at both ends of the strips, which were probably used to attach the braces to the trousers.

The length of the braces indicates that they were designed to fit a small man or even a boy, perhaps 150–160cm tall. That he may have needed braces to hold up his pants is unsurprising, when we learn that government ‘slop’ clothing was typically ill-fitting. As the *Sydney Herald* (23 February 1835:2) announced ‘The slops appear to be given out in the most indiscriminate manner, without the least regard to fitting. For instance, a man standing six feet, and built in proportion, will be presented with a suit to fit a dwarf, and vice versa...’ Indeed, the term ‘slops’ comes from the Dutch ‘slabbe’ meaning ‘wide breeches’, but it became a more general term for loose-fitting readymade clothing (Maynard 1994:11).

A number of other fragments of the same coarsely-woven natural flax fabric were recovered, including a smaller fragment of punishment pants side seam with one button hole (UF11545) (JG9 JS14), and a trouser cuff (UF18051) recovered from JG10 JS14, the half joist beneath a door to the hallway. The recovery of a heavily corroded coin thought to be a 1799 George III shilling (UF99) from this same joist space may lend support to the argument that this joist space retained its convict period deposit. Fragments of blue striped convict shirt fabric (UF970) were also recovered here. Other finds in this joist space include animal bone, stoneware ginger beer bottle sherds, beer or wine bottle sherds, a simple iron belt buckle, bone and ferrous metal buttons, plain clay tobacco pipe stem and bowl fragments, and fragments of woven cabbage tree leaves (see below UF11636 and UF4393).

Woven cabbage tree palm leaves

Fragments of plaited cabbage tree palm fibres (*Livistonia australis*) (UF4393 and UF11636) recovered from the same joist space as the braces (JG10 JS14) may potentially be interpreted as convict period, due to their association with other identifiable convict artefacts in this joist space (Figure 7). This attribution, however, is tenuous as the joist space also contained clearly post-1848 women’s items such as pins, sewing cotton reels, and printed fabric scraps.

A handmade wooden shredding tool (UF11648) with metal teeth was found beneath another doorway on Level 3 (JG12 JS14), used for cutting the leaves of cabbage tree palm into thin strips for plaiting. Crook and Murray (2006:76) and Davies *et al.* (2013:59) discuss the plaited scraps and this tool as possibly made by the female Asylum inmates, but the context of these artefacts in the peripheral joist spaces, in association with other convict artefacts, may suggest convict-era use and deposition.

Historical accounts of convicts making hats from the leaves of the cabbage tree palm are also strong. Straw plaiting was taught to convicts in the hulks and has been called a ‘classic prison craft’ (Winkworth 1990:39). There were numerous convicts accommodated at HPB with the trades of hat maker, milliner, hat finisher and hatter who might have made such hats and taught the skill to others (Historic Houses Trust of NSW c.1990). Cabbage tree hats were reportedly made and worn in the colony as



Figure 7: Strips of woven cabbage tree palm leaves and leaf shredder tool, HPBM collection (Jamie North).

early as 1799 and they continued to be popular throughout the nineteenth century (Flower 1968). Government-issue convict hats were either the grey woollen variety or a leather cap, and even Major Druitt (1822, in Ritchie 1971:16) admitted to Commissioner Bigge ‘they are quite useless, and afford no protection to the head from the sun’. Adapting to the colonial environment, convicts made cabbage tree hats to protect themselves while working, as well as to produce goods that could be sold to others. Druitt mentioned that ‘some have made for themselves straw hats and others I think have stolen them’. Evidence provided by convict John Barker (on Security of Life and Property 1844:39-40) confirms that Barracks convicts were making hats to sell, to make money to buy bread, tea, sugar and tobacco, in addition to their rations:

... there is a messenger kept to go out every morning to fetch whatever is wanted.
What are they allowed to fetch?
Bread, tea, sugar, and tobacco, but no spirits.
Where do the men get the money?
Some make hats which they are allowed to sell.
... What do the men do at night?
Perhaps there are six or seven making hats, some tailoring, and others card-playing
... How do the men dispose of their hats and other articles when they leave the gangs?
They have places about town where they sell their property.

Further evidence was given by Captain H. Browne, J.P. (Select Committee on Security of Life and Property 1844:54):

Do you think it right that the men in Hyde Park Barracks should be allowed to work at trades and to sell their manufactures?

Decidedly not; I have been quite astonished to see the men going along the streets with four or five hats on their heads, one on the top of another.

Captain Maclean, J.P. and Superintendent of HPB also explained to the Committee (1844:60):

... the men are allowed to wear straw hats because the grey woollen caps they are allowed by the Government do not protect them from the sun; and as the men have straw hats generally, they must either make them or buy them. The men are not, however, allowed to sell hats.

Ankle guard

Perhaps the most stunning example of handcrafted ingenuity recovered from HPB was a leather cuff, ankle guard or ‘gaiter’ (UF125), designed to be worn around the ankle beneath the basilis (rings) of leg irons (Figure 8). Discovered in 1979 during restoration by the Public Works Department, its archaeological context was not recorded. With a serrated edge, presumably designed to soften the edge for the wearer, and designed to be laced together, the cuff is cleverly designed with two straps, roughly sewn at one end and fastened with a button at the other, that attach over the basil and hold it in place. The rough stitching might be interpreted as the make-shift nature of the guard, or a later repair.

Worn for months on end by convicts working in iron gangs as secondary punishment, leg irons caused discomfort and severe pain, bruising, lesions and skin ruptures. The only known surviving example of its kind in Australia, this guard may represent only a single example made by a convict who simply could not bear the chafing of his leg irons. Equally, however, it may represent a larger-scale illicit convict industry that involved the manufacture of such guards by convicts with leather-working skills, and trade and sale to wearers of leg

irons. Leather off-cuts and the necessary tools for the manufacture of such ankle guards must have been readily available in the shoemaking workshop at HPB. This guard may represent an industry that is almost completely invisible in the documentary record, except one ambiguous account by convict William Derrincourt (Becke 1899:28, 39) that seems to mention a similar type of guard. Before transportation, while imprisoned on a hulk, Derrincourt had ‘knee garters’ to wear, which buckled around the leg irons by means of a strap, but later when he had no garters, he tore off a piece of his shirt and the lining from his hat to protect his legs. Settler Tom Petrie (in Weidenhofer 1973:66-67), remembering the convict era, also described a sort of guard – ‘a piece of leather made round like the top of a boot, was put in between the iron and the man’s leg, so that the skin would not be so readily chafed’. This description does not indicate whether the authorities provided such guards, or whether convicts made them. A scarcity of historical descriptions of protection for the ankles has been interpreted as suggesting that this practice was not common (Leppard-Quinn 2007:24).

Coins

Coins dating from all periods of occupancy were recovered from across the underground and underfloor contexts, 29 of which were dated between 1797 and 1838, and are included in this study as their dates fall with the convict occupancy of HPB. These include a 1797 ‘Cartwheel’ penny, George III farthings, shillings and halfpennies, a Holey Dollar dump from 1813, George IV pennies, farthings and halfpennies, and a Dutch East Indies half Stuiver. While there is potential for these early coins to have been curated and deposited by post-1848 occupants of HPB, it is likely that most were deposited during the convict period, since 22 were recovered from underground contexts. Of the remaining seven coins, two were recovered under the doorframes of Level 3 (JG10 JS13 and JS14), in association with other convict artefacts. Ten 1826 coins were recovered at HPB, which were received in the colony as official currency, and were common until about 1868, when new coinage began to replace them (Boland 1987). The presence of coins in convict period deposits at HPB is unsurprising given the other archaeological evidence for gambling and black market trade of illicit materials. Indeed, historical documents also provide evidence of how coins changed hands at the Barracks, frequently in the form of ‘tipping’ or bribing the overseers and scourges (‘floggers’). Convict John Barker, messenger to the Police Office, provided



Figure 8: Convict ankle guard (UF125), HPBM collection (Jamie North).

evidence (Select Committee on Security of Life and Property 1844:36-38):

... I asked some of them whether there was any way of getting out of the Barracks, and they said yes, by tipping ... he asked me my name, and put it down on a piece of paper, and said he would see, and I then gave him five shillings ... one night I was sitting down in the ward with one or two more men gambling.

In what manner?

Tossing Halfpence

Is the flogger ever tipped?

I have heard that he takes a deal of tip.

HPB convicts were able to earn a few coins by making and selling cabbage tree hats, by gambling, or by trading rations, clothing, favours or other valuable items obtained squarely, or 'on the cross'. In their free time allowed on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, convicts could have also used their trades for self-employment. A few coins in the pocket enabled convicts to participate in the convict illicit system of trade and 'tipping' that appears to have been entrenched at HPB, allowing a convict facing punishment such as flogging to pay the scourger to 'go easy' on him. In addition, as the Select Committee on Security of Life and Property heard (1844:53), convicts also used coins for their amusement as tokens in gambling games such as 'chuckpenny' or 'tossing halfpence'.

Clay tobacco pipes

The collection of clay tobacco pipes found at HPB is recognised as one of the largest of its kind from an institutional site in Australia, with 4111 fragments excavated from the building and courtyard. The initial identification and cataloguing of the pipe assemblage by Graham Wilson in the early 1980s resulted in a total of 128 catalogue records (including 221 fragments) identified as manufactured by makers known to have been in production during the convict occupation of HPB (pre-1848) (Historic Houses Trust of NSW 2015). These totals may increase with further study of unmarked pipe fragments, and further work is still needed to establish minimum numbers. The convict period pipes included in this study are those made in Sydney by William Cluer (1802–1846) (24 fragments), William Davis (1810–1840) (4 fragments), Joseph Elliott (1828–1840) (60 fragments), Samuel Elliott (1828–1840) (39 fragments), Jonathon Leak (1822–1839) (12 fragments), MPP (1810–1840) (74 fragments), Anson Moreton (1829–1840) (1 fragment), John Moreton (1822–1847) (4 fragments) and by London maker Thomas Reeve (1828) (2 fragments) (dates from Wilson 1988, in Gojak and Stuart 1999:45, Davies *et al* 2013:50).

Pipes by these makers were excavated from the intact convict period deposits of Level 1 and from JG37 on Level 3, an area known to have its 1819 ceilings intact. JG37 retained substantial quantities of both early and late clay tobacco pipes, in association with a diverse range of artefacts including buttons, animal bone, bottle sherds, shell, building materials, newspaper and document fragments, matchboxes, leather offcuts, hand-cut and machine-made nails, pins, religious tracts, jewellery, rosary beads, printed textile scraps and a cast lead gaming piece. Pipes of note included a stem made by Leak (UF3185), Samuel Elliott pipe stems (UF14391, UF14392, UF14393), William Cluer bowl and spur fragments (UF3239, UF3543), two pipe stems (UF14391) by Joseph Elliott, and a re-worked mouthpiece from a MPP pipe (UF17662). The deposition of pipes on this Level 3 stair landing might indicate that convicts were smoking inside the building, or perhaps more likely, that these broken pipes were discarded as rubbish, or concealed below the floor for smoking later, or for secondary uses such as gambling tokens.

Other convict period pipes were also recovered from the excavated trenches on Level 1, where deposits from the convict dormitories in these rooms accumulated between 1819 and 1848. In trench A2/1, there was a Leak stem fragment (UG3810), and a stem fragment made by Anson Moreton (UG3140; A2/1). A2/2 produced convict-period pieces including fragments of a Leak effigial pipe bowl (UG3815), a John Moreton stem with relief script (UG3984), and fragments of a Cluer plain bowl with spur mark 'W/C' (UG3763). From trench A2/4, there were plain pipe bowls by Cluer with his spur mark 'W/C' (UG3073, UG3762) and a plain pipe bowl with spur attributed to John Moreton (UG3184).

In A2/5 there were more fragments of Cluer's spur-marked pipes (UG3760, UG3761), and an effigial pipe bowl by Elliott of a man with an upturned moustache (Figure 9) (UG3790). Nearby A2/6 was rich with artefacts and produced a complete effigial pipe (UG3102) by Joseph Elliott with relief script 'Market Wharf', in association with other early pipes such as a bowl with unicorn design (UG3106), Leak pipe stems (UG3811), a Leak effigial bowl (UG3111) (Figure 9) and another Cluer spur-marked bowl (UG3759). Effigial pipes such as this were a popular form made by Sydney manufacturers in the 1830s (Gojak and Stuart 1999:46).

For many convicts, smoking was a welcome (although illicit) relief from the brutality and drudgery of convict life. Tobacco and the pipes for smoking it were acquired illegally, with these goods being key commodities in the black market economy, and tied up in the common tipping, bribery,



Figure 9: Jonathon Leak pipe bowl, spur and stem fragment (UG3111) (left) and effigial pipe bowl, complete pipe made by Joseph Elliott (UG2102), HPBM collection (Jamie North).

gambling and barter that occurred between convicts, overseers and other individuals. Smoking seems to have been controlled by the authorities in a piecemeal manner. Tobacco was provided to some prisoners as a reward and incentive for good conduct (Walker 1984:11) and three of Augustus Earle's convicts out the front of the Barracks are smoking pipes, yet Barracks convicts were also regularly sentenced to flogging or a stint on the treadmill for smoking in the ward, smoking while working, stealing tobacco from the stores, bringing wine and tobacco into the hospital, or supplying tobacco to other prisoners (Historic Houses Trust of NSW c.1990). Convict Richard Campbell was charged in 1835 for trafficking, 'buying tea, sugar, bread, tobacco etc. for prisoners with money they earned by making straw hats' (Court of General Sessions 1835).

Gaming

A group of six bone gaming pieces (Figure 10) recovered from A2/2 on Level 1 (units 2027, 2035 and 2039) appear to have been hand carved and are consider most likely to date from the convict period. In the same trench (unit 2026), a round gaming piece carved or ground down from a fragment of blue and white transfer printed ceramic (UG1015) was also found, and in nearby trench 2, three other bone gaming pieces were recovered (UG1007, UG1009, UG1010). Another plain bone gaming piece (UG1014) was excavated from A2/6 in the northern ground floor long room. Other miscellaneous gaming pieces were also found under the floors of Level 2 and 3, including one carved from wood (UF2633) which is round with an incised cross, and similar in style and manufacture to some of the bone pieces. In other contexts, four cast lead gaming tokens (UG1016, UF9942, UF625, UG6789) were recovered.

Other game-related artefacts found at HPB also likely date to the convict period. These include four wood-backed bone dominoes recovered from the underground trenches (UG6427 – 3 dominoes, UG6426) in association with convict period tobacco pipes, and two from joist spaces beneath windows on Level 2 (JG20 JS14 – UF79, JG31 JS14 – UF89). A playing card fragment (UG18594) from the doorway joist space of JG12 JS14 may also have been deposited during the convict period. For amusement in the evenings, card-playing was a regular activity in the dormitories, along with hat-making and tailoring (Select Committee on Security of Life and Property 1844:39). These may have been innocent card games, although they were probably more often played for stakes and were part of a persistent culture of gambling at the Barracks which was recognised by the authorities, even in the earliest years. A note in the *Instructions for the Guidance of the Superintendent and Subordinate Officers, of the Establishment of Convicts in Hyde Park Barracks* (NSW Government 1825:8-9) stated that food must be 'impartially divided into messes, and served up by one man of each mess, so as to prevent the men from gambling for the portions allotted them', nor was the Superintendent 'to permit games of hazard, or gambling of any description, amongst the prisoners'.

Despite the regulations, gambling continued into the 1840s, when Henry Keck, Governor of Woolloomooloo Gaol reported (Select Committee on Security of Life and Property 1844: 35):

Are you aware that there is much gambling practised, at the present moment in Sydney?

I think it is carried on to a great extent, at the present moment, than it has ever been before.

What description of gambling is principally practised? Skittle playing and pitch and toss.



Figure 10: Bone and ceramic gaming pieces, HPBM collection (Top row L-R: UG1007, UG1014, UG1012, UG1011; Bottom row L-R: UG1009, UG1013, UG1015, UF2633) (Photo: Jamie North, Sydney Living Museums).

Such hand-crafted gaming tokens and dominoes were perhaps carved from bones retained from meals in the southern range mess halls where meals were served to the convicts (Starr and Bogle 1998). Other found objects such as glass, nails, metal offcuts, or even the government tools used to carry out their trades may have provided the implements needed for carving these pieces, which it is speculated were used as tokens of different values in games played for stakes. Gambling, like trading in tobacco, was an offence punishable by a stint in the solitary confinement cells in one of the corner pavilions of the northern range of HPB. Despite this deterrent, gambling seems to have been a popular pastime at HPB. The small collection of tokens recovered from beneath the ground floor dormitories may indicate that this was an area where such gambling games were conducted, or at least where a gambler once concealed his collection of tokens.

I find there are more robberies planned in these skittle ground, than in any other places.

Deputy Superintendent of the Barracks, Timothy Lane, reported catching men during a game (Select Committee on Security of Life and Property 1844:48):

Do you know whether the men gamble at night?

Yes, I have caught them at it – they have been punished ...

Did you ever find much money?

I made a sweep one night of eight or nine pounds which was staked ... but I have been told they often played for twenty pounds ... the game was up the minute they saw me, and they cut into their hammocks, then they put out the light, and I had to look sharp and depend upon my own.

In his evidence to the Select Committee on Security of Life and Property (1844:53) convict John Browne stated:

I was told by a party the other day, that a friend of his went into the Barracks one Sunday, and saw some of the men gambling on the steps of the Court House; they were playing at "chuckpenny" or something of that sort.

Bottles

Dark olive alcohol bottles and square case gin bottles were recovered from the underground trenches and from the underfloor contexts containing other convict deposits. Some of these were probably deposited during the convict period, however, since the northern convict dormitory on Level 1 was later used as the dining hall for the immigrant women, it is difficult to attribute the very fragmented food and beverage refuse to the convict occupancy. Two complete early stoneware ginger beer bottles (Figure 11) were also recovered, and their early dates may indicate their use and deposition by convicts. One is marked 'FOSTER', for ginger beer brewer Thomas Foster, whose business was located in Bathurst Street, Sydney for one year in 1839 (UF7605). The other bottle marked 'P. WHELAN' (UG3065), was excavated from trench A2/5 in the northern dormitory, and can be dated to the mid-1830s.



Figure 11: Stoneware ginger beer bottles by makers Foster (left) and P. Whelan (right), HPBM collection (Photo: Jamie North, Sydney Living Museums).

While convicts may have easily concealed smaller illicit items such as tobacco pipes and gaming tokens in their clothing for passing inspection in and out of the Barracks, it is less likely that convicts were able to conceal bottles to bring them into the dormitories. The *Instructions to the Superintendent* certainly advised that: 'He is not to suffer spirituous liquor, wine, ale, or porter to be brought into the Barracks on any pretence whatever ...' (NSW Government 1825:9). Historical accounts indicate that Barracks convicts found a

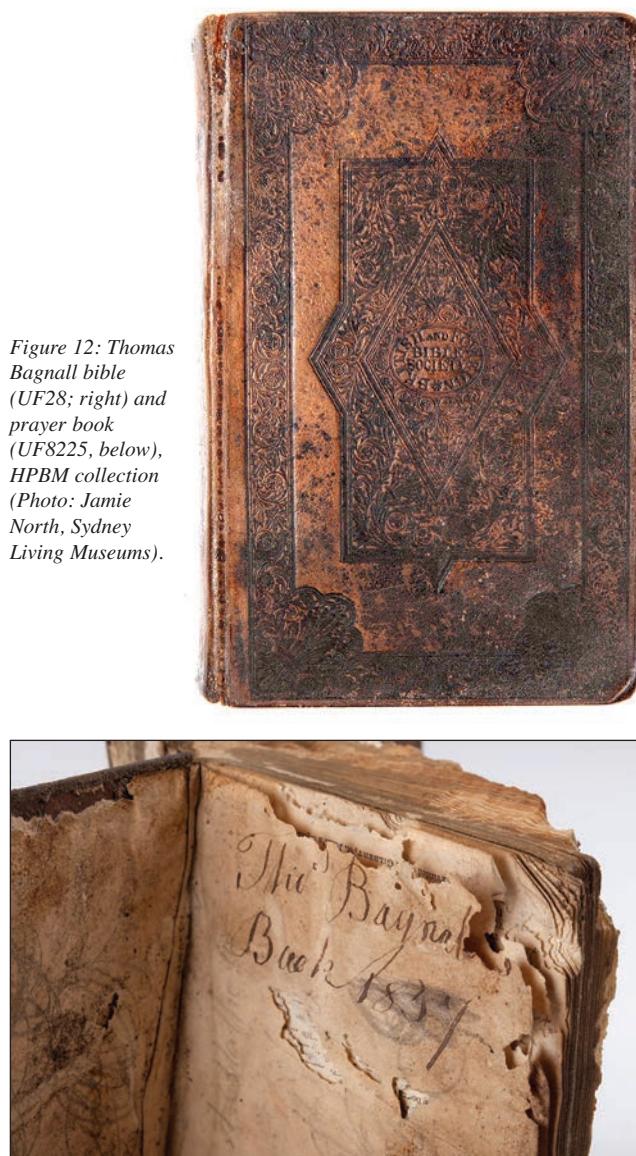
way to have a drink anyway, being frequent 'boosers' at the public houses around Sydney, and the enjoyment this provided was effectively a means of rebellion against the drudgery of the monotony of work, punishment and authority (Starr 2013). Colonial Architect Mortimer Lewis, who resided behind HPB in the Domain, gave evidence that he often heard convicts escaping over the walls at night, by means of his roof (Lewis 1844:94), wearing regular clothing and leaving their 'slop' uniforms at the base of the wall for when they returned from the pubs.

Religious texts

Two leather-bound books were recovered from under the northern dormitory on Level 2 (JG27 JS3) – a Protestant bible and prayer book (UF28, UF8225) (Figure 12). Too large to have fallen through the cracks between the boards, they appear to have been hidden together in the floor cavity. Unlike most other joist spaces which were packed full of material, this joist space was quite empty, the books only accompanied by two small fragments of animal bone, and a piece of jute cord.

Both books are inscribed with the handwritten name 'Thomas Bagnall' and dated 1837, indicating that these books probably survived from the convict period. Indeed, research of historical records revealed that a Thomas Bagnall was convicted at age 17, having broken into a warehouse and tried in Warwick, England in June 1837 (NSW Government

Figure 12: Thomas Bagnall bible (UF28; right) and prayer book (UF8225, below), HPBM collection (Photo: Jamie North, Sydney Living Museums).



1788–1842). To await his transportation for seven years to the colony, Bagnall was imprisoned on the *Fortitude*, *Ganymede* and *Euryalus* hulks on the River Thames in London in 1837–1838 (Home Office 1802–1849). It seems most likely that he was given these books on board one of these hulks, when he recorded the date inside the covers. Thomas was a brass founder who could read and write. He was 5 feet 3 inches tall and had a fair complexion with light brown hair and grey eyes, and a large raised mole on the right side of his chest (NSW Government 1838). He was transported to the colony on the *Earl Grey* (2), arriving on 22 November 1838, and received his ticket of leave in 1843 (NSW Government 1843). No records indicate that he spent time at HPB, but the archaeological evidence suggests that he was one of the tens of thousands marched to HPB directly from the transport ships.

Commissioner Bigge noted (1822:36): ‘Several of the newly arrived convicts have received presents of bibles and prayer books from the surgeons of the different convict ships ... and have been in the habit of reading the scriptures in their many hours of leisure during the passage ... I have observed, however, that ... they lose, and sometimes sell them for purchases of bread and liquor’. Perhaps Bagnall hid his religious books for future use, or merely for their value in the kind of trade mentioned by Bigge. Either way, he left them behind at HPB, probably when he received his ticket of leave in 1843.

Musical instruments

Two Jew’s harps were excavated from underground trenches, one from the rear courtyard (A1/2 – UG6433) and the other from under the floor of the northern dormitory (A2/4 – UG6434). This second example, 70 mm long by 43 mm wide, has a small strip of striped convict shirting fabric attached to the corrosion on the metal, which may originally have been attached to the Jew’s harp, or merely associated with the harp post-deposition. Held between the teeth and struck with a finger, Jew’s harps have provided popular accompaniment to singing, or been played by themselves, for centuries. Associated with convict-period tobacco pipes, an 1813 Holey Dollar dump, and the strip of convict shirting, the UG6433 Jew’s harp would have been an inexpensive and easily concealed instrument for a musical convict to own, and provides rare, tangible evidence of convict music-making at the Barracks.

Hammock flax and ropes

A small number of rope fragments and scraps of densely-woven flax fabric from the underfloor contexts have been identified as possible remnants of the hundreds of hammocks that once lined the dormitories during the convict period (for example ropes UF11598, UF11599, UF4796, and flax fragments UF5402 and UF2658). However, they are not discussed in detail in this study since further research is needed such as splitting mixed bags of textiles to identify further examples, and microscopic analysis to identify plant fibres.

DISCUSSION

Government-employed convicts had few material possessions and those recovered from the Barracks seem to indicate that convicts placed great value on the few they did have. This is clear in the way these possessions were improvised and hand-crafted, mended, stored, traded, gambled, or adapted to provide small comforts, to reduce pain and inconvenience, and to make the path through the penal system more tolerable. Their ingenuity allowed a degree of escape from the system, making the one-size-fits-all government ‘slop’ clothing suit the individual, finding opportunities to make money by hat

manufacture and sale, and trading and consuming illicit materials such as tobacco and pipes. Through this opportunism and improvisation they resisted government regulations and pursued their own illicit economic pursuits and leisure at the risk of secondary punishment, allowing them to alter their personal circumstances as prisoners and to get the upper hand, winning back some control over the authorities.

Material evidence from convict households at the Rocks (1790–1830) indicates that before the construction of HPB, convicts often had comfortable, materially-rich lives with relative freedom (Karskens 2003). Historical evidence also reveals how convicts of the early decades enjoyed asserting their purchasing power by spending money on clothing and other consumables (Elliott 1995). In contrast, the material culture recovered from HPB clearly reflects a dramatic change in the material circumstances of convicts, revealing the institutionalised lives of the occupants and their limited access to goods and inability to replace necessary items such as clothing. The artefacts are a clear indication of how Governor Macquarie’s convict barracks changed everything – a direct reflection of the control imposed over unmarried male convicts from 1819 onwards.

The artefacts reflect Winkworth’s (1990) themes expected from convict material culture such as separation, distinction, containment, control and segregation. In response to these measures imposed by authority, the artefacts reveal how convicts concealed precious items for safe-keeping beneath the floors, stairs and wall cavities, patched, adapted and recycled their one-size-fits-all government clothing, fashioned functional items from cheap and disposable materials such as bone, and valued recycled, stolen and discarded objects as commodities for trade. Concealing material possessions under the floorboards of the dormitories was perhaps the only way convict residents could keep possessions for safekeeping. Hammocks and blankets in the dormitories were numbered (NSW Government 1825:4), suggesting that individuals were assigned to identifiable berths in the Barracks. Some convicts may have been able to conceal items within close proximity to their assigned berths. Unpaid government workers they might have been, but convicts found ways to be economically independent, to make and sell handmade items, to gamble and earn some cash, all ways to ‘escape’ the control and restrictions of the system put in place for convicts in government employment.

Most of the artefact types considered in this study are regularly found in early colonial archaeological contexts, but those found at HPB have distinctly convict qualities, or can be interpreted as having been used in different ways to such artefacts found at other sites. The artefacts recovered from HPB represent a distinctly ‘prisoner-type’ material culture, their personal possessions limited to what could be carried on their person, or hidden somewhere in the building.

By allowing the artefacts to interact with complementary historical sources, our knowledge of convict life is extended. The presence of coins in the dormitories, for example, provides physical evidence of a convict economy where individuals were able to earn money through various means. The material evidence reveals that the official regulations for the banning of illicit items, measures to prevent gambling, and the inspection of convicts passing through the gates were not always successful. Instead, the material evidence confirms later accounts of the general lack of discipline at HPB, including activities such as bribery, gambling, trade, smuggling and theft.

Nicholas and Shergold (1988) argued that convicts living in the various NSW barracks were well accommodated, with greater sleeping space and generally superior physical conditions than those available to American slaves, poor

workers in Britain, and to British soldiers and sailors on ships and military barracks at the time. The analysis of historical records by these authors indicated that NSW convicts were in fact well fed, had a relatively high standard of medical care, were generally healthy, that the lash was used less frequently than previously assumed, and that their work hours were less than those of most free British workers of the time. Despite these aspects of their lives being perhaps more lenient than we might expect, the material evidence suggests that Barracks convicts pushed the boundaries as far as they could to suit their needs.

The artefacts allow us to consider how HPB convicts entered the convict system at the centre of the ‘staircase’ (Kerr 1984; Connah 1988), and reflect how the individuals associated with these items attempted to survive the system and negotiate their way up the staircase to freedom. At the same time, by dealing in contraband like smoking pipes and stolen goods, the convicts took the risk of slipping further down the ladder.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented an analysis of convict artefacts from HPB and provided new discussion regarding the survival of intact convict period deposits in selected underfloor cavities. It is expected that further investigation and analysis, particularly of the associated material in window and door joist spaces on Levels 2 and 3, will reveal additional convict deposits, and a detailed study of finds from the underground trenches should also reveal additional convict period material. Further research questions and studies might then follow.

The HPB convict artefacts allow us to reflect on the nature of convict society – the sociology and economics of being a convict in early-nineteenth-century Sydney – within the context of the wider colonial convict system and the global pattern of forced migration of criminals. The serial listing of the Australian Convict Sites as one World Heritage property throws a spotlight on the interconnectedness of these places and the potential for the archaeology of these sites to be interpreted as part of the penal system across the Australian penal colonies. As Casella (2002) points out, there is enormous potential for comparative studies of the material from Ross Factory with that of other convict sites such as HPB. Combined with studies such as Dirks’ (2013) analysis of the Port Arthur Prisoner Barracks material, there is potential to consider site similarities and differences such as proximity to and availability of material goods, and the relative freedom and movement of inmates in and out of the sites.

While substantial documentary sources exist regarding daily life and regulations and routines at HPB, the artefacts discussed here shed new light on how convicts improvised ways to live more comfortably within the rigid structure and regulations of HPB as a penal institution. In future exhibitions about convict life in Sydney, this new perspective on Barracks life may be useful for contrasting with evidence from convict households at the Rocks, in order to realise the opportunity noted by Karskens (2001:31) for ‘exploring the nuances and varieties of convict experience’. We might expect to find more of the ‘ball and chain’ type material from an institution such as HPB. Remarkably, however, what survives is not objects of convict control, punishment, provisioning, administration and work, but the most personal of convict material culture – the shirts off their backs, the coins they earned or won, the gaming pieces they carved, and other objects they improvised to reduce the discomfort of the ill-fitting convict system. Despite being personal, they nevertheless reflect an element of control over the inmates, but in turn, a resistance to this authority through employing ingenuity in response to human needs,

adapting to their environment, minimising the impact of the penal system, and making-do in their situation of confinement and segregation from society.

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