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# The Lives and Labour Skills of the Port Arthur woodworkers, 1866-1874 <sup>1</sup>

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The Port Arthur settlement relied heavily on the skilled labour of convict woodworkers. The detached and isolated station, with its dense and diverse woodlands and its multifarious construction and maintenance needs, required their expertise and labour daily over many years. During the decades following the end of convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land in 1853 the timber trade was one of the biggest employers (next to agriculture) of convict labour at Port Arthur. However, little has been written on the lives and labours of these woodworkers, or on the management of their labour at Port Arthur during this era. This article considers a group of forty convicts who were incarcerated at Port Arthur during its final years as a convict station between 1855 and 1877, and whose work was recorded in two ledgers or 'workbooks' covering the period 1866 to 1874.<sup>2</sup> Were these men the aged and ailing 'dregs' of the convict system, as contemporaries often claimed, or were they skilled tradesmen who eventually led productive, crime-free lives?<sup>3</sup> Drawing on the workbooks, as well as other contemporary sources, biographical and work profiles have been created for each convict woodworker, revealing something of their experiences within and outside the penal system, as well as the types of building, production and maintenance they were engaged in during these years. The collated data also allows for an examination of what became of this cohort after their release from Port Arthur.

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<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project, Landscapes of Production and Punishment (DP170103642) administered by the University of New England.

<sup>2</sup> 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', 2 Vols., B14, Mitchell Library (ML). The first volume, covering 1866-1869, was transcribed by Steve Torley for the Port Arthur Historical Site Management Authority (PAHSMA) in 2018. The second volume, for 1870-74, was transcribed by the author. An index to both volumes can be found on the State Library New South Wales website at <content-lists.sl.nsw.gov.au/tabular-list/convict-department-carpenters-and-labourers-1866-1874> (9 August 2020). In this article these documents are referred to as the carpenters workbooks.

<sup>3</sup> M. Weidenhofer, *Port Arthur A Place of Misery*, Melbourne, 1981 p. 2.

From its foundation in 1830 until its closing in 1877, the objectives of the Port Arthur penal station were both punitive and industrial.<sup>4</sup> However, the balance of these objectives varied over the decades, depending upon the needs of the station and the wants of the authorities. My study is situated in the 'post-probation' era (1848-1871) when the settlement housed a declining number of mostly aging men. Locally, 'labour-saving' techniques were being introduced to help Port Arthur remain self-sufficient and viable.<sup>5</sup> The carpenters workbooks provide a revealing glimpse into the management of skilled convict labour during this period. The books were produced by the Convict Department, along with similar ledgers relating to other trades and gangs.<sup>6</sup> These record the trade, labour class, productivity, and conduct of each convict within the 'gang', with additional information provided on hospitalisations and the movement of men between gangs.

The forty men who were named in the carpenters workbooks were considered to be skilled mechanics, assumed to have experience and proficiency in one or more timber-related trades. Table 1, which displays the numbers employed in each trade category, shows that three-quarters of the cohort were classified as skilled carpenters, likely involved in everything from 'larger rougher work' such as framing to more ornamental building work and smaller pieces of turned woodwork. Shipwrights (also referred to as ship's carpenters) formed the second largest group, building, maintaining, and repairing watercraft at Port Arthur. There were two coopers, likely skilled in both carpentry and metalworking, probably producing and repairing items such as barrels (wet coopers) or household items (white coopers). Two of the cohort were classified as wheelwrights, another trade that utilised both woodworking and metalworking skills, servicing carriages, and other vehicles.<sup>7</sup> Finally, two men were identified as shinglers, involved in cutting and laying wooden roofing shingles. Some individuals worked at more than one trade, or were also

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<sup>4</sup> R. Tuffin, M. Gibbs, D. A. Roberts, H. Maxwell-Stewart, D. Roe, J. Steele, S. Hood and B. Godfrey, 'Landscapes of production and punishment: Convict labour in the Australian context', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2018, pp. 50-76.

<sup>5</sup> R. Tuffin, 'The evolution of convict labour management in Van Diemen's Land: Placing the "Penal Peninsula" in a colonial context', *Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 2007, pp. 69-83.

<sup>6</sup> For example, 'Vile Gang, 1865-1867', B1, and 'Long Bay Returns, 1862 and 1864', B8, ML; 'Convict Credit and Gratuity Book No.37', 'Bush Sawyers and Splitters', CON130/1/3, Tasmanian Archives (TA).

<sup>7</sup> J. Johnson, *The Book of English Trades, and Library of the Useful Arts*, London, 1817, pp. 84-89, 429-433.

engaged in re-handling tools or repairing the semaphores. From other records we glean additional information on where the labour of these men was utilised; whether in the carpenter's workshops, for example, or on the settlement repairing buildings, in the sawmill, or in various wood and log gangs.<sup>8</sup> Before looking more closely at their work skills, what can we say about the identity and background of these men?

Of the forty woodworkers recorded in the carpenters workbooks, only two originally arrived in Van Diemen's Land as free men (Table 2). Both were Englishmen. Cabinet maker James Jones (i), alias Herbert Hobart, came to Van Diemen's Land sometime after 1851, having previously spent twelve months in an Adelaide prison for 'stealing timber'.<sup>9</sup> He was convicted in Launceston's Supreme Court in 1859 for forgery, receiving four years 'penal servitude' at Port Arthur.<sup>10</sup> The second was carpenter Joseph Powell who arrived in Hobart Town aged twenty-three in 1848 and was soon after found guilty of stealing money, earning seven years penal servitude.<sup>11</sup> Another man, William Kellow, was born in the colony and was given a colonial sentence of three-years imprisonment for feloniously receiving in 1872.<sup>12</sup>

The remainder of the cohort arrived in the colonies between 1820 and 1852 as convicts under British sentences of transportation. Twelve arrived during the assignment period (1803-39) when convicts were typically dispersed as labourers to the private sector. William Pickers, for example, had arrived in 1820, well before the establishment of Port Arthur. Most of the cohort, twenty-six men, had arrived in Van Diemen's Land during the later probation period (1839-48) when convicts were required to complete a stipulated probationary term before entering into labour contracts with private employers. Nearly all of the men came to be at Port Arthur following a further conviction awarded in the colony. At the time they were sent to Port Arthur, nearly 77% of them had secured their freedom through serving the duration of their original sentence or by obtaining a conditional pardon. A further 10% held a ticket-of-leave when they were

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<sup>8</sup> A key source here are the various 'Port Arthur Convict Establishment, Penitentiary Sick Reports, 1868-1877' (hereafter 'Port Arthur Penitentiary Sick Reports'), Tasmanian Papers (TP) 297-304, ML.

<sup>9</sup> *South Australian*, 13 April 1849, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Conduct record, Herbert Hobart per *Black Swan*, CON37/1/9, TA.

<sup>11</sup> *Hobarton Guardian*, 2 December 1848, p. 2; Conduct record, Joseph Powell per *Rebecca*, CON37/1/4, TA.

<sup>12</sup> Conduct record, William Kellow (born in Tasmania), CON37/1/10, TA.

reconvicted and sent to Port Arthur. Another 10% were still under sentence, mostly pass holders under private work contracts.<sup>13</sup>

Demographically, the cohort was broadly representative of the colony's convict (or ex-convict) population (Table 2). Twenty-nine men were English. Four were born in Ireland, and two in Scotland. They were tried in six different countries – including Nova Scotia (British North America, now Canada) and Malta. Overwhelmingly (85%) they were transported for crimes involving larceny, including one case of highway robbery. Others were transported for forgery or uttering, or for the military crimes of desertion and mutiny. Only six (15%) were married before transportation, with only four known to have had children. John Merchant, for example, left a wife and two children in England, while James Gibson had two children and a wife in Scotland.<sup>14</sup> However, at least twelve men, including Gibson, married locally before they were imprisoned at Port Arthur.<sup>15</sup> Six of those men had children born in the colony.<sup>16</sup> Only 60% of the cohort professed an ability to read and write (of those for whom details could be obtained), a lower literacy rate than the 75% given by Stephen Nicholas in his study of New South Wales convicts during an earlier period.<sup>17</sup> Only 27 stated a religious affiliation, with just over 42% professing to be Protestant, 10% Church of England, and 15% Roman Catholic. Protestants form an unusually high percentage of this group, but it is not known whether this meant they were all dissenters from the Church of England. Later colonial records seem to indicate that the

<sup>13</sup> This information compiled from these conduct records series CON33, CON37 & CON94, TA.

<sup>14</sup> Conduct records, John Merchant per *Neptune*, CON31/1/32, and James Gibson per *Fairlie*, CON33/1/107, TA.

<sup>15</sup> Drawn from the 'Registers of Marriage in all Districts, 1839-1899', RGD37, TA. Those others who married (and the date of marriage) were Robert Bew (13 October 1857), William Bright (27 August 1868), James Gibson (27 March 1854), James Howard (24 March 1851), William Kellow (14 March 1853), James Onions (2 June 1856), Henry Pettitt (11 August 1851), William Pickess (22 May 1837), Joseph Pollard (24 December 1859), William Way (23 December 1856) and William Worthy (9 July 1856).

<sup>16</sup> 'Registers of Births in All Districts, 1839-1899', RGD33, TA, showing children born to Armstrong (RGD33/1/36, no. 603; RGD33/1/40, no. 372; RGD33/1/42, no. 585; RGD33/1/44, no. 334; RGD33/1/47, no. 310), Bew (RGD33/1/37, no. 1725; RGD33/1/138, no. 548), Gibson (RGD33/1/36, no. 294), Onions, (RGD33/1/34, no. 1745; RGD33/1/36, no. 1762; RGD33/1/38, no. 1942; RGD33/1/40, no. 1379), Pollard, (RGD33/1/42, 301), and Worthy (RGD33/1/37, no. 1057; RGD33/1/39, no. 388).

<sup>17</sup> S. Nicholas and P. R. Shergold, 'Unshackling the past', in S. Nicholas and P. R. Shergold (eds), *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 9.

convict department sought to simplify religious categories when compiling data.<sup>18</sup>

| Trade       | Convict   | Total |
|-------------|---|-------|
| Carpenter   | Richard Armstrong; Samuel Baker; Robert Bew; John Cashen; John Crawley; John Dunn; Daniel Edmonson; James Gibson; James Howard; Samuel Jarman; George Jones; James Jones (i); James Jones (ii); Matthew Jones; William Kellow; William Kinton; John Merchant; James Morgan; Michael Murphy; James Onions; James Page; Joseph Pender; Henry Pettit; William Pim; Joseph Pollard; Joseph Powell; William Way (Robert Gough); Henry Wheeler; George Willis | 29    |
| Cooper      | Joseph Belcher; Charles Drummond  | 2     |
| Shipwright  | William (Hugh) Johnson; William Pickers; Anthony Robinson; Joseph Rogers; William Worthy  | 5     |
| Wheelwright | Samuel Roberts; James Waring  | 2     |
| Shingler    | William Bright; Martin Irwin  | 2     |
| Total       |   | 40    |

| Trade        | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|
| Carpenters   | 72%        |
| Shipwrights  | 13%        |
| Wheelwrights | 5%         |
| Shinglers    | 5%         |
| Coopers      | 5%         |

Source: Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874, 2 Vols., B14, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Note that seven of the cohort worked at more than one wood trade.

<sup>18</sup> See for example the death records of convicts in the Royal Hobart Hospital (HSD 145/1/1, TA), which only allow for Roman Catholic or Protestant. The Port Arthur conduct registers (CON94/1/1 and CON94/1/2, TA) were the same.

| Table 2: The cohort in order of arrival in the Australian colonies (and arrival in Van Diemens Land if first sent elsewhere) |  |                               |                       |                          |
|--|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Name   | Ship   | Original crime                | Sentence              | Arrival                  |
| Assignment Period  |  |                               |                       |                          |
| William Pickers  | <i>Dromedary</i>                               | Burglary                      | 7 years               | 1820 – VDL               |
| Robert Gough   | <i>Norfolk</i><br><i>Flying Fish</i>           | Larceny<br>Unnatural act      | 7 years<br>Death-life | 1825 – NSW<br>1845 – VDL |
| Samuel Baker   | <i>Lord Lyndoch</i>                            | Stealing                      | 7 years               | 1831 – VDL               |
| John Crawley   | <i>Elizabeth</i>                               | Stealing pigs                 | Life                  | 1832 – VDL               |
| William Bright   | <i>Asia</i><br><i>Louisa</i>                   | Housebreaking<br>Robbery      | 14 years<br>10 years  | 1833 – NSW<br>1846 – VDL |
| Joseph Rogers  | <i>Arab (2)</i>                                | Stealing                      | 7 years               | 1834 – VDL               |
| Joseph Pender  | <i>Henry Porcher</i><br><i>Flying Squirrel</i> | Stealing<br>Highway robbery   | 15 years<br>15 years  | 1835 – NSW<br>1844 – VDL |
| James Waring   | <i>Augusta Jessie</i>                          | Mutiny                        | 14 years              | 1835 – VDL               |
| William Worthy   | <i>Frances Charlotte</i>                       | Larceny                       | 7 years               | 1837 – VDL               |
| Henry Wheeler  | <i>Coromandel (2)</i>                          | Housebreaking                 | 14 years              | 1838 – VDL               |
| John Merchant  | <i>Neptune</i>                                 | Stealing pigs                 | 14 years              | 1838 – VDL               |
| Henry Pettit   | <i>Lord Lyndoch</i><br><i>Lady Franklin</i>    | Horse stealing<br>Bushranging | 15 years<br>15 years  | 1838 – NSW<br>1844 – VDL |
| Probation Period   |  |                               |                       |                          |
| Martin Irwin   | <i>Duncan</i>                                  | Burglary                      | 14 years              | 1842 – VDL               |
| Daniel Edmonson  | <i>Candahar</i>                                | Desertion                     | 14 years              | 1842 – VDL               |
| William Kinton   | <i>Moffatt</i>                                 | Larceny                       | 10 years              | 1842 – VDL               |
| Samuel Roberts   | <i>Isabella</i>                                | Burglary                      | 15 years              | 1842 – VDL               |
| Anthony Robinson   | <i>Eden (2)</i>                                | Uttering                      | 7 years               | 1842 – VDL               |
| Mathew Jones   | <i>Eden (2)</i>                                | Housebreaking                 | 14 years              | 1842 – VDL               |
| James Onions   | <i>Emerald Isle</i>                            | Stealing                      | 7 years               | 1843 – VDL               |
| Richard Armstrong  | <i>Cressy</i>                                  | Court Martial                 | 14 years              | 1842 – VDL               |
| James Howard   | <i>Marion</i>                                  | Burglary                      | 10 years              | 1844 – VDL               |
| John Cashen  | <i>Emily (2)</i>                               | Sheep stealing                | 10 years              | 1844 – VDL               |
| Charles Drummond   | <i>Sir Robert Peel</i>                         | Housebreaking                 | 10 years              | 1844 – VDL               |

|  |   |                                    |               |                         |
|--|---|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Samuel Jarman  | <i>Sir Robert Peel</i>                    | Stealing                           | 7 years       | 1844 – VDL              |
| George Jones   | <i>Hyderabad</i>                          | Highway robbery                    | 20 years      | 1845 – VDL              |
| James Jones /<br>Brocklehurst                                  | <i>Theresa</i>                            | Larceny                            | 10 years      | 1845 – VDL              |
| James Morgan   | <i>Hyderabad</i><br><i>Tory</i>           | Burglary<br>Transfer to VDL        | 15 years<br>- | 1845 – NI<br>1847 – VDL |
| Robert Bew   | <i>Mayda</i><br><i>Pestongee Bomangee</i> | Violent robbery<br>Transfer to VDL | 15 years<br>- | 1846 – NI<br>1847 – VDL |
| James Page   | <i>Palmyra</i>                            | Housebreaking                      | 10 years      | 1846 – VDL              |
| Joseph Belcher   | <i>John Calvin</i>                        | Burglary                           | 10 years      | 1846 – VDL              |
| Joseph Powell  | <i>Rebecca (Free)</i>                     | Stealing                           | 7 years       | 1848 – VDL              |
| John Dunne   | <i>Hyderabad (3)</i>                      | Stealing a cow                     | 10 years      | 1850 – VDL              |
| George (Metcalf)<br>Willis                                     | <i>Neptune (2)</i>                        | Armed robbery                      | 7 years       | 1850 -VDL               |
| William Pim  | <i>Rodney (2)</i>                         | Stealing                           | 10 years      | 1852 – VDL              |
| Hugh Johnson   | <i>Lady Montagu</i>                       | Burglary                           | 7 years       | 1852 – VDL              |
| James Gibson   | <i>Fairlie</i>                            | Burglary                           | 10 years      | 1852 – VDL              |
| Joseph C. Pollard  | <i>Pestongee Boomangee</i>                | Burglary                           | 7 years       | 1852 – VDL              |
| Michael Murphy   | <i>Fairlie</i>                            | Larceny                            | 7 years       | 1852 – VDL              |
| Post Probation Period  |   |                                    |               |                         |
| James Jones (ii)   | Black Swan (Free)                         | Uttering                           | 4 years       | 1859 – Port<br>Arthur   |
| William Kellow, who was born in Tasmania is not included here. |   |                                    |               |                         |
| Source: Convict Conduct Registers, CON18 to CON37, TA.         |   |                                    |               |                         |



|  |   |       |           |
|--|---|-------|-----------|
| 1: Woodwork Trades                       |   | TOTAL | 22 (55%)  |
| Joiner & cabinet maker                   | Richard Armstrong; James Gibson; James Howard; William Way (Robert Gough)   |       | 4 (10%)   |
| Wheelwright                              | George Jones; Samuel Roberts; James Waring  |       | 3 (7.5%)  |
| Cooper                                   | Joseph Belcher; Samuel Jarman   |       | 2 (5%)    |
| Boat builder                             | Anthony Robinson  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Blind maker                              | Samuel Baker; William Pim   |       | 2 (5%)    |
| Splitter                                 | Joseph Pender   |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| French polisher                          | William Kinton  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| 2: Other Trades, not related to Woodwork |   | TOTAL | 18 (45%)  |
| Block maker                              | Hugh Johnson  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Bricklayer                               | Michael Murphy  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Collier                                  | James Onions  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Silk weaver                              | James Jones/Brocklehurst  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Tobacconist                              | William Bright  |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Ploughman                                | Joseph Rogers   |       | 1 (2.5%)  |
| Labourer                                 | Charles Drummond; John Dunn; Martin Irwin; Matthew Jones; James Page; William Pickers; Henry Wheeler; George Willis; William Worthy |       | 9 (22.5%) |
| Unknown                                  | William Kellow; John Merchant; James Morgan   |       | 3 (7.5%)  |

| Name          | Offence           | Sentence length               | Trial Date | Trial Place                  |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| James Morgan  | Buggery           | Death-Life imprisonment       | 4/12/1855  | Hobart Supreme Court         |
| Hugh Johnson  | Assault & robbery | Life in penal servitude       | 14/7/1856  | New Norfolk Quarter Sessions |
| Joseph Pender | Stab with intent  | Death-life in penal servitude | 31/10/1857 | Hobart Supreme Court         |
| John Crawley  | Uttering          | 8 yrs penal servitude         | 19/4/1859  | Hobart Supreme Court         |

|                  |                                |  |            |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|------------|--------------------------|
| Martin Irwin     | Burglary                       | 5 yrs imprisonment & hard labour in chains | 26/8/1859  | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| Samuel Baker     | Larceny                        | 3 yrs                                      | 24/2/1860  | Launceston Supreme Court |
| Joseph Rogers    | Armed assault                  | Death-life in penal servitude              | 5/6/1860   | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| Henry Pettit     | Burglary                       | 10 yrs penal servitude                     | 27/12/1861 | Oatlands Supreme Court   |
| Daniel Edmonson  | Indecent assault of a girl <10 | 3 yrs penal servitude                      | 10/12/1861 | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| James Howard     | Receiving                      | 6 yrs penal servitude                      | 22/10/1861 | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| Joseph Powell    | Receiving                      | 6 yrs penal servitude                      | 3/10/1861  | Launceston Supreme Court |
| William Worthy   | Intent to murder               | Death-life in penal servitude              | 2/1/1862   | Launceston Supreme Court |
| John Merchant    | Stealing sheep                 | 8 yrs penal servitude                      | 29/12/1862 | Launceston Supreme Court |
| Charles Drummond | Burglary                       | 8 penal servitude                          | 3/6/1862   | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| James Gibson     | Burglary                       | 6 yrs penal servitude                      | 26/6/1862  | Launceston Supreme Court |
| William Kinton   | Burglary                       | 5 yrs hard labour, 3 in chains             | 4/9/1863   | Oatlands                 |
| Joseph Belcher   | Burglary                       | 5 yrs penal servitude                      | 27/1/1863  | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| James Jones      | Uttering                       | 4 yrs penal servitude                      | 27/1/1863  | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| Robert Gough     | Burglary                       | 7 yrs imprisonment                         | 7/1/1864   | Launceston Supreme Court |
| Samuel Jarman    | Uttering                       | 6 yrs imprisonment                         | 6/4/1864   | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| William Pim      | Larceny                        | 4 yrs imprisonment                         | 6/12/1864  | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| William Pickers  | Larceny                        | 5 yrs imprisonment                         | 24/1/1865  | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| James Waring     | Larceny                        | 8 yrs imprisonment                         | 5/9/1865   | Hobart Supreme Court     |
| Samuel Roberts   | Indecent assault of a girl     | 5 yrs imprisonment                         | 20/2/1865  | Launceston Quarter       |

|                            | <10                            |   |                       | Sessions                                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| Henry Wheeler              | Receiving                      | 7 yrs imprisonment                                    | 12/2/1866             | Launceston Quarter Sessions                 |
| John Cashen                | Fraud                          | 3 yrs imprisonment                                    | 11/6/1866             | Launceston Quarter Sessions                 |
| George Jones               | Stealing                       | 2 yrs imprisonment & hard labour                      | 1/8/1866              | Hobart                                      |
| James Page                 | Indecent assault of a child    | 5 yrs imprisonment                                    | 10/9/1866             | Launceston Quarter Sessions                 |
| Joseph C. Pollard          | Receiving                      | 7 yrs imprisonment                                    | 12/2/1866             | Launceston Quarter Sessions                 |
| Anthony Robinson           | Uttering                       | 8 yrs imprisonment                                    | 1/7/1867              | Hobart                                      |
| Mathew Jones               | Housebreaking & stealing       | 5 yrs imprisonment                                    | 24/11/1868            | Hobart Supreme Court                        |
| Robert Bew                 | Housebreaking                  | 4 yrs imprisonment                                    | 1/3/1870              | Hobart Supreme Court                        |
| James Onions               | Wounding with intent           | 6 yrs imprisonment                                    | 2/6/1870              | Launceston Supreme Court                    |
| John Dunn                  | Uttering a forged cheque       | 4 yrs imprisonment                                    | 28/12/1871            | Launceston Quarter Sessions                 |
| Michael Murphy             | Feloniously receiving          | 6 yrs imprisonment                                    | 28/12/1871            | Launceston Quarter Sessions                 |
| Richard Armstrong          | Manslaughter                   | 15 yrs imprisonment                                   | 31/7/1871             | Launceston Supreme Court                    |
| William Kellow             | Feloniously receiving a sheep  | 3 yrs imprisonment                                    | 10/9/1872             | Hobart Supreme Court                        |
| George Willis              | Larceny                        | 5 yrs imprisonment                                    | 10/9/1872             | Hobart Supreme Court                        |
| William Bright             | Housebreaking<br>Housebreaking | 8 yrs imprisonment<br>8 yrs imprisonment (cumulative) | 9/7/1872<br>1/12/1874 | Hobart Supreme Court / Hobart Supreme Court |
| James Jones / Brocklehurst | larceny & absconding           | 3 yrs imprisonment                                    | 28/9/1872             | Hobart Town & New Norfolk                   |

These prosopographical observations are interesting enough, but we need to consider these men in terms of their capacity as workers, and in the context of the changing needs of Port Arthur in the 1860s and 70s. At the time these men arrived in the colony, most were in the prime of their working lives – just under 93% of the cohort being aged 15-34, with an average age of 23.4 years<sup>19</sup>. Some, like labourers William Worthy and Charles Drummond, were mere 'boys' when transported in the 1830s.<sup>20</sup> They were not so young and strong, however, when they were later reconvicted in the colony. By the time they, and the rest of the cohort, were sent to Port Arthur in the post-probation era, around thirty percent were aged between 45 and 49 (Table 5), with a mean age of 44.9 years overall William Pickers was relatively old at 64 years of age.<sup>21</sup> For many of these men their best working years were behind them, and yet providing they were not invalids men of this age were still expected to be reasonably active and productive workers.

By the 1860s and 1870s, all forty men in this cohort were employed in timber-related trades at Port Arthur. Interestingly, according to their transportation records, 55% of them had been skilled in timber-related trades when they arrived in the colonies as convicts (Table 1). Others had been recorded as bricklayers, silk weavers, and colliers. Evidently, there had been ample time and opportunity for them to learn new skills and trades between the time of their arrival and their reconviction. Trade-training had of course been a priority for younger convicts during the assignment period. The 'boy convict' Drummond, for example, was by the policies of the 1830s seen as a prime candidate for training.<sup>22</sup> He spent his probationary years at the Point Puer Boy's Prison near Port Arthur where he and many others were taught trades such as carpentry.<sup>23</sup> The other 'boy', William Worthy, was at Port Arthur in 1838, possibly learning to build ships (later records indicate he became a shipwright), despite contemporary

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<sup>19</sup> Original transportation ages from these conduct record series CON18, CON31, CON33, CON35 & CON37, TA.

<sup>20</sup> Conduct records, Charles Drummond per *Sir Robert Peel*, CON33/1/63, and William Worthy per *Frances Charlotte*, CON31/1/48, TA.

<sup>21</sup> Conduct record, William Pickers per *Dromedary*, CON31/3/34, TA.

<sup>22</sup> C. O. Booth, 'Report on the juvenile establishment at Point Puer', 24 July 1837, in *Report from the Select Committee on Transportation: together with the minutes of evidence*, London, 1838, pp. 219-20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*; Conduct record, Charles Drummond, CON33/1/63.

fears that boys might be exposed to moral and physical corruption in penal settings.<sup>24</sup>

| Age on arrival at PA | Total | %    | Age at release from PA | Total | %    |
|----------------------|-------|------|------------------------|-------|------|
| 30-34                | 2     | 5.0  | 30-34                  | -     | -    |
| 35-39                | 9     | 22.5 | 35-39                  | -     | -    |
| 40-44                | 9     | 22.5 | 40-44                  | 8     | 20.0 |
| 45-49                | 12    | 30.0 | 45-49                  | 10    | 25.0 |
| 50-54                | 4     | 10.0 | 50-54                  | 10    | 25.0 |
| 55-59                | 2     | 5.0  | 55-59                  | 6     | 15.0 |
| 60-64                | 2     | 5.0  | 60-64                  | 3     | 7.5  |
| 65 +                 | -     | -    | 65 +                   | 3     | 7.5  |
| Total                | 40    | 100  |                        | 40    | 100  |

| Transportable offences                                  | Total | % of total |
|---|-------|------------|
| Larceny / stealing / burglary / housebreaking / robbery | 45    | 61.5       |
| Uttering / fraud  | 8     | 11.0       |
| Receiving   | 7     | 9.5        |
| Unnatural crime (animal)                                | 1     | 1.4        |
| Indecent assault (children under 10)                    | 5     | 6.9        |
| Armed assault   | 1     | 1.4        |
| Intent to murder  | 5     | 6.9        |
| Manslaughter  | 1     | 1.4        |
| Total   | 73    | 100.0      |

<sup>24</sup> Evidence of John Russell, 19 February 1838, in *Report from the Select Committee on Transportation: together with the minutes of evidence*, British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), London, 1838, pp. 52-53; William Worthy, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, p. 16.

Of course, it was not only young convicts who received trade training. An 1872 report on Port Arthur convicts named ten men who were being reskilled in trades such as shoemaking and tanning, most of them aged between 44 and 53.<sup>25</sup> It is likely that a number of the Port Arthur woodworkers were trained on site, and that some were made to be versatile. Seven of the cohort worked at more than one timber-related trade between 1866 and 1874. William Kinton, for example, was a carpenter and semaphore repairer. James Morgan and Joseph Rogers both worked re-handling tools and as carpenters, but Rogers was also a shipwright, while Samuel Jarman and Michael Murphy both worked as carpenters and shinglers.<sup>26</sup> James Onions, originally a collier, was in his late forties at Port Arthur when he was promoted from a carpenter's labourer to a carpenter, indicating that he was receiving training on site.<sup>27</sup> Further, between 1870 and late 1872 he worked variously in the bush and settlement sawpits, at the Port Arthur farm fencing and boring posts, and laying tramroad tracks.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that the settlement authorities considered him more useful when engaged in a variety of laborious tasks, outside the workshops, and yet in January 1873 he was recorded as working as a carpenter.<sup>29</sup> As explained below, the cycling of men between the workshops and the gangs was a feature of the management of labour in these years.

The Port Arthur carpenters workbooks also tell us something about the different skill levels among the woodworkers, and also of a degree of cycling between three different labour classes. These classes apparently indicated a convict's capacity for work. A Class One tradesman was 'able-bodied' and skilled at his job. Those in Class Two were either not quite as able-bodied or not as highly skilled, and

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<sup>25</sup> 'Prisoners, Paupers, and Lunatics at Port Arthur and Hobart Town Establishments', *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 24, No. 15, Hobart, 1872, pp. 5-10. W. M Robbins, 'The lumberyards: A case study in the management of convict labour, 1788-1832', *Labour History*, Vol. 79, 2000, p. 150, found this to also be the case for convicts in early NSW.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Jarman, William Kinton, Anthony Robinson, and Joseph Rogers, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 9, 11, 130, 132, 150, 195; James Morgan, Michael Murphy, Anthony Robinson and Joseph Reynolds, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 2, ML, pp. 18, 35, 50, 73, 82, 109.

<sup>27</sup> James Onions, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 2, ML, pp. 67, 79.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, James Onions, 17 July 1870, in 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1870, TP 300, ML.

<sup>29</sup> James Onions, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 2, ML, pp. 67, 79.

convicts in the third class were 'only fit for the lightest labour'.<sup>30</sup> The carpenters workbooks show that this cohort was overwhelmingly (62.5%) described as being Class One workers. Wheelwright James Waring, who died in Port Arthur Hospital in 1866, just over a year into his eight-year sentence for larceny, was the only consistent Class Two worker.<sup>31</sup> Four other men — two carpenters, one cooper, and a single shingler — were in the third class for the duration of the period covered by the books. The remaining 25%, consisting of ten men, cycled through the labour classes. For example, carpenter Robert Gough alias William Way appeared in all three classes. He also spent eighteen weeks in hospital between January 1868 and August 1869, suggesting incapacitation affected his ability to work.<sup>32</sup> Illness and hospital admissions are also the most probable cause for the class changes seen in the records for James Rogers, Joseph Pender, Henry Wheeler, and John Merchant. The downgrading of class level might also have been related to age, as in the case of the demotion of Samuel Baker (aged 57 in 1869), Samuel Roberts (64 in 1869), and William Pickers (68 in 1870).

A fourth class was for invalids deemed unfit for work by the settlement Medical Officers.<sup>33</sup> Carpenter and shoemaker Matthew Jones, transported to Port Arthur on 18 December 1868, is a prime example of a Class One tradesman becoming an invalid because of a series of significant ailments. Despite suffering from gonorrhoea, rheumatism, a heart condition, and pleurodynia (an infectious viral disease that sent him to hospital for three-and-a-half months), Jones maintained a Class One labour status. On 14 December 1871, just a day after his release from hospital, he suffered a life-threatening thoracic aneurysm while working in the settlement garden. At 48 years of age, and three years and two days after he arrived at Port Arthur, he was

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<sup>30</sup> 'Port Arthur. Report of the Select Committee, with minutes of the proceedings, and evidence', December 1871, *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Tasmania, Vol. 22, No. 127, 1871, Hobart, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> James Waring, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 41; Conduct record, James Waring per *Augusta Jessie*, CON37/1/10, TA.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Gough, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 136, 151, 163, 178, 193; Robert Gough, 28 November 1868, in 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1868-1869, TP 297, ML.

<sup>33</sup> Boyd, 'General state of the establishment, 8 April 1871, in 'Port Arthur, Report of the Select Committee, with minutes of the proceedings, and evidence', *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 22, No. 127, Hobart, 1871, p. 15.

re-classed as an invalid.<sup>34</sup> Almost exactly two years later, on 29 December 1873, he was found dead, apparently of natural causes, having only been free for around six months.<sup>35</sup> Jones' poor health was not an isolated example, yet overall most of the cohort maintained a Class One work status, meaning that they stayed both active and productive at Port Arthur in its final years. They did so, however, despite having their work capacity affected by age or ill health.

Using the carpenters workbooks, as well as hospital ledgers, and the 'sick reports', in conjunction with reports made by Port Arthur's Civil Commandant, James Boyd, we find that nearly a third of the cohort spent from a few days to a few months at a time in hospital between 1866 and 1873.<sup>36</sup> Three of the men died in the Port Arthur Hospital while under sentence, including Joseph Belcher who died of heart and lung disease.<sup>37</sup> Another, William Worthy, who died in 1872, was noted by the Commandant to have been 'very much diseased'.<sup>38</sup> He was known to be suffering from kidney disease.<sup>39</sup> Many others in the cohort suffered injuries and infirmities. Between 16 October 1868 and 31 December 1871, the woodworkers accounted for 222 visits to the medical officers at the Port Arthur Penitentiary. Nearly 35% of these were for mere 'observation', or to request replacement items of clothing. Only 15 cases involved injury, mostly to the extremities, or being shoulder contusions or dislocations. The most common disorders reported related to the respiratory and digestive systems. Diseases of the joints such as rheumatism, skin conditions such as boils and abscesses, and general debility were also relatively common for this group. The prevalence of these ailments can be associated with an aging population many of whom, according to their conduct records, had spent years undergoing hard labour before being incarcerated at

<sup>34</sup> Various entries for Matthew Jones in 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1869, TP297, and 1871, TP303, ML. Matthew Jones's condition was mentioned in A. H. Boyd 'Port Arthur Report for 1872', 9 April 1873, *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 25, No. 11, Hobart, 1873, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Jones, 30 December 1873, Inquest no. 7305, in 'Findings, Depositions and Associated Papers Relating to Coroners' Inquests', SC195/1/56, TA.

<sup>36</sup> 'Convict Department, Hospital', 1869-1872, B21, ML; 'Convict Department, Hospital' 1872-74, B22, ML; 'Civil Commandant's Office, Letter Book', 26 February 1866-31 July 1869, TP 315, pp. 223-24, ML; 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-69'; 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1870-74'; 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1868-1871, TP297-303, ML.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Belcher, 12 October 1866, Inquest no. 6137, in 'Findings, Depositions and Associated Papers Relating to Coroners' Inquests', SC195/1/56, TA.

<sup>38</sup> 'Civil Commandant's Office, Letter Book', 26 February 1866-31 July 1869, TP 315, p. 623.

<sup>39</sup> William Worthy, 11 August 1879, in 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1870, TP300, ML.



Port Arthur during the 1860s and 70s. Issues such as these led to improvements in health care, diet, and accommodation at the settlement.<sup>40</sup>

Poor health and poverty may in fact have played some role in bringing these men to Port Arthur in the first place. Historian Louis Marshall points to age, injuries, and failing health as factors that made it difficult for some men to find work outside the penal system.<sup>41</sup> Skilled tradesmen were nominally an asset to the Van Demonian economy, but many in this cohort appear to have struggled to adjust to life post-servitude. They probably battled to find employment in an economy that recovered unevenly in the wake of the 1840s Depression. An 1860s downturn in the timber industry particularly affected construction and trade.<sup>42</sup> These circumstances could explain why these men committed crimes that saw them sentenced to Port Arthur during the 1860s and 70s. Further, historians Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Rebecca Kippen suggest that 'high levels of punishment experienced under sentence significantly increased the chance of reconviction', acting not as a deterrent to further crime but possibly pushing many into a cycle of misbehaviour and punishment.<sup>43</sup> The records for this cohort sheds some light on this matter.

Before being reconvicted and sent to Port Arthur, thirty-seven men in this cohort collectively committed 840 offences. Further, at least 70% had been previously incarcerated at Port Arthur, while nearly a third also spent time on Norfolk Island, meaning that they had been exposed to some of the harshest penal regimes Australia had to offer in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> The offences recorded against these men were mostly of a petty nature, 77% involving such things as disobeying orders, insolence, idleness, malingering, swearing, drunkenness, and lying. Some committed more serious offences, including assault,

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<sup>40</sup> L. Marshall, 'A benign institution?: Convict health, living conditions, and labour management at Port Arthur penal station, 1868-1870', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 18, 2016, p. 71; Tuffin, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

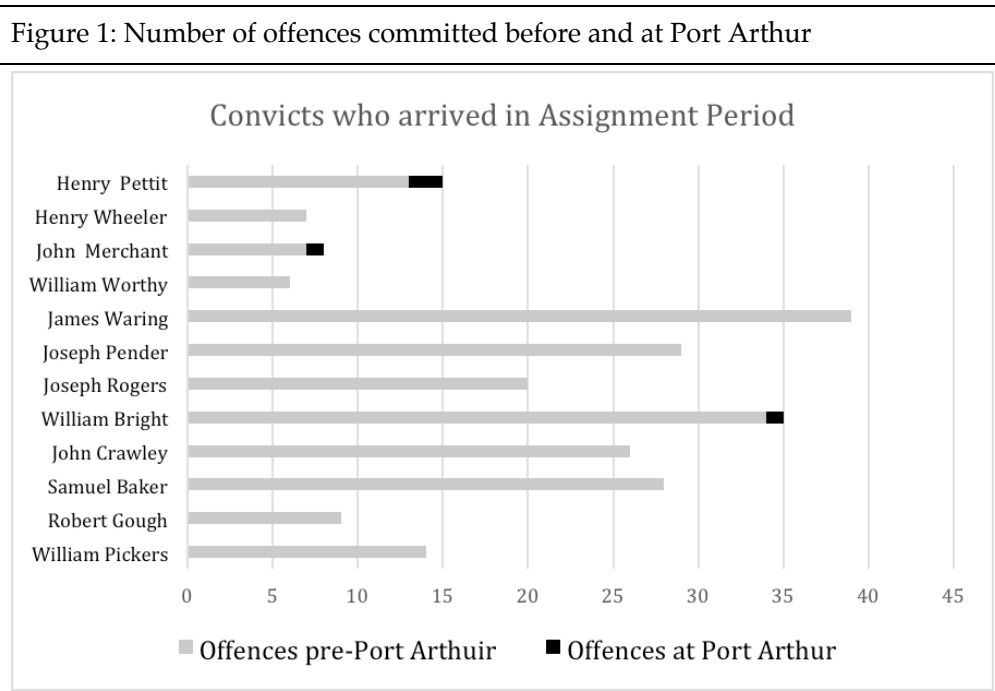
<sup>41</sup> Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-94.

<sup>42</sup> B. Meikle, 'Hard times in the golden age: The long depression of Tasmania, 1857-1875', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, 2010, pp. 39-70. Meikle suggests the Tasmanian economy struggled well into the 1870s.

<sup>43</sup> H. Maxwell Stewart and R. Kippen, 'Old lags and recidivism in the Tasmanian penal colony', in J. Campbell and V. Miller (eds), *Transcontinental Penal Cultures*, Abingdon, 2015, p. 165.

<sup>44</sup> Data sourced from CON33/1/8, 23, 32, 43, 55, 63, 79, 86 & 88, CON35/1/2, CON37/1/7 & CON39/1/1, TA.

indecenty, and larceny, which were dealt with in the higher courts (Table 4). Maxwell-Stewart and Kippen's study of convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land during the Probation era showed that 85% of convicts who were punished committed less than five offences while under sentence.<sup>45</sup> That statistic is reversed in the case of the Port Arthur woodworkers. Of the twenty-five men who had served during the Probation period, 88% had committed *over* five offences. Three men, Samuel Jarman (47 offences), William Kinton (78 offences), and Martin Irwin (152 offences) can be classed as extreme recidivists (Figure 2). The twelve men of this cohort transported during the assignment period all committed more than five offences (Figure 1). This was a cohort that knew a great deal about punishment.



<sup>45</sup> Maxwell-Stewart and Kippen, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

Figure 2: Number of offences committed before and at Port Arthur

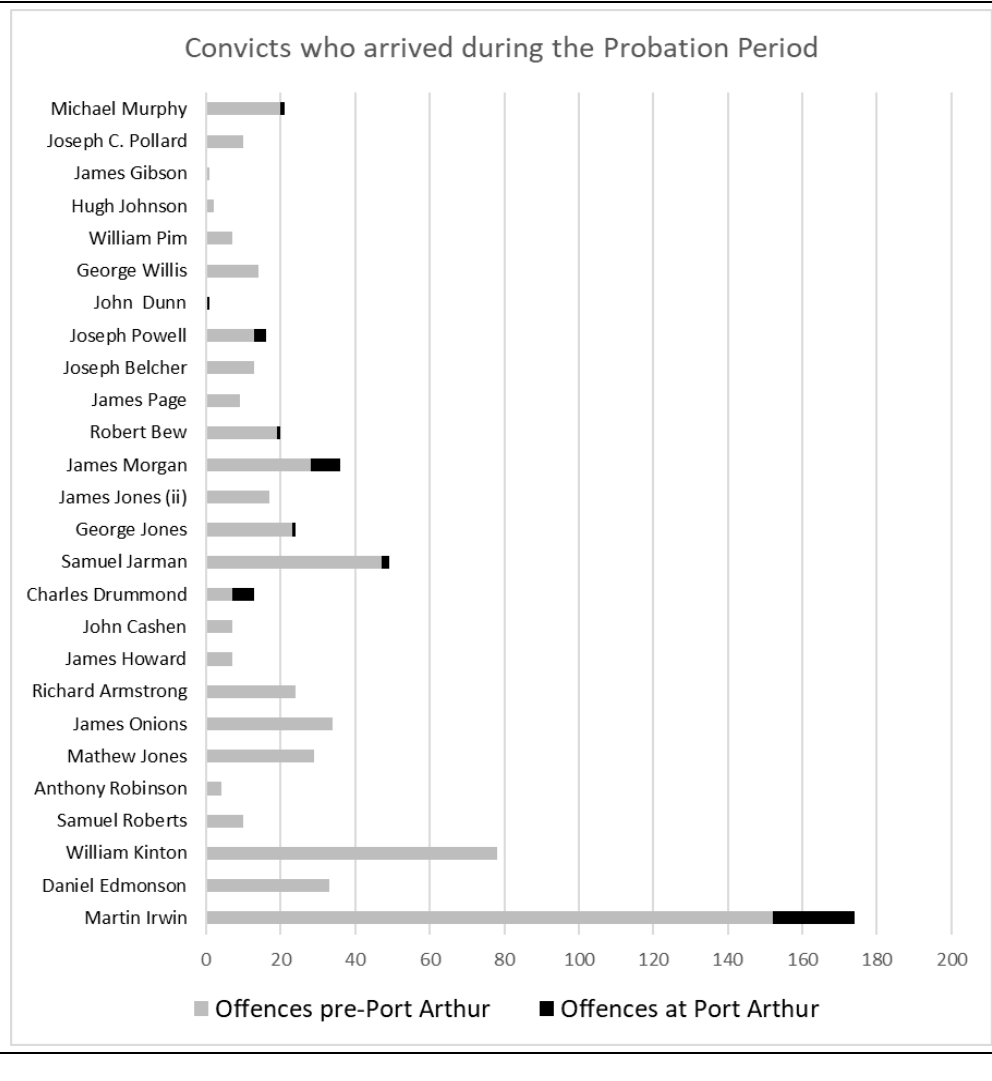
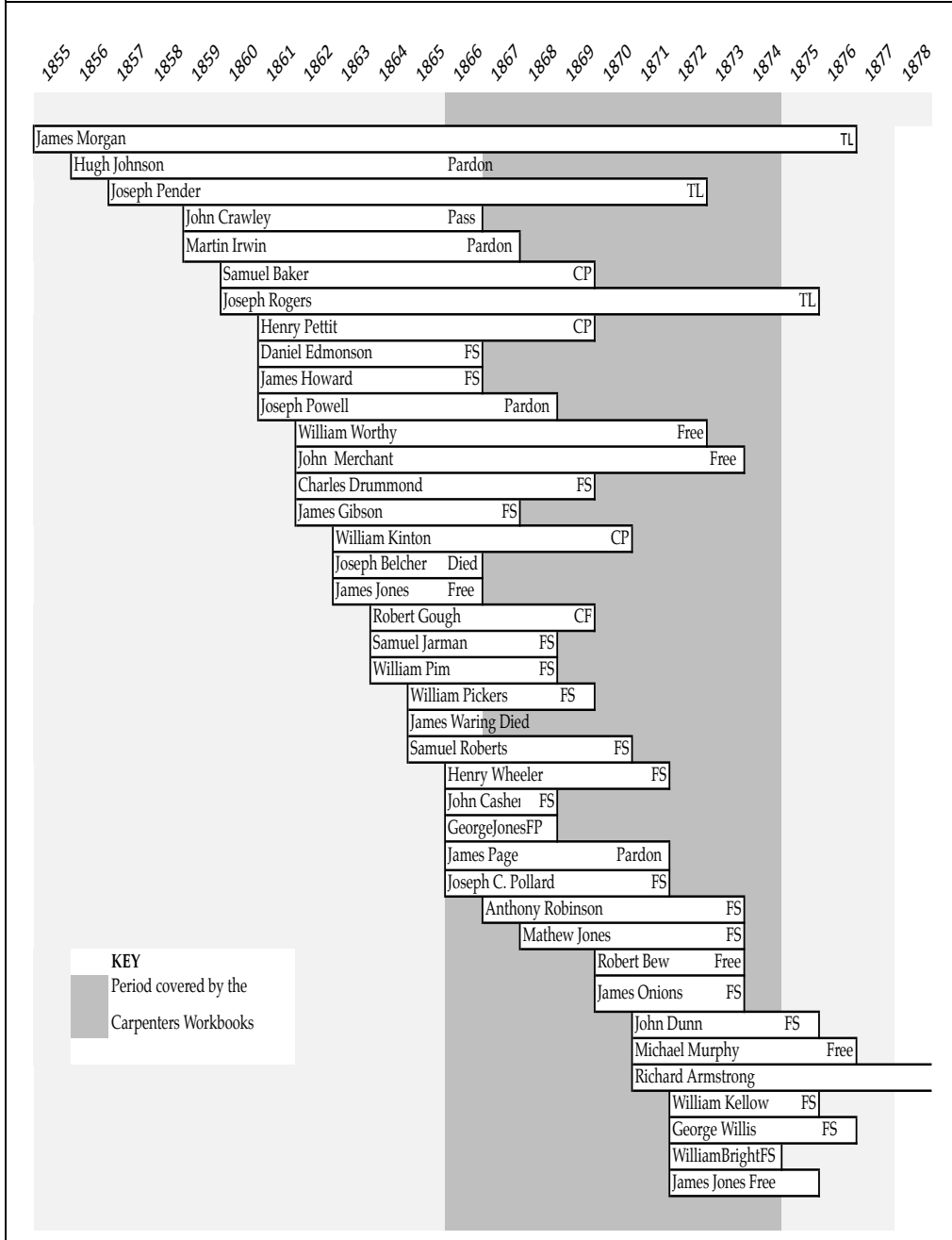


Figure 3: Port Arthur Woodworkers, showing span of sentences at Port Arthur, and time of freedom



| Offences                          | Total | %    |
|-----------------------------------|-------|------|
| misconduct / disorderly conduct   | 20    | 38.4 |
| disobedience / insubordination    | 15    | 28.8 |
| insolence                         | 3     | 5.8  |
| idleness / neglect of duty        | 5     | 9.7  |
| absent without leave / absconding | 4     | 7.7  |
| assault                           | 2     | 3.85 |
| swearing / indecency              | 2     | 3.5  |
| wilful prevarication of oath      | 1     | 1.9  |
| Total                             | 52    | 100  |

Harsh punishment, moreover, did not deter these men from crime. Punishments during the assignment period were predominantly physical, especially flogging, the treadwheel, and hard labour in irons.<sup>46</sup> Only 15 of the cohort experienced the lash, but between them they racked up 2,218 stripes, an average of just under 148 each. The use of the lash faded from the beginning of the probation period in 1839 when most of the cohort arrived.<sup>47</sup> The last man in this cohort to be flogged was George Willis who received 50 lashes on Norfolk Island in April 1852 for 'neglect [of duty] & telling a lie'.<sup>48</sup> The probation period signalled a change towards psychological punishment, which at Port Arthur included solitary confinement and incarceration in the Separate Prison.<sup>49</sup> Hard labour in irons remained a popular sentence at Port Arthur but lighter chains were used.<sup>50</sup> The most common punishments overall for the cohort (78%) were solitary confinement and separate treatment, hard labour with or without chains, and the lash, out of a total of 811 disciplinary actions.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> H. Maxwell-Stewart and E. Watkins, 'Transportation', *The Digital Panopticon*, <digitalpanopticon.org/Transportation> (15 March 2019).

<sup>47</sup> Maxwell-Stewart and Kippen, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>48</sup> Conduct record, George Willis per *Neptune* (2), CON37/1/7, TA.

<sup>49</sup> Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>50</sup> Boyd, Civil Commandant, to Nairn, Comptroller General, 14 August 1865, in *Annual Reports of the Convict Establishments*, BPP, London, 1866, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> Statistics on offences compiled from these conduct record series: CON31, CON32, CON33, CON37 & CON39, TA.

| Table 8. Punishments received by the cohort at Port Arthur, 1856-1874 |       |
|---|-------|
| Punishment  | Total |
| Solitary confinement  | 23    |
| Hard labour against task work credits                                 | 8     |
| Hard labour   | 7     |
| Admonished  | 6     |
| Separate prison   | 5     |
| Hard labour in chains   | 4     |
| Dismissed   | 1     |
| Total   | 54 *  |

A pie chart illustrating the distribution of punishments received by the cohort at Port Arthur between 1856 and 1874. The chart is divided into seven segments, each representing a different punishment type and its percentage of the total. The largest segment is Solitary confinement at 43%, followed by Hard labour against task work credits at 15%, Hard labour at 13%, Admonished at 11%, Separate prison at 9%, Hard labour in chains at 7%, and Dismissed at 2%.

| Punishment                            | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Solitary confinement                  | 43%        |
| Hard labour against task work credits | 15%        |
| Hard labour                           | 13%        |
| Admonished                            | 11%        |
| Separate prison                       | 9%         |
| Hard labour in chains                 | 7%         |
| Dismissed                             | 2%         |

\* Some punishments combined solitary confinement and imprisonment at the separate prison thus the difference between offence and punishment levels.

Of significance is the substantial reduction in misconduct and punishment for this cohort when serving their sentences at Port Arthur during the post-probation era (Tables 7 & 8). Between 1856 and 1877 only 52 offences were committed by 13 men (Table 7). Almost half of these (42%) were committed by one man, Martin Irwin, who was a prolific offender throughout his convict career. The other twelve only committed one to three crimes while incarcerated at Port Arthur (Figures 1 & 2). These were mostly (86%) minor disciplinary offences such as disobeying orders, idleness, and swearing. Incidences of assault, indecency, and absconding dropped by almost 50% (Table 7). Solitary confinement was the most common punishment for the cohort during this later period (Table 8). Being forced to undertake hard labour still made up over 35% of punishments but only Irwin and fellow shingler William Bright had to work in chains.<sup>52</sup> At this time in Port Arthur's history, the Imperial government was highly critical of what it saw as 'lax penal discipline' at the settlement.<sup>53</sup> Considering the health and age of the convicts and the need to extract maximum labour from them, there is no doubt that convict labour management needed to focus more on encouraging hard work and good conduct rather than the infliction of harsh punishment for every misdemeanour.

Of course, the coercion and punishment of convicts constantly vied with the provision of incentives and rewards.<sup>54</sup> Convicts could also earn credits by working overtime after their set tasks were finished and a small wage. Recorded in the carpenters workbooks along with individual conduct reports, these extra hours accumulated and were used to shorten their sentences.<sup>55</sup> Convicts who committed

<sup>52</sup> Conduct records, Martin Irwin per *Duncan*, CON33/1/8 and William Bright per *Louisa*, CON39/1/1 & CON94/1/2, TA.

<sup>53</sup> S. Petrow, 'Claims of the colony: Tasmania's dispute with Britain over the Port Arthur penal establishment 1856-1877', *Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 1997, p. 225.

<sup>54</sup> 'Memorandum of M. Forster, Esq', May 1837, *Copy of a despatch from Lieut.-Governor Sir John Franklin, to Lord Glenelg, dated 7 October 1837, relative to the present system of convict discipline in Van Diemen's Land*, BPP, London 1838, p. 66; Boyd, 'General state of the establishment, 8 April 1871, in: 'Report of the Select Committee, with minutes of the proceedings, and evidence', *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 22, No. 127, Hobart, 1871, p. 15; R. Tuffin, 'Australia's industrious convicts: A reappraisal of archaeological approaches to convict labour', *Australian Archaeology*, Vol. 76, No. 1, 2013, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Young, Governor, to Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State, 18 October 1860, in *Further Correspondence on the Subject of Convict Discipline and Transportation*, BPP, London, 1861, p. 55; Gore Browne, Governor, to Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State, 22 July 1862, *Further Papers on the Subject of Convict Discipline and Transportation*, BPP, London, 1863, pp. 64-65; W. M. Robbins, 'Contested terrain: The convict task

offences punished by hard labour or solitary confinement were unable to earn task work credits or a wage until those sentences were completed.<sup>56</sup> Absconders like William Bright and James Jones (ii) alias Brocklehurst lost the right to earn task work credits or money and were therefore probably destitute upon release.<sup>57</sup> This, according to Stefan Petrow, was a significant problem for 'ex-convicts' in Tasmania after 1855.<sup>58</sup> William Bright, for example, was suspected of stealing money within days of his release from Port Arthur in 1883.<sup>59</sup>

In sum, these forty men were mostly recidivists, and for many, age and debility were taking their toll. So, how effective were they at meeting the demands of the Port Arthur settlement? Certainly, the skills the woodworkers brought to Port Arthur between 1855 and 1872 were essential, but how were they utilised? Importantly, their work at Port Arthur coincided with the introduction of labour-saving devices to aid in timber handling.<sup>60</sup> The addition of steam-powered vertical and circular saws, for example, was an important shift away from the inefficiencies of a labour management system designed to punish.<sup>61</sup> So what exactly was being built, repaired, and produced by the woodworkers at Port Arthur during the 1860s and 1870s?

The Port Arthur carpenters in this period were primarily involved in the continual repair of buildings and smaller everyday objects ranging from furniture to artificial limbs (Table 10). But the workbooks also show some of the carpenters being moved between various bush work gangs, such as the sawyers, splitters, charcoal burners, and other

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work system, 1788-1830', in R. Hood and R. Markey (eds), *Labour and Community, Proceedings of 6th National Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, Wollongong, 1999, pp. 256-57.

56 Although the rules for labour hours and task work were published in 1849 the evidence of the withdrawal of task work credits and wages can be seen in the Port Arthur conduct records (CON94/1/2) of William Bright and James Jones alias Brocklehurst from 1874-1876. For example, James Jones's record states, 'No task work credits nor money earnings being an absconder'. 'Scale of task work adapted to the capacity of the several classes of convicts, and proportional for the various seasons of the year', *Convict Discipline and Transportation*, BPP, London, 1849, p. 158; Port Arthur Conduct records', William Bright and James Jones per *Theresa*, CON94/1/2, TA.

57 'Port Arthur Conduct Registers', William Bright and James Jones per *Theresa*, CON94/1/2, TA.

58 Petrow, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

59 *Tasmanian Reports of Crime*, Vol. 22, No. 1237, 6 April 1883, p.1.

60 R. Tuffin, 'Cascades probation station: Prison built on timber', *Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 2004, p. 75.

61 I. Brand, *Penal Peninsula Port Arthur and its Outstations 1827-1898*, Launceston, n.d, p. 159.



wood gangs outside the Port Arthur settlement. Richard Tuffin reveals that skilled tradesmen were regularly moved to where their skills could be best utilised, often as the supportive 'core' of labour gangs that were predominantly made up of unskilled labourers.<sup>62</sup> The utilising of these carpenters outside the confines of the workshops and settlement suggests they were valued for their versatility. There is also contemporary evidence that few 'really able-bodied men' remained at Port Arthur during the 1860s and 70s, and despite the lack of carpenters available for the workshops, the most effective men were allocated to 'heavy bush work' that was of economic importance to the timber industry.<sup>63</sup> A good example is an order for large logs and piles made by the Hobson Bay Railway Company of Victoria in 1864 that provided work for every available able-bodied convict.<sup>64</sup> Possibly, the cycling of men such as Class One carpenters Anthony Robinson (who was also a shipwright), Matthew Jones, John Merchant, and Robert Bew, between the settlement gangs, workshops, and the bush gangs meant they were seen as both multi-skilled, and maybe more importantly, physically capable of carrying out strenuous labour.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, between 1868 and 1876, 17 launches, 20 boats, and one schooner were repaired by Port Arthur's shipwrights (Table 10). As with the carpenters, there were not enough able-bodied shipwrights to carry out the necessary work. In 1868, when nine launches and three boats were repaired, William Johnson had already finished his sentence, Class One shipwright Anthony Robinson was working as a carpenter in the Sawyers Gang,<sup>66</sup> William Worthy, also a first-class mechanic, spent nearly five months in hospital<sup>67</sup>, and William Pickers (generally working in the second class and repairing boats) was due to serve out the remainder of his five-year sentence in Hobart from the end of June of that year. This probably left Joseph Rogers repairing the

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<sup>62</sup> R. Tuffin, 'Convicts of the 'proper description': The appropriation and management of skilled convict labour', *Labour History*, No. 114, 2018, p. 70.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15 & 17.

<sup>64</sup> Boyd, Civil Commandant, to Nairn, Comptroller General, 10 August 1864, in *Annual Reports of the Convict Establishments*, BPP, London, 1865, p. 52.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Bew, 20 March 1870, Matthew Jones, 6 November 1870, and John Merchant, 14 August 1870, in 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1870, TP300, ML; Samuel Jarman and Joseph Pollard, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 150, 162; 'Port Arthur Conduct Registers', Anthony Robinson per *Eden* (2), CON94/1/1, TA.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony Robinson, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, p. 195.

<sup>67</sup> William Worthy, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 134, 148, 170.

launches on his own until Worthy returned from the hospital in mid-July. Commandant James Boyd, worried about losing effective labour, stated that Pickers was the only shipwright 'available for repairing the guard boats'.<sup>68</sup> Pickers was to stay at Port Arthur for another nine months.<sup>69</sup> By mid-1873 Rogers was the only remaining shipwright, probably managing the boat repair work while also, as recorded in the second carpenters workbook, working as a carpenter.<sup>70</sup> The declining numbers of effective workers at Port Arthur probably meant that convict labour had to be managed even more efficiently and effectively to meet the daily demands of the station.

The shinglers were kept especially busy during this period, replacing the rotten roofing that was of great concern to the Convict Department.<sup>71</sup> Between 1868 and 1873 they made well over 1.5 million shingles, although by late 1876, when the establishment was months from closing and building repairs seemed unnecessary, there was only one shingler remaining (Table 9). Meanwhile, the coopers at Port Arthur, made and repaired items falling within the trade of 'wet cooper', producing barrels and tubs to hold butter and urine, water buckets, and harness casks for brining meat, as well as that of the 'white cooper', producing household items such as the butter churn made in the settlement workshops in 1869.<sup>72</sup> Woodworkers at Port Arthur sawed and prepared 1,630 timber staves for the coopers to make the above-mentioned items (Table 9). However, Class One cooper Joseph Belcher, died of heart and lung disease shortly after joining the coopers in April 1866, aged forty.<sup>73</sup> When Charles Drummond was released in March 1869, his departure left the settlement without a qualified mechanic.<sup>74</sup> Boyd asked for a

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68 'Civil Commandant's Office, Letter Book', 26 February 1866-31 July 1869, TP 315, ML, p. 622.

69 William Pickers, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 133, 147, 160, 176.

70 Joseph Rogers, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 2, ML, pp. 68, 94, 101.

71 Boyd, Civil Commandant, to Belstead, Acting Comptroller General, 20 July 1869, *Report of the Directors of Convict Prisons*, BPP, London, 1870, p. 486.

72 Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-119.

73 Joseph Belcher, in 'Long Bay Returns', 1862, 1864, B8, ML, pp. 6, 25; Joseph Belcher, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, p. 25

74 'Civil Commandant's Office, Letter Book', 26 February 1866-31 July 1869, TP 315, ML, p. 785; Charles Drummond, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, p. 169.

replacement, to satisfy new production requests and to undertake 'difficult repairs', but it is unknown if that request was answered.<sup>75</sup>

The two wheelwrights at work in this period — James Waring who died in 1866, and Samuel Roberts who was sixty when he arrived in Port Arthur in 1865 — both spent time in the second class (Roberts also in the third), probably on account of illness and old age, but continued to be actively productive.<sup>76</sup> In 1868, 65 felloes (sections of wheel rims) and 300 wooden wheel spokes were produced (Table 9) possibly for the carts also made that year (Table 10). Another 48 felloes were made in 1869 (Table 9). Between 1868 and 1876 wheelwrights (or those with similar trade experience) also made boat wagons, and, made, and (or), repaired various types of barrows. In addition, eleven tramway wagons (Table 10) were made to go with the 'new tramway works' that many of the Port Arthur convicts, including shipwright Joseph Rogers, carpenter Matthew Jones, and trainee carpenter James Onions were labouring on in 1871.<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, between 1868 and 1874 convict timber workers produced an extensive variety of sawn and split posts, arras, or support rails, various lengths of split palings, and posts and rails (Table 9). As well as the procuring and preparing of timber, the building, renovating, and repairing of infrastructure was a continuous process that employed those convict woodworkers not labouring out in the bush gangs between 1868 and 1877. Work completed between 1868 and 1869 included additions to the lunatic asylum, a slaughterhouse, dairy, utility rooms in the pauper depot, and a convict library in the Penitentiary.<sup>78</sup> However, six free carpenters had to be hired by the Convict Department to complete the additions to the lunatic asylum in a timely fashion, demonstrating that the convict population at this time could not always meet the settlement's

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<sup>75</sup> 'Civil Commandant's Office, Letter Book', 26 February 1866-31 July 1869, TP 315, ML, p. 785.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Roberts and James Waring, in 'Carpenters and Labourers, 1866-1874', B14, Vol. 1, ML, pp. 18, 41, 71, 108, 125.

<sup>77</sup> A. H. Boyd, 9 April 1873, 'Port Arthur report for 1872', *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 25, No. 11, Hobart, 1973, p. 3; Various entries for Matthew Jones, James Onions and Joseph Rogers, in 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1871, TP303, ML.

<sup>78</sup> Boyd, Civil Commandant, to Belstead, Acting Comptroller General, 20 July 1869, *Report of the Directors of Convict Prisons*, BPP, London, 1870, p. 486; Brand, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

demands, especially when major projects were underway.<sup>79</sup> The convict woodworkers were, instead, needed to focus on smaller building projects and the extensive repair work on the 'ceilings, walls, and floors' of the old buildings, all much damaged by leaking roofs.<sup>80</sup> During this period, seven men are known to have been collecting, moving, or sawing and quartering timber, occupied in the sawmill, the bush log and wood gangs, and at the bush and settlement sawpits.<sup>81</sup> Others were at work repairing the wharves and jetties.<sup>82</sup> The major repairs to the mooring structures of Port Arthur and its outstations in 1866 also included bridges, and in 1872 the authorities contemplated the erection of a new jetty.<sup>83</sup>

The output of convict woodworkers in this period was considerable, undoubtedly aided by the settlement's new vertical and circular saws. They produced many thousands of feet of battens for floors, wall, and roofing, as well as boards and 'beams & other large timbers', plus joists, and quartering for more decorative walls and areas that needed to be weatherproof. They made piles, in a variety of sizes, to support wharves, jetties, and bridges, or for breakwaters, (Table 9). There is evidence that some timber products were also exported to Hobart, including forty-six piles for the Derwent Rowing Club.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, those working in joinery and cabinetmaking were kept busy fashioning quarter-sawn timber into furniture and other useful implements that needed to be both waterproof and durable. Principally they made and repaired closet stools, night-stools, chairs, tables, washstands, and axe handles. Quartered timber creates a lot of waste wood, which at Port Arthur was probably used to make the 8,589 bushels of charcoal from 1868 to 1873 (Table 9).

<sup>79</sup> 'Civil Commandant's Office, Letter Book', 26 February 1866-31 July 1869, TP 315, ML, pp. 177-78, 195.

<sup>80</sup> 'Mr. Cheverton's report on the state of the buildings', 9 May 1873, *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 25, No. 77, Hobart, 1873, pp. 3-5.

<sup>81</sup> 'Port Arthur Sick Reports', 1869-70, 1869, and 1870, TP297, TP 299, TP 300, ML.

<sup>82</sup> See for example J. Boyd, 'Return showing the various descriptions of labour at which the prisoners have been employed during the year ending 30 June 1862 [at Port Arthur]', *Convict Discipline and Transportation*, BPP, London, 1863, p. 72.

<sup>83</sup> Boyd, Civil Commandant, to Nairn, Comptroller General, 9 April 1873, *Annual Reports on the Convict Establishments*, BPP, London, 1867, p. 20; 'Establishment at Port Arthur, Report for 1872', *Journals of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, Vol. 24, No. 11, Hobart, 1873, p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Log of the *Harriet* (schooner), between Hobart and Port Arthur, 13 September 1873, in Ship's Logs, CRO82/1/19, TA.

|  | 1856   | 1868   | 1869   | 1870   | 1872* | 1873   | 1874  | 1875  | 1876  |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Battens, ft  | -      | 25857  | 14158  | 36772  | -     | 13901  | 4975  | 335   | -     |
| Boards, ft   | -      | 78851  | 86830  | 68318  | -     | 18186  | 20105 | 771   | -     |
| Boards, ft coffins   | -      | 817    | 1248   | 260    | -     | 2783   | 710   | 2003  | 1100  |
| Beams & large timber, ft   | -      | 3168   | -      | -      | -     | 8407   | 745   | -     | -     |
| Joists, ft   | -      | -      | 19115  | 27812  | -     | 13558  | 7039  | 128   | 44501 |
| Quartering, ft   | -      | -      | 15527  | 30254  | -     | 11887  | 9841  | 336   | 55347 |
| Planks, ft   | -      | 7794   | 1043   | 2985   | -     | 1509   | 1400  | -     | -     |
| Posts sawn, ft   | -      | 26607  | 10464  | 13564  | -     | 11398  | 12823 | -     | -     |
| Arras rails, ft  | -      | 10348  | 6467   | 4000   | -     | 6589   | 9077  | -     | -     |
| Boards, ft lightwood   | -      | 2208   | 6702   | -      | -     | 408    | 100   | -     | -     |
| Planks, ft lightwood   | -      | -      | -      | -      | -     | 656    | 689   | -     | -     |
| Staves, no. lightwood  | 1475   | 860    | 770    | 310    | -     | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Joists, no. lightwood  | -      | -      | -      | -      | -     | 93     | 75    | -     | -     |
| Quartering, no.  | -      | 25     | 1828   | -      | -     | 560    | 87    | -     | -     |
| Spars, no. wattle  | -      | -      | -      | 1      | -     | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Posts & rails, no.   | 250    | 9032   | 1203   | -      | 330   | 1157   | -     | -     | -     |
| Chock & log fence, rods  | -      | -      | -      | -      | 1507  | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Tramway, yards   | -      | -      | -      | -      | 2530  | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Shingles   | 157000 | 256200 | 520700 | 405314 | -     | 231613 | 96050 | 78000 | 43300 |
| Piles, no.   | 230    | 95     | -      | -      | -     | 42     | 12    | -     | -     |
| Posts split, no.   | -      | -      | -      | 260    | -     | 363    | 225   | 100   | 255   |
| Rails split, 26'x12", no.  | -      | -      | -      | -      | -     | 4      | 550   | 400   | 290   |
| Firewood, tons   | -      | 3915   | 3867   | 3794   | -     | 4827   | 2578  | 2324  | 1623  |
| Firewood billets, lbs  | -      | 80896  | 7904   | 18334  | -     | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Charcoal, bushels  | -      | 2778   | 1710   | 1506   | -     | 2350   | 245   | -     | -     |
| Laths, no.   | 40500  | 5000   | 11900  | 5500   | -     | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Felloes, no.   | -      | 65     | 48     | -      | -     | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Gum spokes, no.  | -      | 300    | -      | -      | -     | -      | -     | -     | -     |
| Coffins, no.   | -      | 24     | 20     | 25     | -     | 23     | 15    | 14    | 11    |
| * Little information is available on the timber work conducted in 1872.  |        |        |        |        |       |        |       |       |       |
| Sources: Drawn from various Port Arthur Annual Reports, in British Parliamentary Papers and the <i>Journal of the House of Assembly, Tasmania</i> , between 1869 and 1877. |        |        |        |        |       |        |       |       |       |

| Wooden items             | Trade                  | 1868 | 1869 | 1870 | 1872 | 1873 | 1874 | 1875 | 1876 |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Artificial legs & arms,  | Carpenter              | -    | 4    | 3    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Crutches, made, pairs    | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 12   | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Buckets, water, made     | Cooper                 | 18   | 63   | 30   | 18   | 13   | -    | -    | -    |
| Buckets, water, repaired | Cooper                 | 13   | 8    | 10   | 22   | 16   | -    | -    | -    |
| Carts made               | Wheelwright            | 2    | 1    |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Carts repaired           | Wheelwright            |      |      | 9    | 8    | 9    | 5    | 6    | 2    |
| Cart wheels, repaired    | Wheelwright            | -    | -    | -    | 2    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Wagon, boat, made        | Wheelwright            | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 4    | -    | -    |
| Tramway wagons, made     | Wheelwright            | -    | -    | -    | 11   | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Casks, made              | Cooper                 | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Casks, repaired          | Cooper                 | -    | -    | -    | 4    | 2    | -    | -    | -    |
| Churn, butter, made      | Cooper                 | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Close stools, made       | Carpenter              | 36   | 14   | 9    | -    | 4    | -    | 35   | -    |
| Stools, repaired         | Carpenter              | -    | 7    | 10   | 2    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Chairs or settees, made  | Carpenter              | 25   | 16   | 18   | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Seats for shoemakers     | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 2    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Tables, repaired         | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 2    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Launches repaired        | Shipwright             | 9    | -    | 8    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Boats repaired           | Shipwright             | 3    | -    | 6    | 5    | 2    | 4    | 3    | 2    |
| Schooner repaired        | Shipwright             | -    | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    |
| Pinnacle paddles, made   | Shipwright/carpenter   | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 2    | -    | -    |
| Hut for Mt Arthur        | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Pig shed, made           | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Tubs, made & repaired    | Cooper                 | 90   | 145  | 67   | 24   | 46   | -    | -    | -    |
| Ladders, made            | Carpenter              | -    | 4    | -    | -    | 2    | -    | -    | -    |
| Plough beams, made       | Carpenter              | -    | 17   | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Ploughs made & repaired  | Carpenter              | -    | -    | 11   | 5    | 2    | 5    | 4    | -    |
| Trusses repaired         | Carpenter/shipwright   | -    | -    | 9    | -    | 3    | -    | -    | -    |
| Wash-hand stands, made   | Carpenter              | -    | 2    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Wheelbarrows, made       | Carpenter/wheelwright  | -    | 3    | 1    | 19   | -    | 6    | 6    | 1    |
| Wheelbarrows, repaired   | Carpenter/wheelwright  | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 5    | 4    | 3    |
| Barrows, wheels, repair  | Wheelwright            | -    | -    | -    | 6    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Barrows, made & repaired | Carpenter/wheelwright  | -    | -    | -    | -    | 6    | -    | -    | -    |
| Wooden pump, made        | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Doors made & repaired    | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 3    | 7    | -    | -    | -    |
| Gates, made              | Carpenter/blacksmith   | -    | -    | -    | -    | 19   | 7    | 8    | -    |
| Frames, sawmill, repair  | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 1    | -    | -    | -    | -    |
| Axe Handles, made        | Tool handler/carpenter | -    | -    | -    | 228  | 58   | -    | -    | -    |
| Semaphores, made         | Semaphore repairer     | -    | -    | -    | -    | 2    | 1    | -    | -    |
| Semaphores, repaired     | Semaphore repairer     | -    | -    | -    | 2    | -    | -    | 2    | 3    |
| Semaphores, made         | Semaphore repairer     | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 6    | 9    | -    |
| Shelves, made            | Carpenter              | -    | -    | -    | 4    | 25   | -    | -    | -    |
| Bullock yokes, made      | Any                    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 12   | -    | -    | -    |
| Bullock yokes, repaired  | Any                    | -    | -    | -    | 12   | -    | -    | -    | -    |

Sources: Drawn from various Port Arthur Annual Reports, in British Parliamentary Papers and the *Journal of the House of Assembly, Tasmania*, between 1869 and 1877.

In all, the convict woodworkers were a much needed and highly productive component of the Port Arthur labour force, despite their advancing ages and failing health. So, what became of them? Generally, they were all reasonably old men when released from Port Arthur — the mean age of the cohort upon release was 51.3 years of age.<sup>85</sup> Drummond and Jarman were lucky to still be relatively young at only 40 and 41 respectively.<sup>86</sup> William Pickers, however, was 68 upon his release in 1869, while William Bright, still under sentence in Hobart after Port Arthur closed in 1877, was 69 when he was finally released in 1883.<sup>87</sup> By the time the settlement ceased to operate in 1877, one-quarter of the cohort were deceased (although as noted, only three died while under sentence at the settlement).

As far as these men can be traced in the archives, over 40% appear to have found employment as free citizens. In fact, most continued to work at their trades, or at least within the timber industry.<sup>88</sup> But then many, in fact about half, also found themselves in trouble again for burglary, vagrancy, and idleness after being released, although most only offended once more. However, two exceptions stand out, Charles Drummond, accused of seven crimes and gaolled for three of them between 1869 and 1883, and George Willis who served an astonishing twenty gaol sentences between 1879 and 1889 when he died in prison.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, some succeeded in creating a new and better life after convictism. Upon his release from Port Arthur in February 1871, Joseph Pollard spent about ten years raising a family and working as a carpenter before co-owning a 'large general store' in Waratah in northern Tasmania, where he was also active in the local community and Methodist Church.<sup>90</sup> By 1904 Pollard was in New Zealand where he started as a grocer, his business becoming 'Pollard &

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<sup>85</sup> Calculated from the statistics found in Table 5.

<sup>86</sup> Conduct records, Charles Drummond and Samuel Jarman per *Sir Robert Peel*, CON33/1/63, TA.

<sup>87</sup> Conduct records, William Pickers per *Dromedary*, CON31/1/34, and William Bright per *Louisa*, CON39/1/1, TA.

<sup>88</sup> This information is from death and burial records in the Tasmanian Archives and the colonial newspapers available through the National Library of Australia.

<sup>89</sup> Their record of crime is traced mostly through the information gazetted in various issues of the *Tasmanian Reports of Crime* newspaper between 1869 and 1881, as well as the *Launceston Examiner*, and *Tasmanian News*.

<sup>90</sup> *Advocate*, 29 May 1929, p. 7; *Cornwall Chronicle*, 13 October 1874, p. 2; *Launceston Examiner*, 6 September 1886, p. 1; *Tasmanian*, 22 September 1883, p. 1102; Ailsa Neilson to Anne Hoyle, email, 28 October 2013, copy in author's possession; Death certificate of George Willis, died 12 June 1889, RGD35/1/12, no. 609.

Co., Grocers, and Ironmongers' in 1907.<sup>91</sup> In 1911 he was once again working as a joiner and upon his death in 1914 was a builder.<sup>92</sup> Pollard had successfully raised a family that is still living in New Zealand, fulfilling the ideal that convicts could become productive and lasting contributors to a free society.

Yet ultimately it was more common for these men to end up in charitable institutions. At least fifteen did so, probably suffering the disdain of the free population who viewed them as a lingering embarrassment and a drain on society.<sup>93</sup> Thirteen of the cohort died in an institution for paupers and invalids.<sup>94</sup> William Pim, who had a crippled hand and was in his sixties, died at the New Town Pauper Establishment in 1889 after six stints (a few months at a time) there during the previous five years.<sup>95</sup> Robert Gough (alias William Way) was in and out of institutions between early 1872 and late 1878, alternating between the Cascades and Brickfields invalid depots, and was probably an alcoholic.<sup>96</sup> He died in the New Town Pauper Establishment in September 1880 under his real name of William Way.<sup>97</sup> John Merchant, who at Port Arthur had a bone disease in one leg that required sedatives, as well as reoccurring bouts of intestinal pain, hardly a year after his release in August 1873 was incarcerated in the New Town Invalid Depot; eventually dying there in February 1908, aged 86.<sup>98</sup> Some are known to have died in Launceston Hospital – for

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<sup>91</sup> Joseph Pollard, in *Wise's New Zealand Post Office Directory*, Dunedin, 1904, p. 279A; 'Joseph Pollard', *New Zealand, City and Are Directories, 1866-1954, Stone's Otago and Southland Directory*, Dunedin, 1907, p. 155.

<sup>92</sup> Death Registration of Joseph Crawshaw Pollard, 1 July 1914, *New Zealand Births, Deaths and Marriage Online*, Registration No. 1914/6270 <[www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/](http://www.bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/)> (12 August 2020); 'Joseph Crawshaw Pollard', *New Zealand Electoral Rolls, 1853-1981, Chalmers*, Dunedin, 1911, p. 117.

<sup>93</sup> A. Piper, 'A love of liberty The manipulation of the colonial Tasmanian institutional system by invalids', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 11, 2009, pp. 74-75.

<sup>94</sup> Their institutional records can be found in various issues of the *Tasmanian Reports of Crime* newspaper between approximately 1866-1908, and in the death records that were available through the Tasmanian Archives.

<sup>95</sup> See for example 'Prisoners discharged from H.M. Gaols and House of Correction, Hobart Town and Launceston', *Reports of Crime*, 8 March 1872, Vol. 41, No. 660, 1872, p. 44; William Pim, 20 July 1889, Register of Deaths In Hobart, RGD35/1/12, no. 693, TA.

<sup>96</sup> *Tasmanian Reports of Crime*, various volumes between 1872 and 1878. According to the *Tasmanian Tribune*, 23 January 1873, p. 3, he was caught trying to sneak 'strong spirits' into Brickfields in 1873 but was let off with a caution.

<sup>97</sup> William Way, 10 June 1880, Register of Deaths in Hobart, RGD35/1/9, no 2560.

<sup>98</sup> John Merchant, 20 February 1908, in 'Orders for Burials and Cremations Cornelian Bay Cemetery', 1907-1908, AF 70/1/31, TA.



example, George Jones from a hernia, and Robert Bew from cancer.<sup>99</sup> Others died in their homes. The average age at death (from a sample of thirty-one known cases) was 67.2 years, although several lived into their eighties. The most common cause of death, in just over a quarter of cases, was given as senility. And over half of them, at the time of their death, were recorded as having been in a timber-related trade.<sup>100</sup>

The convict woodworkers at Port Arthur contributed greatly to the building and maintenance of the settlement's infrastructure. Their skills, many of which were learned at Port Arthur and its outstations, may have helped them gain employment later, outside the penal system, and it is notable that most committed no further offences, or committed very few, when freed from their sentences. Some men did prove that Port Arthur could, at least for tradesmen, provide a vital stepping stone to becoming self-sufficient and useful members of society. For the most part, however, age, injury, and ill-health took their toll on men who left Port Arthur stigmatised and facing limited prospects for decent employment in a recovering Tasmanian economy. It was difficult to create a better life after serving as a woodworker at Port Arthur, although it was not necessarily impossible to avoid crime, find work, or raise a family. Yet ultimately, very few were able to enjoy long and prosperous lives after serving at Port Arthur.

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<sup>99</sup> Robert Bew, 26 May 1887, Register of Deaths in Launceston, RGD35/1/56, no. 205; George Jones, 4 June 1886, Register of Deaths in Launceston, RGD35/1/55, no. 210.

<sup>100</sup> The 31 death records are available through the Tasmanian Archives.