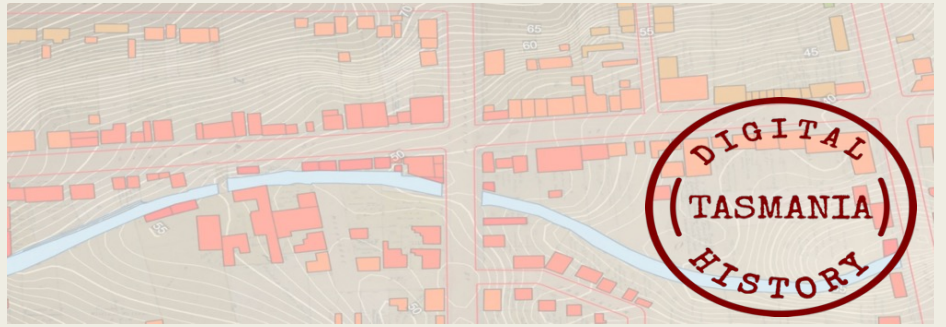




DIGITAL HISTORY NEWSLETTER

March 2026



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WELCOME

Welcome to the inaugural Digital History Newsletter. We are circulating this to all members and associates of Digital History Tasmania and everybody involved with the South Australian *Tale of Two Cities Project*. Our intention is to produce three newsletters a year (March, June and December) in addition to the DHT Annual Report which we will circulate in September. The aim of the newsletter is to provide information on digital history and archaeology initiatives in Australia and elsewhere as well as updates on the three Digital History Filemaker databases created to date (more about these below). We also hope that the newsletter will help to connect academics, archivists, curators, family historians and others with an interest in the digital humanities. Please contact us if you have news or information that you would like to include in future editions.

Hamish Maxwell-Stewart

Jenny Wise

Please contact us at: editorDHnews@une.edu.au

ANNUAL WORKSHOP TO REMEMBER EMERITUS PROFESSOR LUCY FROST

19 AUGUST 1941 – 7 FEBRUARY 2026



I wrote to all DHT members last month with the sad news of Lucy's death. She is sorely missed by all the DHT team. It is difficult to underestimate her contribution to the digitization of Tasmania's convict archive. Although a Professor of English Literature, she took a keen interest in Tasmania's colonial history from the moment that she arrived at UTAS in 1997. She was ahead of her time in grasping the many ways in which digital tools could assist a deep reading of Australia's convict past. In recognition of her pioneering leadership in the field, DHT are planning to hold an annual workshop in her name.

Lucy was a private person, who had little time for self-promotion. She was passionate, however, about research. To the very last she wanted to know where we were up to with digitization, record linkage and data visualization. My last conversations with her were about the database. A hands-on workshop seems to be a fitting way of remembering her. To this end the core purpose of the event will be to discuss the latest developments in digital history. While the focus will be on the digitization of Tasmania's archive, contributions from the general field of digital history, archaeology and literature will be welcomed.

We are hoping to run the event in conjunction with the University of Tasmania. This would be fitting as Lucy was the first woman to be appointed to a chair in Humanities at the University. We are hoping that the inaugural workshop will be timed to coincide with the DHT AGM which is scheduled for September/ October. If anyone would like to present, or would like to part of an organizing committee or in other ways help could they email me:

hmaxwell@une.edu.au

In the meantime we will keep everyone informed of progress. Keep an eye on the June newsletter for more information.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

ARC LINKAGE GRANT

In 2025 we received the welcome news that our application for an ARC linkage grant was successful and 'A Tale of Two Cities: Long run social and economic mobility in Australia' would be funded to run for four years. This project brings together participants from four universities to work with five partner organisations and combines a range of diverse research disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach brings together economic, social, historical, computational, and data visualisation skills which will provide new insights into factors impacting social mobility in Australia.



L to R: Prof Martin Shanahan, Prof Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, Assoc Prof Lionel Frost, Assoc Prof Jenny Wise.



L to R: Dr Lisa Hackett, Dr John Wilson, Dr Florian Ploeckl

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CI Professor Martin Shanahan, Adelaide University,

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RA, Dr Trudy Cowley, Digital History Tasmania, trudy@researchtasmania.com.au

RA Ms Jodie Ombao, Digital History Tasmania, jombao@une.edu.au

RA Dr Heidi Ing, Adelaide University, heidi.ing@adelaide.edu.au

Partner Organisations:

- **Genealogy SA:** Robert Blair (President) saghs.president@saghs.org.au & David Ballinger (Vice President, & Database Manager) saghs.randd@saghs.org.au
- **State Records of South Australia:** Nick Miller (Senior Reference Archivist) nicholas.miller@sa.gov.au
- **State Library of South Australia:** David Brooks (Projects) David.Brooks@sa.gov.au
- **Registry of Birth, Deaths & Marriages:** Mr Chris Byron-Scott (Deputy Registrar), Chris.Byron-Scott@sa.gov.au
- **Digital History Tasmania:** Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart (CEO), hmaxwell@une.edu.au



In December 2025, DHT Database Manager Trudy Cowley created a duplicate of the Populating Tasmania Database (PopTAS) to create Populating South Australia (PopSA). Research Assistant Heidi Ing has started to populate PopSA with over 15,000 individuals drawn from the 1841 South Australian Census and almost 12,500 children born from 1842 to 1851. These people are being reconstituted into families and linked to their ship of arrival to lay the foundation for future data linkage.

Home Menu			Populating South Australia			Populating Tasmania Database					
Persons		Artifacts		Contexts		Contexts		Events		Roles	
Person Details		Headstone Images		Churches		Churches		Baptisms		AIF Soldiers	
Person Aliases		Person Images		Disorderly & Public Houses		Disorderly & Public Houses		Births		Convicts	
Person Artifacts				First Nations (restricted access)		Locations		Burials		Disorderly & Public House Licensees & Proprietors	
Person Contexts				Locations		Schools		Deaths		Employers	
Person Events				Schools		Ship Voyage Details		Education		Immigrants	
Person Relationships				Ship Voyage Details		Ship Voyage Persons		Employment		Magistrates	
Person Research Notes				Ship Voyage Persons		Ships List		Freedoms		Norfolk Island Settlers	
Person Roles				Ships List		Ships & Voyages List		Institution Admissions		Prisoners	
Persons List				Ships & Voyages List		Tasmanian Aboriginal Historic dataset (restricted access)		Institution Discharges			
Relationships				Valuation Rolls		Valuation Rolls		Land & Property			
								Marriages			

Datasets uploaded into the PopSA database so far include the 1841 South Australian census, ship arrivals from 1836 to 1841, pre-civil South Australian births, baptisms, marriages and deaths and South Australian registered births up to 1851. Volunteers at Genealogy SA have begun to extract and transcribe additional fields from South Australian registered deaths, such as occupation, cause of death and other very useful information about the deceased and the informant.

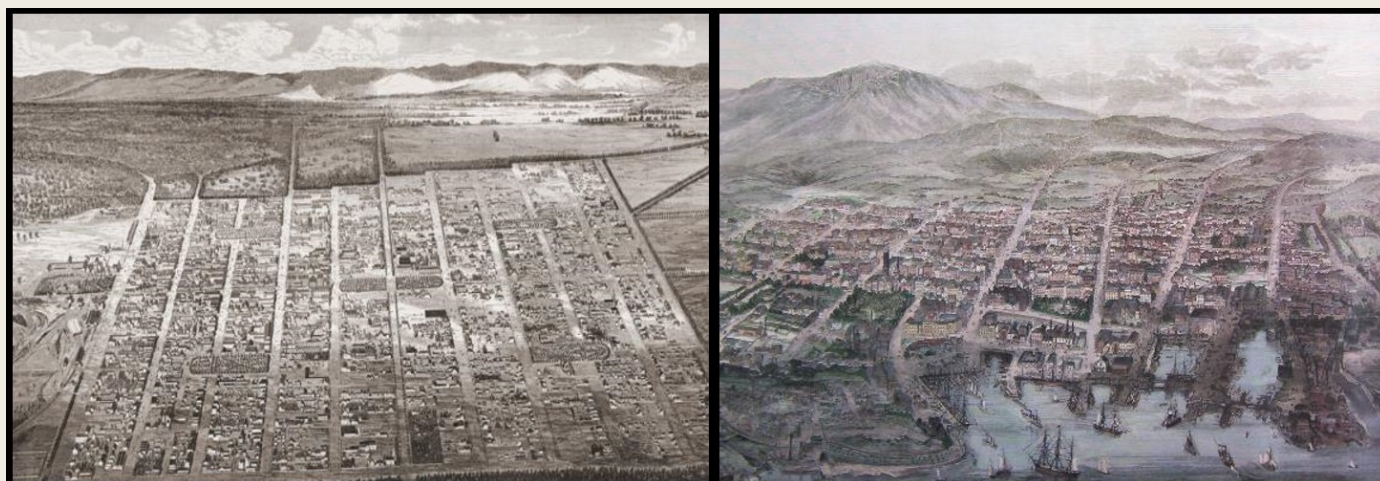
Another task currently underway is to create a SA Locations dataset which nests locations in South Australia into regions, counties, hundreds, districts, wards, lands, and places. This will support future geocoding and assist when boundaries move or locations change their name.

Underpinning both PopTas and PopSA databases are over 400 scripts which link datasets and allow data to be extracted for analysis. Trudy Cowley has used the creation of PopSA as an excuse to review every PopTAS script and Heidi Ing has replicated and edited each script to apply to the new database.

The Populating Tasmania database is an immense beast which continues to expand. Recently 154,837 cleansed and coded death records were imported to the PopTas database, courtesy of Rebecca Kippen & Monika Schwarz. These provide full transcripts for 1900-1930 Tasmanian death records (previously only the index data were available) and include cleansed and coded data for all death records from 1838 to 1930. Many new fields have been added to the database to accommodate these additional transcripts and codes. Of particular importance are coded causes of death (ICD10h standard) and occupations (HISCO standard). Volunteers are currently undertaking the huge task of transcribing the 1931 to 1970 death records. Additional volunteers welcome – training provided.

In early February 2026 team members were able to meet in person in Adelaide to discuss our aims and project timeline. It was great to see and hear from all who were able to attend. We intend to organise another gathering later this year and look forward to seeing you then.

Stay tuned for future progress reports!



MAKING CRIME PAY

ARC LINKAGE GRANT

The Making Crime Pay team have been working on a series of Unshackled installations for the National Trust operated Hobart Penitentiary and Woolmers World Heritage Site, Longford, Tasmania. These have included calculating the number of days served by each convict. This information will soon be added to the fourth screen of the Convict Memorial.

Thanks to the work of our volunteers, 37,411 full descriptions of male convicts have recently been added to the database. These updated records contain information on complexion, nose shape and many other physical details that have helped to fine tune the process of generating convict avatars.

The avatar on the right was created using data for William Henry Kenny who was aged 16 when he arrived in Hobart in 1837 on board the *Frances Charlotte*. Kenny was initially sent to Point Puer but later served at Woolmers. He is one of four convicts assigned to Thomas Archer who feature in Unshackled: The True Convict Story exhibition, installed at Woolmers in January 2026. This tells the story of political repression in Britain, Ireland and other British colonies and explains how this shaped convict transportation to Australia. It also reveals recent evidence on the scale and impact of convict resistance in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Initially launched in the Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery Hobart in 2024, the Unshackled exhibition has been designed to tour multiple sites in Australia, Britain and Ireland.



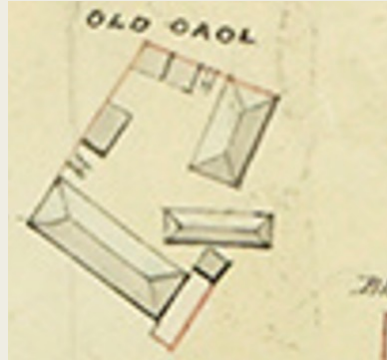
The Making Crime Pay team are delighted with the Woolmers iteration and the way in which DHT data has been used to provide a local twist to this exhibition. If you are in Northern Tasmania do try and pay a visit.

CONVICT LANDSCAPES

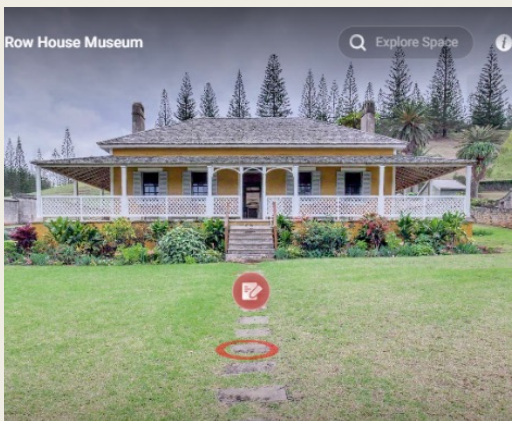
Norfolk Island First British Settlement

ARC DISCOVERY GRANT - DP260100630

In June 2025 a group of staff and students from UNE, UQ and USQ visited Norfolk Island as part of a pilot study towards the latest *Landscapes of Production and Punishment* project, looking at the 1788-1814 First British Settlement on Norfolk Island. We have in fact been working there since 2014, but this was undertaken as a lead-in for a new ARC project grant.



During the 10 days the group carried out remote sensing surveys at both the Sydney/Kingston settlement area, as well as at Phillisburgh, one of the outlying agricultural settlements, trying to determine if the footprint of these lost structures is detectable.



We also trialed the creation of 3D tours for No. 10 Quality Row and the New Gaol, using the new Realsee Lidar-enabled camera system. These will be made available to KAVHA and also be part of our 'Virtual Museum' (see the next page).

The students assisted with the sorting and cataloguing of several older archaeological collections, as well as the backlog from recent KAVHA excavations.



We were delighted to hear late last year that our ARC Discovery application was successful. This will allow us to roll out the full project design that includes transcribing and analysing archival documents, developing a new biographical database, undertaking further remote sensing, working with artefacts from previous excavations and – if we are lucky – excavating to see if we can find the remains of the 1788-1814 British settlement.

UNE

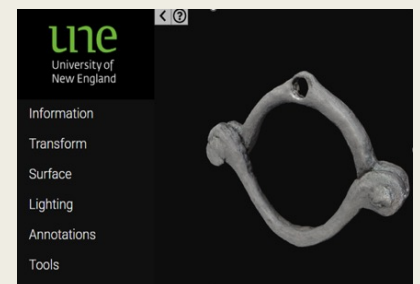
CONVICT VIRTUAL MUSEUM

Despite what must have amounted to millions of institutional items that were attached to the convict system, from clothing and footwear, to leg irons, tools and pannikins, surprisingly little material has survived and made its way into museum collections. Some institutions have an eclectic and often haphazard assortment of convict items, while others have almost none, and it is only infrequently through exhibitions such as *Unshackled* that they are brought into one space to create a more coherent story about convict life.

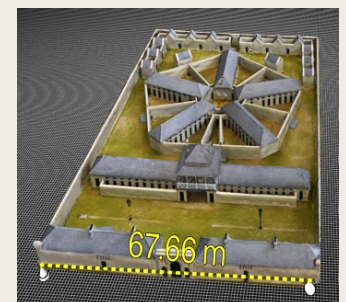


Above - Emma Watt (UNE) with the photogrammetry rig at Norfolk Island Museum

For some years now, UNE has been using photogrammetry and the Pedestal platform as part of its teaching and outreach. This low-cost but very effective form of photography allows us to create 3D models of objects, buildings and even whole landscapes that can be rotated, measured and manipulated by site users. It also creates a means for reassembling a *virtual collection* that brings in relevant items from a range of public and private holdings.



The UNE team are working with several of the major institutions, including TMAG, Port Arthur, Norfolk Island Museum, Museums of History NSW, Qld Museum (and hopefully some of the other collection very soon) to model a representative sample of the body of convict objects for inclusion in the collection. These will then be accessible to students, the public and other institutions, for inclusion into their programs.



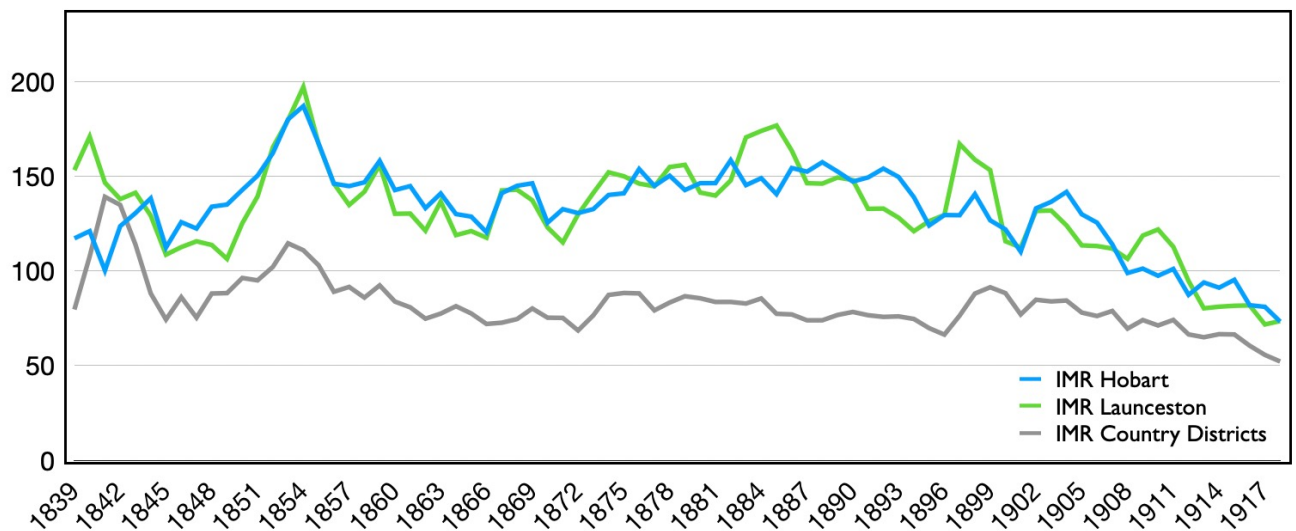
A side project is *Digitizing Dioramas*, where we are modelling some of the excellent, but under-used (or in storage) dioramas of convict sites. This will allow them to become much more flexible tools for interpretation both on and off site. The above example is of the New Gaol on Norfolk Island, which has no standing structures making it hard for visitors to interpret. Having the 3D model in their pocket, with explanatory 'hot spots', allows them to better understand the site.

Some examples of the Convict Virtual Museum are available by websearching UNE Pedestal and going through the Archaeology portal and then the Convict tab, or at: <https://une.pedestal3d.com/r/5QQmUQP4AB/>

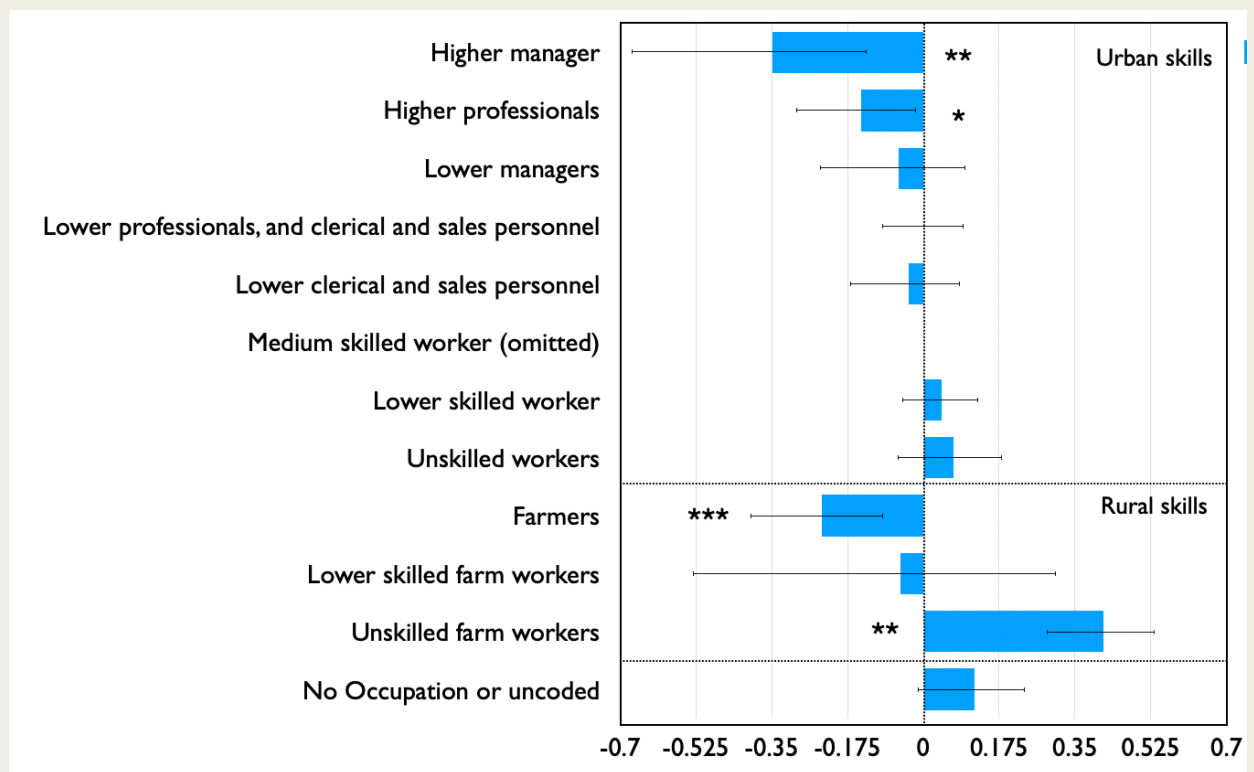
PUTTING DEATH IN ITS PLACE

ARC DISCOVERY GRANT

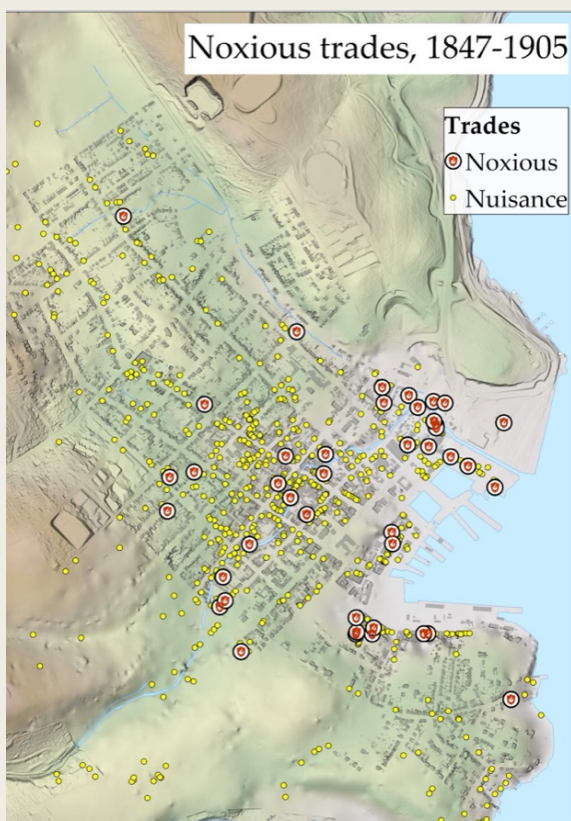
Thanks to work by Trudy Cowley, Rebecca Kippen, Peter Gunn, Monika Schwarz and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart we are now able to reconstruct infant mortality rates (IMR) for Tasmania in the period from 1838-1919. These are remarkably similar for Hobart and Launceston but significantly lower for rural areas. After 1900 IMR improved, and this was especially true for urban areas (see below). To put these results into comparative perspective, Hobart's IMR was similar to Ipswich in the UK, a town of approximately the same size.



We are currently exploring the factors responsible for elevated IMR rates in urban areas and those that enabled a reduction in infant mortality in the early 20th century. Class appears to have played an important role. Children born to fathers who were higher managers or professionals experienced significantly lower rates of mortality in their first year of life. The surprise here was that class differentials were more apparent amongst children born to fathers with rural occupations compared to urban. Children born to farmers experienced lower levels of mortality than those whose fathers were unskilled farm workers for example (see below). The Logistic Regression model below is based on the 52,119 births registered in Hobart District 1838-1899 that have been linked to infant death records. The omitted variable is male children, born spring 1865-9 in a Hobart suburb, to a father recorded as a medium skilled worker. Results to the left of 0 indicate decreased mortality risk compared to this reference group and to the right an increase. The number of stars indicate results significant at the: *** 1 percent level, ** 5 percent and * 10 percent levels.



Urban, rural disparities reflect differing environmental conditions. Infant health conditions and injuries were more likely to be concentrated in urban areas where there was poor water quality. To further test this Richard Tuffin has mapped the distribution of offensive trades in Hobart (see below). He has also calculated the distance between each property and the rivulets that ran through the town. Finally, he has mapped valuations at ten-year intervals. Work is now underway to link births to geolocated valuations so that the team can map infant mortality in Hobart at property level.



(1.)
OFFENSIVE TRADES.
 Blood or offal boiling or treating.
 Bone boiling or crushing.
 Candle-making, where tallow is rendered on the premises.
 Chemical or acid-making.
 Copper or lead-smelting.
 Fellmongering.
 Slaughtering.
 Soap-boiling.
 Tallow-melting, where refined tallow is not used.
 Tanning.
 Gut-scraping.
 Gut-spinning.
 Glue-making.
 Manure manufacturing.
 And any trade that, unless preventive measures are adopted, may become a nuisance or injurious to the health of the inhabitants of the district.

**Definition of a Noxious Trade from 1903
 Public Health Act**

FORCED MIGRATION

ARC DISCOVERY GRANT

Impact of forced migration on Tasmanian convicts and their descendants is a new Australian Research Council funded Discovery grant which will run from 2026 to 2029. The grant is led by Professor Adeline Delavande of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and NOVA University Lisbon. The other researchers are Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, UNE, and Professor Luis Pontes de Vasconcelos, UTS.

A key aim of this project is to compare the life expectancy of the brothers and sisters of convicts who were not transported with their siblings shipped in chains to Australia. This will help shed light on the impacts of forced migration and punishment. There is always a danger that those that experienced harsh early life conditions were more likely to be punished in Australia. Thus, while it might appear that flogging, solitary confinement and hard labour shortened life expectancy, it is possible that childhood insults played a more significant role. The siblings of convicts had both shared genetics and early life experiences, making them an ideal group to explore these kind of complications.

Fortunately convict records provide details of next of kin. These are particularly detailed for those arriving after 1840. The plan is to use this information to locate siblings in online family history platforms. The team are also hoping to use the same process to compare life expectancy of the children of transported convicts with their non-transported cousins. This will provide a means of exploring possible intergenerational effects. Note that we are currently looking for volunteers to help with this project.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Professor Adeline Delavande
Economics Discipline Group

2026 ARC Discovery Project Grant

- Impact of Forced Migration on Tasmanian Convicts and Their Descendants

UTS



ANNOUNCEMENT

Professor Luis Pontes de Vasconcelos
Economics Discipline Group

2026 ARC Discovery Project Grant

- Impact of Forced Migration on Tasmanian Convicts and Their Descendants

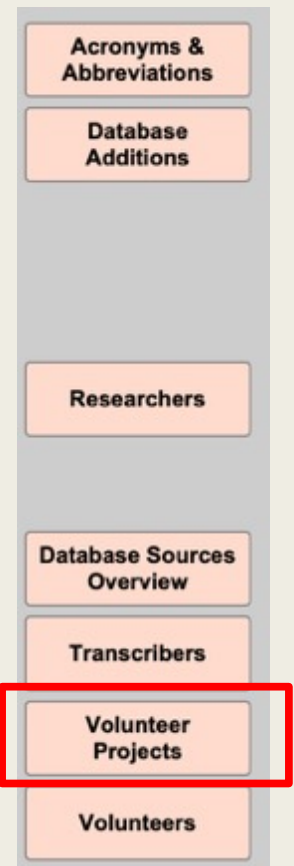
UTS

FORCED MIGRATION

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

We are currently looking for up to 20 volunteers to help track the brothers and sisters of convicts. If you enjoy populating family trees this could be the project for you. We will provide each volunteer with an Ancestry UK Heritage Plus subscription. For more information contact Jodie Ombao (DHT Volunteer Coordinator): jombao@une.edu.au

There are many other opportunities to volunteer. To find more information about these, open up the DHT Convict database and go to the “Admin Menu”. On the right you will see a column with peach-coloured buttons. Second from the bottom is one labelled “Volunteer Projects”. This includes a list of all the projects undertaken by DHT in recent years. Current projects are marked “active”. At the end of the list you will also see some planned projects. If you click on “view record” you will be taken to the project page. For more information about any of these email Jodie Ombao: jombao@une.edu.au



To find the full list of Volunteer Projects follow the diagram below.

1st step

2nd step

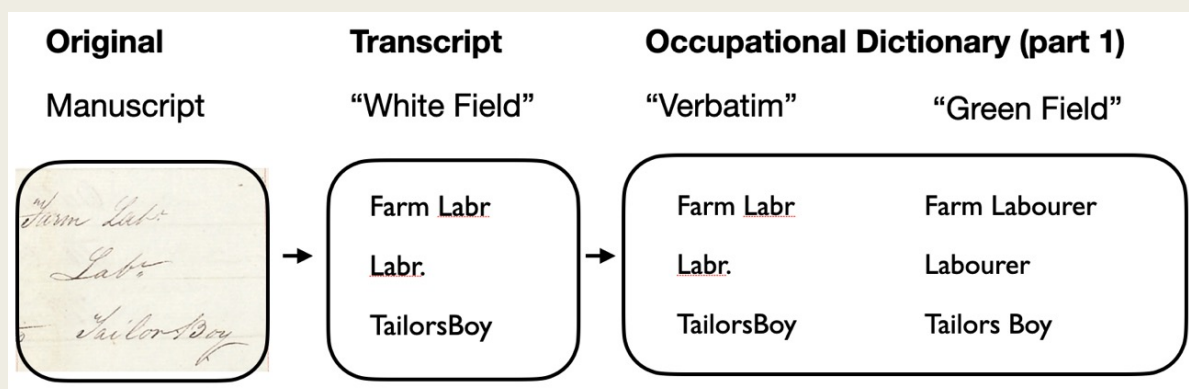
Project ID	Project Name	Project Type	Start Year	End Year	Project Manager 1	Medium: Excel	Medium: Convict DB	Medium: PopTas DB	Project Status	
UnidLoon	Unidentified Locations	Identification	2025		TC0105		yes		active	View Record
ForMig	Forced Migration	Identification	2026		HM0185		yes		active	View Record
ConFam	Convict Families	Linkage	2024		TC0105			yes	active	View Record

OCCUPATIONAL CODING DICTIONARY

Electronic coding dictionaries are files that can be used to clean and classify occupational and other data. They can save a significant amount of time by automatically matching data to standardised terms and linking these to the appropriate codes for analysis. They are also useful in that corrections and additions made to the dictionary can flow through to all linked datasets. The drawback is that they take time to get right.

Monika Schwarz, Monash, and David Roberts, UNE, have led the push to build a Convict Historical Occupational Dictionary. Working with Nathan Beer and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart (both UNE), they have concentrated on occupations listed in NSW convict indents and the following record groups in the Tasmanian Archives (Con 14, 15, 18, 19, 23, 27, 33 and 41). Monika and Hamish are also working with John Wilson (Adelaide University) to extend this to cover occupations described in WWI Tasmania Attestation Papers, Tasmanian Police Gazettes and Tasmania Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Why are historical occupational dictionaries needed? It is important that a transcript reflects the original. While it is tempting to write abbreviations out in full or otherwise standardise or code a record as it is transcribed, experience has shown this can be costly. Misinterpretation of the original can be difficult to unwind if a verbatim transcript does not exist. The flip side of this is that verbatim transcripts require some cleaning before they can be systematically analysed. Data dictionaries can help with this. In the simple example below three occupations encountered in an Appropriation Register (Con 27) have been transcribed and stored in a “White Field” in the DHT Convict Database. These have also been added to an Occupational Dictionary along with 3,165 other unique occupational transcripts. The first task of the dictionary is to map each of these to a standardised occupational title. Once set up, this dictionary can be used to automatically populate the cleansed or “Green Field” in the database, speeding up future data cleaning exercises.



In a second step, the Occupational Dictionary maps the “White Field” to a series of occupational coding structures as per the illustration below. Note how one of these coding systems (HISCLASS 12 adj) is designed to identify assistants and adjust skill rankings accordingly. In this case “Tailors Boy” has been separated from Tailor and dropped from medium skilled worker (class 7) to low skilled (class 9). As an aside, the dictionary has been designed to automatically convert “tailor’s boy” to “tailors boy”, as apostrophes can cause problems with some automated database routines and other scripts.

Occupational Dictionary (part 2)

"Green Field"	HISCO	HISClass 12	HISClass 12 adj	Armstrong	DHT Ind	HISCO-CW
Farm Labourer	62105	12	12	4	12	H-Agriculture
Labourer	99910	11	11	5	21	A-General labourers
Tailors Boy	79100	7	9	3	17	D-Manufacturing textiles

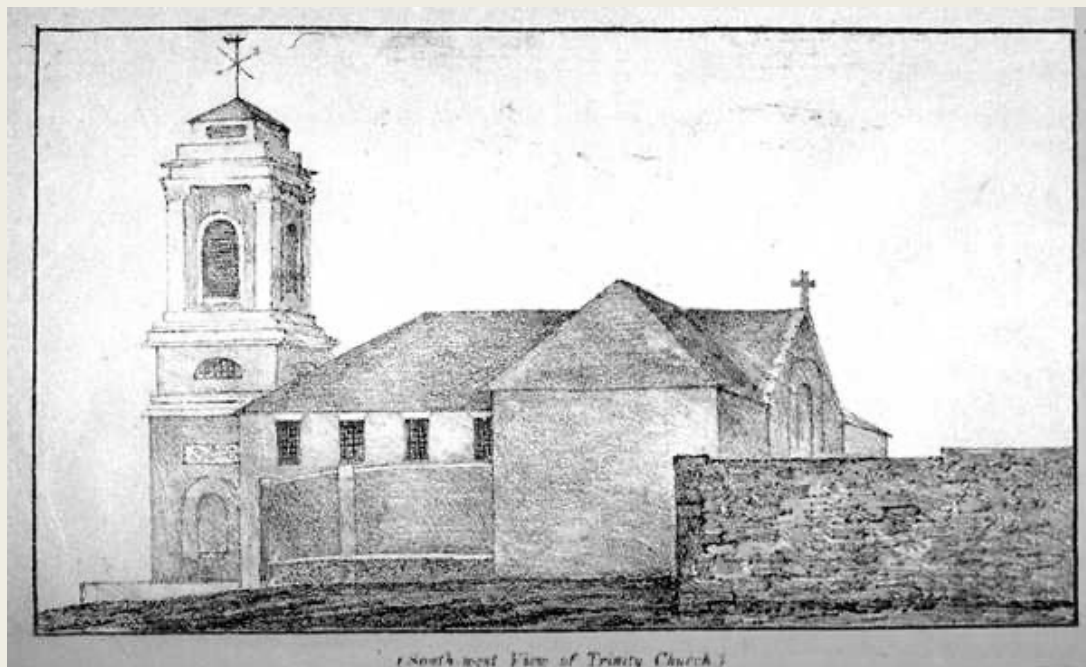
The coding system used in the above illustration are:

1. The Historical International Standard of Classification of Occupations (**HISCO**), a standardised international classification schema for historical occupations devised in 2002 by van Leeuwen, Maas and Miles to enable comparative analyses of labour and work across countries and time periods.
2. The Historical International Social Class Schemes (**HISCLASS**) which group occupations into social classes, specifically HISCLASS 12, a scheme that divides occupations into twelve social classes, and HISCLASS 5, a simplified model that reduces HISCLASS 12 into five broad social groups for less granular analysis.
3. **HISCLASS adjusted**, a variant of HISCLASS 12 and 5 which identifies assistants (including boys and girls) and apprentices and adjusts their skill coding accordingly.
4. Another 5-fold stratified system developed by **Armstrong** in 1970 that is in turn based on a typology devised by the British medical statistician T. H. C. Stevenson in 1910.
5. The **DHT Industrial** 22 category industrial code adapted from a system developed by the convict historian L. L. Robson in the 1960s which was in turn based on the 1951 UK census classification.
6. HISCO for Convict Workers (**HISCO-CW**), a system devised by Nathan Beer and David Roberts that takes HISCO codes at the 2-digit level and overlays them with group categories following the broad logic of the coding system employed by Nicholas and Shergold in the 1988 publication *Convict Workers*.

We plan to make these dictionaries available as downloads. The hope is that they will encourage wider use of these tools across the sector, ensuring that historical data is consistently marked up. We are currently working on version controls to ensure that further releases can be distinguished from prior. We are also working on adapting HISCLASS 12 to reflect differences between rural and other primary sector occupations in European and New World settings.

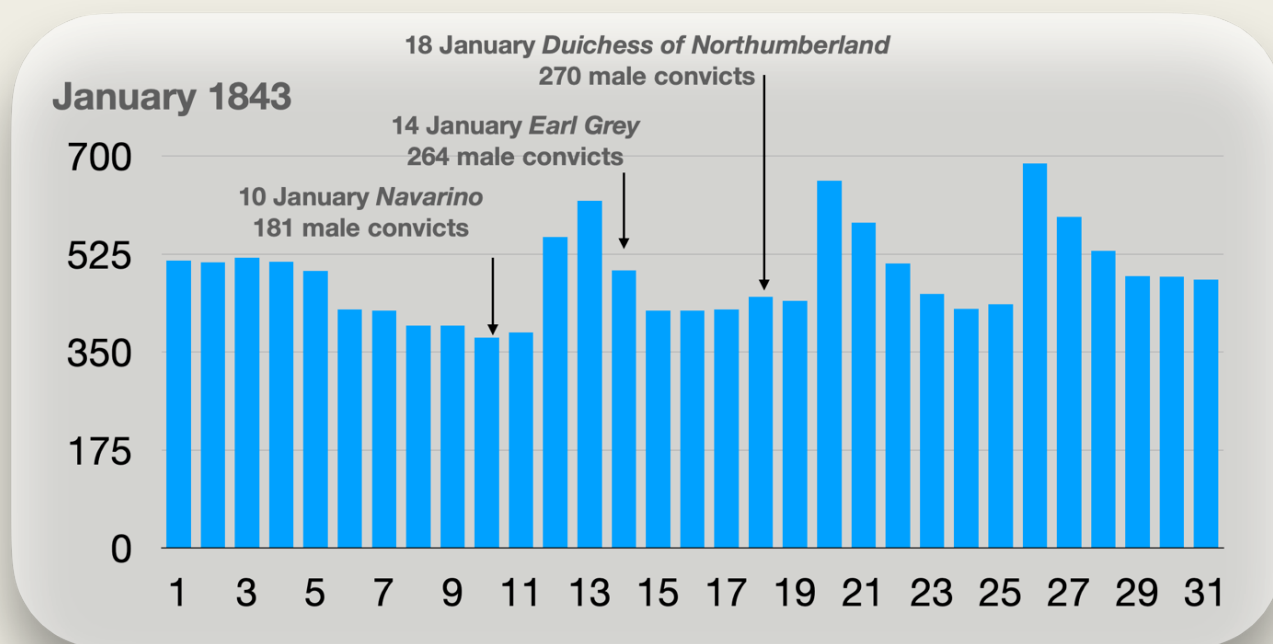
PRISONERS BARRACKS RATIONS

Annette May has led the team transcribing the seven volumes of Con 96. This intriguing record details rations supplied to convicts in the Hobart Penitentiary across seven months (April 1841, May 1842, January 1843, June 1848, September 1849, August 1850 and March 1851). These are important records. Although the Hobart Penitentiary played a central role in the day-to-day operation of the convict system it is remarkably understudied. It was the place where most male convicts arriving after 1820 were processed. It also housed the two town chain gangs and the surveyor's gang and was an important site of punishment. There were 36 solitary cells located under the pews of the chapel and there were others elsewhere in the complex as well as the town treadmill.



The ration books tell us how many convicts were in the Penitentiary at a particular moment in time. They also tell us how long it took to process new arrivals. To provide an example, three male convict vessels docked in Hobart in January 1843 (see image on the next page). In the days immediately before the arrival of the first of these the number of convicts in the Penitentiary dropped by 119 or 24 percent. The majority of the *Navario* convicts, the first of these vessels to arrive, were only in the penitentiary for a day before they were marched out to the probation stations at Southport, Jericho, Jerusalem, Long Marsh, Browns River, Westbury, Lovely Banks, New Norfolk and Bridgewater. Others were loaded onto local vessels to be conveyed to Maria Island and the Cascades and Coal Mines on the Tasman Peninsula.

After three days the population of the penitentiary stabilised but by now the *Earl Grey* had docked. After five days in port her convict cargo was discharged to the Penitentiary, followed a further five days later by the convicts on board the *Duchess of Northumberland*.



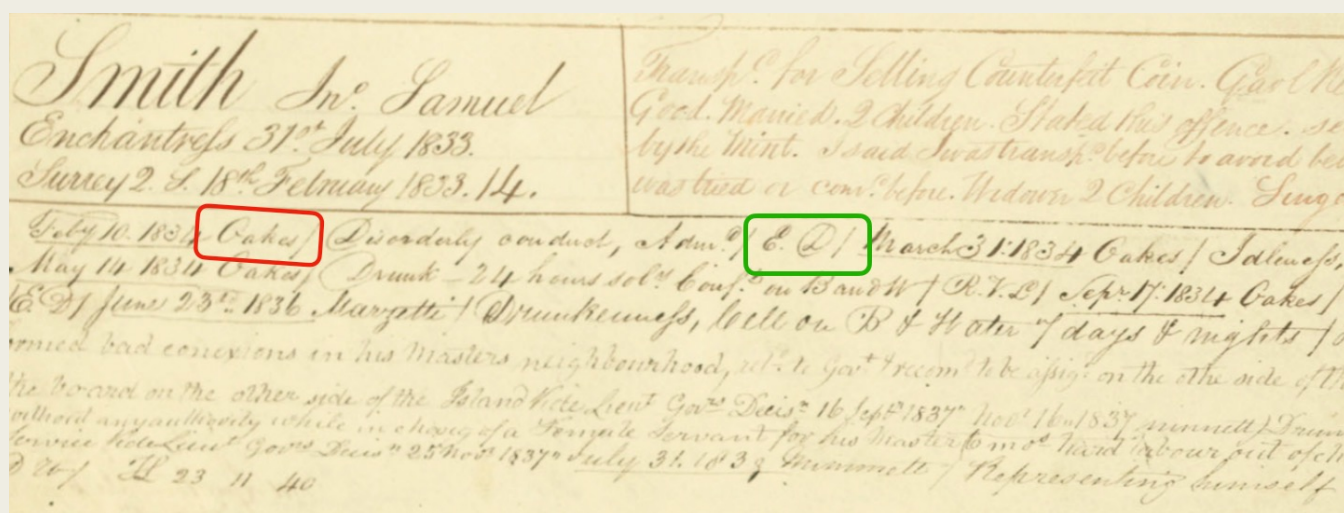
The ration books also tell us much about diet. Convicts in solitary got the least food (they were fed bread and water). As the scale of ration provided to each man is noted, it is possible to determine who was undergoing this form of punishment. On 1 June 1848, 50 convicts were in solitary cells, more than the capacity of the cells in the chapel. We also know that some longer solitary punishments were broken into sections. Richard Eade absconded from the colony in 1849. When recaptured he was sentenced to a month in solitary although the punishment was broken into at least three stints (see below). Eade was taken out of his cell and placed on the standard ration on 10 September 1849. Two days later he was put back in solitary but was released again on 15 September. This time he was allowed to recover for two full weeks before being returned to finish his punishment. We suspect that these breaks reflect medical interventions.

Days Rationed:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31																																							
Select from list for each day	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	1	1	S	S	S	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	S	S																																								
Total Full Rations	16										Total Half Rations										0										Total Solitary Rations										14										Total MechanicsRations										0									
Entry Date: D M Y	1			September			1849			Exit Date: D M Y			30			September			1849																																																			
Transcriber Comments																																																																						

CONDUCT RECORDS

THANK YOU TO THE VOLUNTEERS

Thanks to the efforts of a magnificent volunteer team, we are now close to having a complete transcript of Con 31 (Conduct records for male convicts arriving in Van Diemen's Land in the period to December 1839). These records summarize more than 176,000 magistrates bench encounters. Each contains many individual elements that require classification before this important series can be linked to other convict records and analysed. These include the name of the master that each convict was assigned to when prosecuted. Frustratingly, in most cases this is limited to a family name as per "Oakes" in the example highlighted in red below.

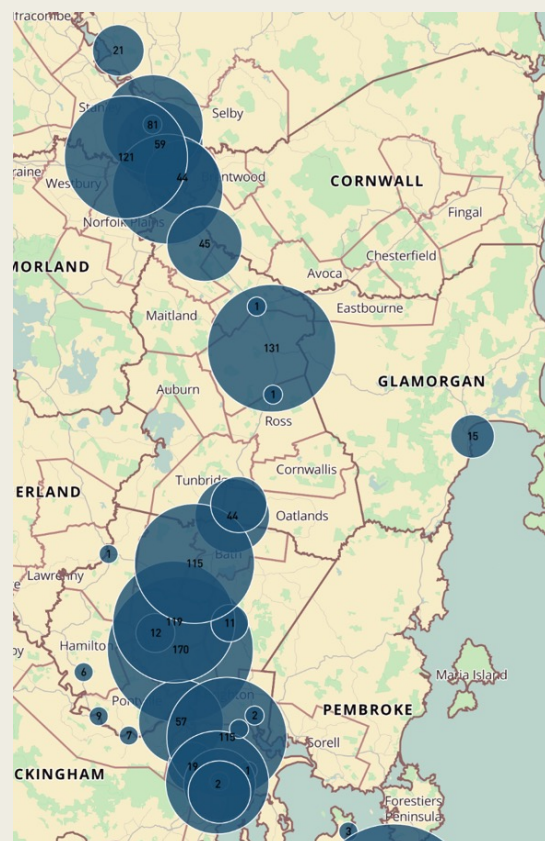


There are five employers named Oakes in the DHT database. Other parts of the record are useful, however, in identifying which is the correct one. The initials of the magistrate who heard this case are "ED" (highlighted in green). Thanks to the work of Margaret Strike (a PhD student at UNE), ED can be identified as Edward Dumaresq. In 1834 Dumaresq was the Police Magistrate at New Norfolk—a handy piece of information which helps to identify the master as Henry Oakes whose property, Redlands, was in the New Norfolk district. In the diagram below both Oakes and Dumaresq are linked to identifiers. In concert these help pin-point the place where both the offence occurred and where the punishment was served. In this case John Samuel Smith was merely admonished, but we now know that his next sentence to solitary confinement on 3 March 1834 was served in the New Norfolk watchhouse.

Date	Master	Offence	Punishment	Magistrate
31 March 1834,	Oakes,	Idleness,	36 hrs Soly Conft on B&W,	ED
	↓ Henry Oakes ↓ e035665 ↓ Redlands, Plenty, New Norfolk ↓ Property	↓ Place ↓ District	←.....→	↓ Edward Dumaresq ↓ PM038 ↓ Police Magistrate, New Norfolk

We are currently linking all magistrates' initials to the identifiers for the 747 appointed between 1803 and 1860. The next step will be to organise these by police district to better differentiate between masters who shared the same surname, but were located in different districts. We are also using muster data to calculate the number of convicts assigned to each master. This will enable us to calculate punishment rates across different employers and districts as well as to explore differences in magistrate sentencing patterns.

Monika Schwarz, Hamish Maxwell-Stewart and Richard Tuffin are also using these records to geolocate and populate sites of punishment. The image on the right is a detail from a visualisation of this data developed by Monika. This uses geocoordinates for each road and chain gang barracks located as a result of extensive archival work by Richard to plot all sentences issued (in this case for year 1837). As well as revealing the sequence of roads and other infrastructure projects developments, we are now able to recreate the distribution of convict labour across Van Diemen's Land with a degree of certainty.



DIGITAL HISTORIES TASMANIA

NEWS

Professor Martin Gibbs (UNE) has recently been appointed to as an acting director to the DHT Board. Martin is an archaeologist with a wealth of experience in geolocating, mapping, imaging and visualizing heritage sites.



Nadine Wiggins has recently joined the DHT database management team. Nadine is the former operations manager for the Tasmanian Data Linkage Unit and brings with her a wealth of expertise in data linkage and management. She will be working on the new Forced Migration ARC Discovery grant.



TATTOOS

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

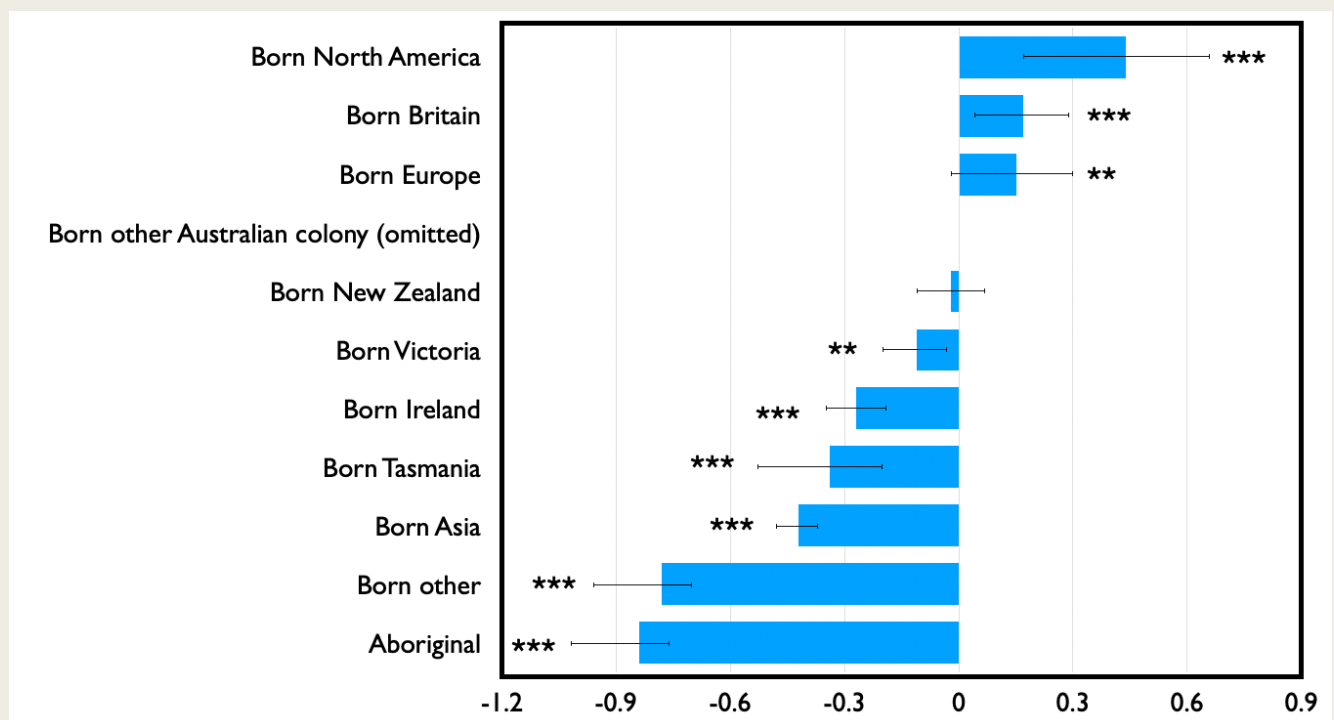
Last Canadian summer Piper Helen Boyd Bell and Salomé Perdomo Gonzalez, two history students at the University of Guelph, Ontario, conducted ground-breaking work analysing the descriptions of discharged prisoners published in the *Tasmanian* and *Victorian* Police Gazettes between 1862 and 1924.

Physical descriptions are difficult to work with because they are highly varied. While they are full of information about scars, injuries, deformities and tattoos, the details of these do not follow a logical order and are described in ways that are far from consistent. By way of illustration this is how Lawrence Walter a 24-year old English born labourer released in 1881 from the police lockup at Jamieson, Victoria, was described:

Ballet dancer, mermaid and anchor on lower right arm female figure on left arm, a star on left instep, a tattooed in blue; scar top of left thumb, scars over nose and each eyebrow, and on forehead close to hair.



Piper and Salomé developed a series of Excel formulas that could be used to reliably identify the records of discharged prisoners who were described as tattooed. They were able to use these to mark up 140,000 discharge records for analysis. The diagram below summarises one of the many findings resulting from this work. It shows the probability of being tattooed by place of birth (less likely to the left, more likely to the right). More to follow on this, but in the meantime a big thank you to Piper and Salomé for their pioneering endeavours.



UPCOMING EVENTS

South
Australia's

History Festival

1-31 May
2026

Every May South Australia lives up to its branding as the 'Festival State' with a massive, month-long festival celebrating history and heritage through a range of diverse activities held across the state. Hundreds of community-led events, such as talks, tours, walks, workshops and exhibitions take place in museums, libraries, historic buildings and community spaces. Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart will be in Adelaide during the 2027 South Australian History Festival and will present with Professor Martin Shanahan at the Genealogy SA library on Unley Road at 1pm on Wednesday 6 May 2027. Genealogy SA, the largest family history society in Australia, is a partner organisation in 'The Tale of Two Cities' ARC funded linkage grant and provides a research library and online database containing over 8 million searchable records.

A Tale of Two Cities

BOOK NOW

LONG-RUN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY IN AUSTRALIA

Join Professors Hamish Maxwell Stewart and Martin Shanahan as they discuss the challenges and insights surrounding their nationally funded project 'A Tale of Two Cities'.

The project, which builds on years of research by Professor Maxwell-Stewart on Tasmanian population records, looks to compare the life courses of settler generations in Hobart and Adelaide in the 19th century. The presenters will share some of the background to the project, things already learned about the Tasmanian settler population, and discuss some of the challenges involved in compiling and linking large data sets from the 19th century.



INFO

Online via Zoom and in the Genealogy SA Library on Unley Road.

Please note, this session will be recorded, and all registrants will receive a link to the recording after the event.

Registrations close Wednesday 6 May, 9:00 am.

DATE

Wed 6 May 2026 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (UTC+10:30)

LOCATION

 [Get directions](#)

Genealogy SA
201 Unley Road, Unley South Australia 5061

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1523748>

UPCOMING EVENTS

VISITING FELLOW: DR LUCAS HAASIS

Lucas Haasis is a historian and senior fellow (Gerda Henkel Scholarship) specializing in digital maritime cultures. His research focuses on maritime global history during the long 18th century, addressing maritime history and mobility, with a particular focus on imprisonment aboard ships, the materiality of history, public history and digital humanities. Haasis earned his doctorate at the Oldenburg University through a microhistorical study on merchant culture and epistolary practice in the 18th century. He previously served as a lecturer in early modern history and games in Oldenburg, and as research coordinator and PR manager for the German-British Prize Papers Project.

Lucas will be visiting Australia in May to conduct research on 132 letters written in 1803 at the Cape of Good Hope during the voyage of the British convict transport ship H.M.S. *Calcutta* from England to Australia. These were later seized from a Dutch ship and have been held ever since as part of the Prize Papers Collection of UK High Court and Admiralty records, comprising around 500,000 letters and documents taken from enemy ships between 1652 and 1815. What makes the Calcutta letters particularly interesting is that three-quarters were written by convicts. As Haasis notes, Ego-documents penned by the convicts en route to a penal colony are exceedingly rare. The study of this newly discovered collection represents an important contribution to Australian, British and global history.

Dr. Lucas Haasis

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SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS

McLean, M. A., Roberts, D. A., & Gibbs, M. 2025, Panopticon to Plexus: Analysing Colonial Labour and Migration in 1820s NSW. *Labour History* 129, 119-144(2025).

DOI: [10.3828/labourhistory.2025.29](https://doi.org/10.3828/labourhistory.2025.29)

Schwarz, M., Maxwell-Stewart, H., Quinlan, M. 'Trouble on the Roads: Using Digital Techniques to Explore Convict Protest in Van Diemen's Land', *Labour History*, 129: 61-89.

<https://doi.org/10.3828/labourhistory.2025.27>

Byard, R. Kippen R., and Maxwell-Stewart, H. 'Overlaying in Colonial Tasmania: Revisiting The Templeman Hypothesis', *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* 2025, DOI: [10.1111/jpc.16586](https://doi.org/10.1111/jpc.16586)

Gibbs, M., R. Tuffin and D. Roe 2025 Unfree intersections: the study of Australia's convict past and the growth of the digital humanities. *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 40: 31-45.

Gibbs, M. and R. Tuffin 2025, The Archaeology of Industrial Productivity and Decline in the Port Arthur convict station landscape, 1853-77. *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*. DOI: 10.1007/s10761-024-00764-4

Tuffin, R., M. Gibbs and M. Nash 2024 *Maria Island: History and Landscapes 1825-1930*. Navarine Publishing: Hobart. ISBN: 978-0-6457086-3-9

McLean, M. A., Roberts, D. A., & Gibbs, M. 2024, Ghosts and the machine: testing the use of Artificial Intelligence to deliver historical life course biographies from big data. *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History* 57 (3), p.146-162
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01615440.2024.2398455>.

Gibbs, M. and R. Tuffin 2024 Carceral Time at Port Arthur and the Tasman Peninsula: An Archaeological View of the Mechanisms of Convict Time Management in a Nineteenth Century Penal Landscape. *Int J Histor Archaeol.* 28:8 56–881. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10761-024-00734-w>

Phillips, C. and M. Gibbs 2024 The Port Macquarie Settlement, New South Wales, 1821-1847: interconnections within landscapes of convict labour and industry. *Historical Archaeology* 58: 103–12. doi.org/10.1007/s41636-024-00496-6

D'Gluyas, C., Tuffin, R., Gibbs, M. and D. Roe 2024 At the Edge of Space: the Archaeology of Boundaries within a Landscape for Young Convicts. *Int. J. Histor. Archaeol.*
doi.org/10.1007/s10761-024-00730-0

O'Keefe, S., Allen, M, Maxwell-Stewart, H and Quinlan, M. 'Alcohol, work and Play in Convict Australia', *Labour History*, 127 (2024): 145-169. [10.3828/labourhistory.2024.33](https://doi.org/10.3828/labourhistory.2024.33)

CALL FOR PAPERS

If you would like to have a story featured in the June newsletter please reach out to Hamish and Jenny at editorDHnews@une.edu.au. Submissions due by 31st May 2026.