A COMMONWEALTH OF THIEVES: AUSTRALIA AS A CONVICT COLONY

A COMMONWEALTH OF THIEVES:
AUSTRALIA AS CONVICT COLONY

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A COMMONWEALTH OF THIEVES: AUSTRALIA AS CONVICT COLONY

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THE INTERNATIONAL NO. 1 BESTSELLER

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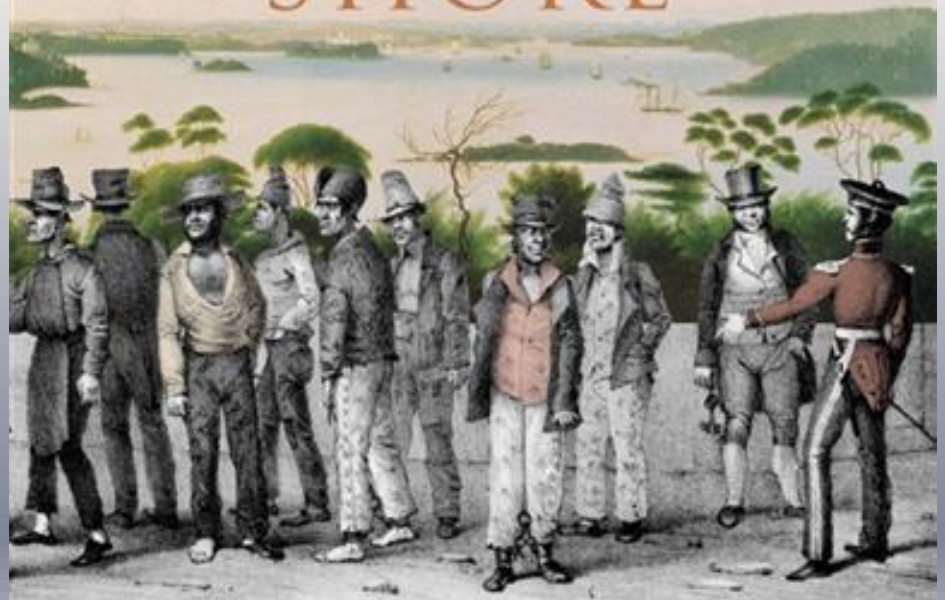
THE FATAL SHORE

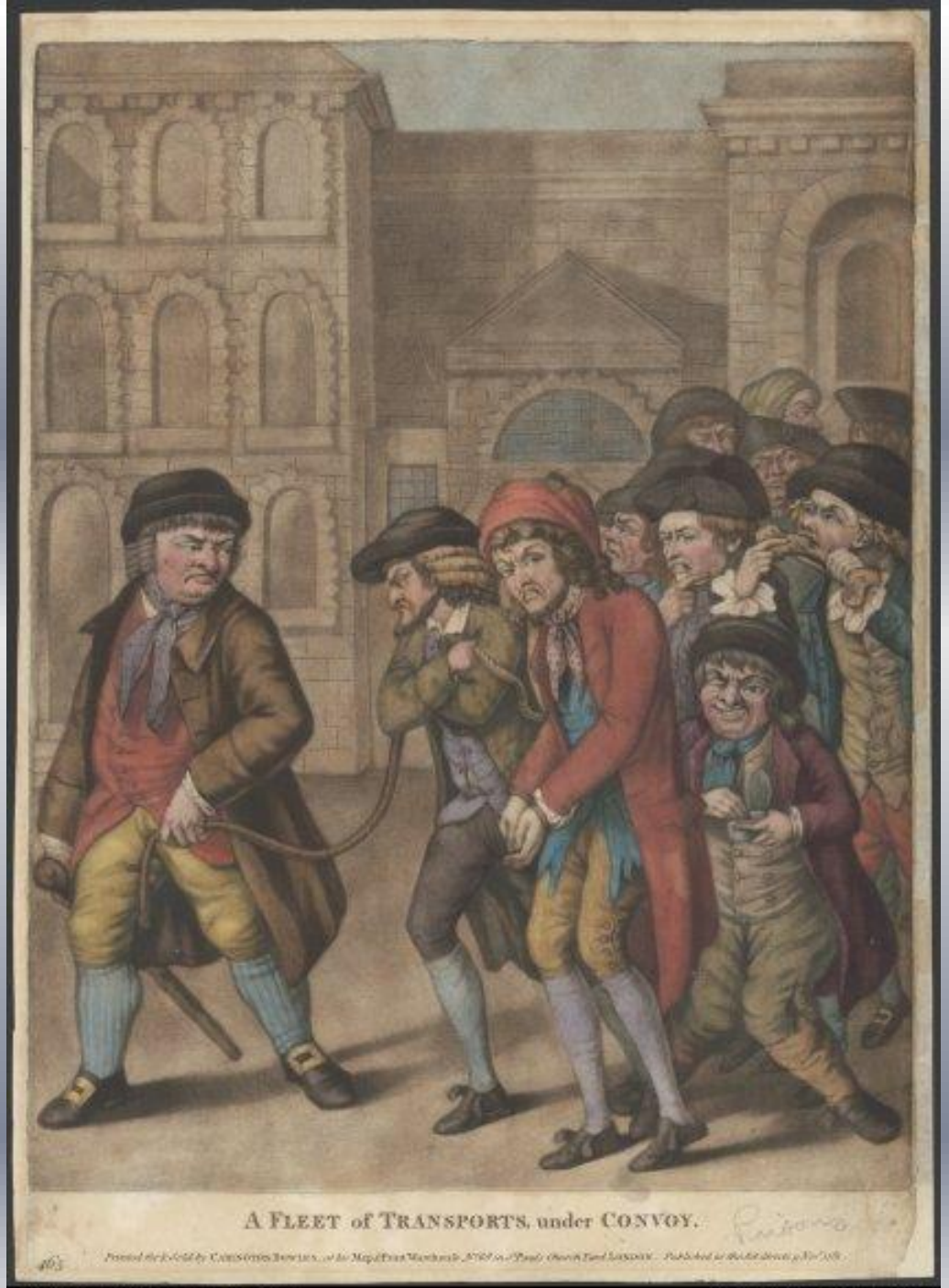


'An extraordinary, vivid yet authentic account of the birthpangs of a nation. A work of real distinction' Philip Ziegler

The ruins of the penitentiary at Port Arthur in Tasmania

THE LANDING OF CAPTAIN COOK AT BOTANY BAY 1770

AUSTRALIA



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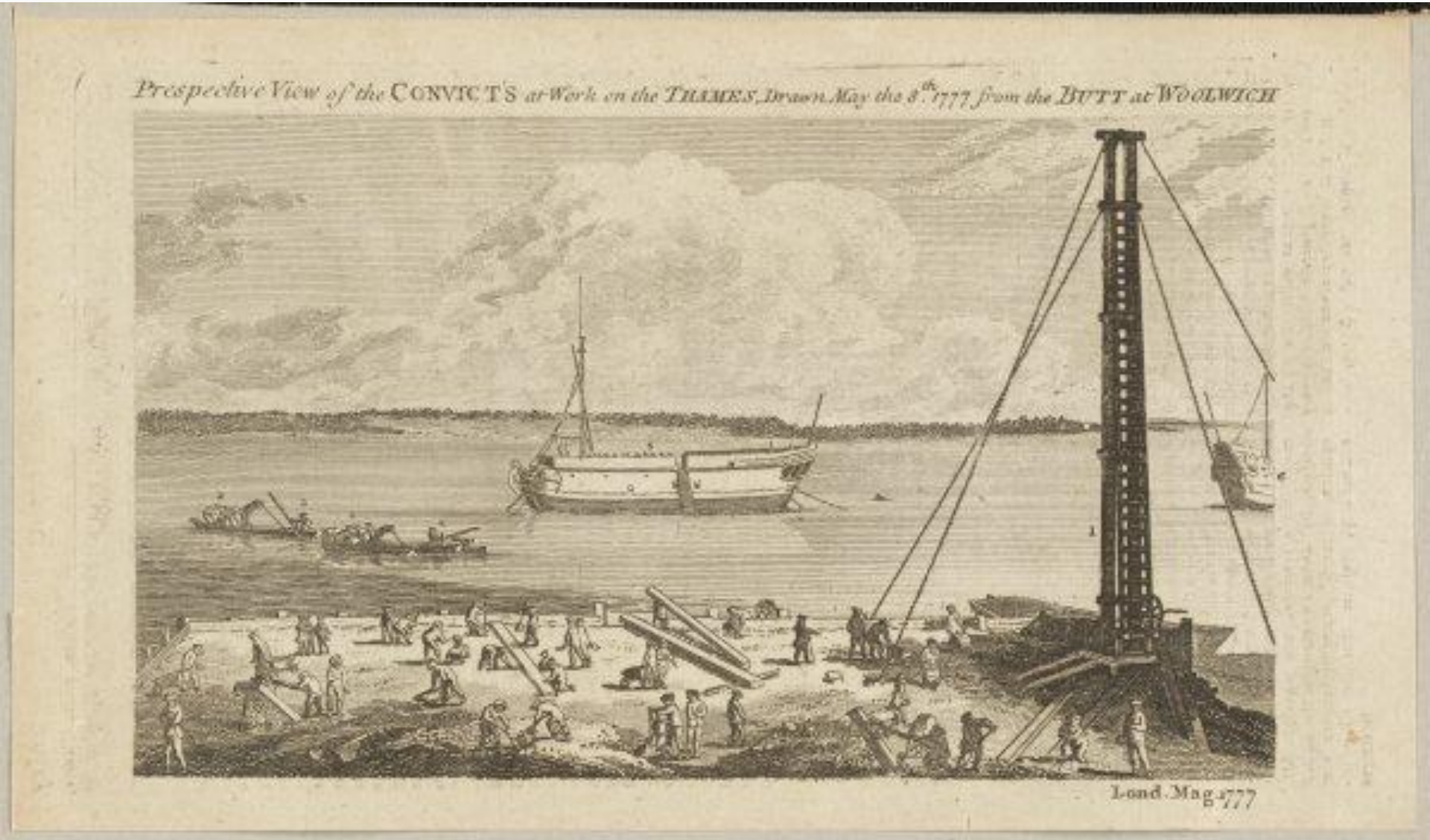
Transportation As Criminal Punishment

- Its formal origins as a system began with the 1597 “Acte for Punyshment of Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars.”
- From 1618, felons were transported to the Thirteen Colonies.
- An act of 1717 authorized the transportation of minor offenders to 7 years in America and those with commuted death sentences to 14 years.
- In the next six decades, 40,000 would be transported to the Thirteen Colonies.
- The outbreak of the American Revolution ended the flow.



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Convicts employed from the hulks on the Thames in 1777

Searching For Alternative Locations

- A 1779 Parliamentary committee was set up to determine where transportees might be sent.
- Joseph Banks spoke in glowing terms of Botany Bay as a possibility.
- The first proposal considered was Lemane, an island 400 miles up the Gambia River in West Africa.
- The vote went to Das Voltas Bay on the southwest coast of Africa, before surveyors who were sent in 1785 returned with negative judgments about the climate and geography.

Captain

Arthur Phillip –

The commander of the First Fleet and the first governor of New South Wales

Thomas Rowlandson,

“Convicts Embarking For Botany Bay”

THE FIRST FLEET IN SYDNEY COVE, JANUARY 27, 1788

An oil painting by John Hunt.

The First Fleet, in command of Captain Arthur Phillip, H.N., sailed from England in May, 1787. Phillip, in the armed tender Supply (a brig), entered at Botany Bay on January 18, 1788, and the other ships on the 19th and 20th. Botany proving a dreary waste, Phillip set out with three longboats on the 21st for Port Jackson, which Captain Cook had sailed past 18 years before. The 21st is first a romantic and historic date. On that day 150 years ago white men made the passage of the Heads for the first time. Aborigines were on the cliffs crying "Warra! Warra!" — "Begone! Begone!" Enraptured by the wonderful harbour, Phillip returned his Fleet. On the 23th he returned to the Supply to Port Jackson. On the 24th the rest of the Fleet followed. Some of them anchored in the stream, but on the 27th all moved into Sydney Cove. One carrier drawn—from an elevated point—the Fleet on that day. All included, about 1063 people came with the Fleet, and were concerned in the birth of British settlement in Australia. . . . . 7. Details of Pitman: In the left corner is the site of Fort Macquarie, and up left the Tank Stream flowing into the Cove. The Rocks area commands the landscape with its extreme right extending towards Dawes Point. Over the heights is Goat Island — with Balmain beyond — being Bull's Head, across the stream. In the little bay beyond the Scene is the site of Flood's Wharf. . . . . A diagram showing each dial is on another page.

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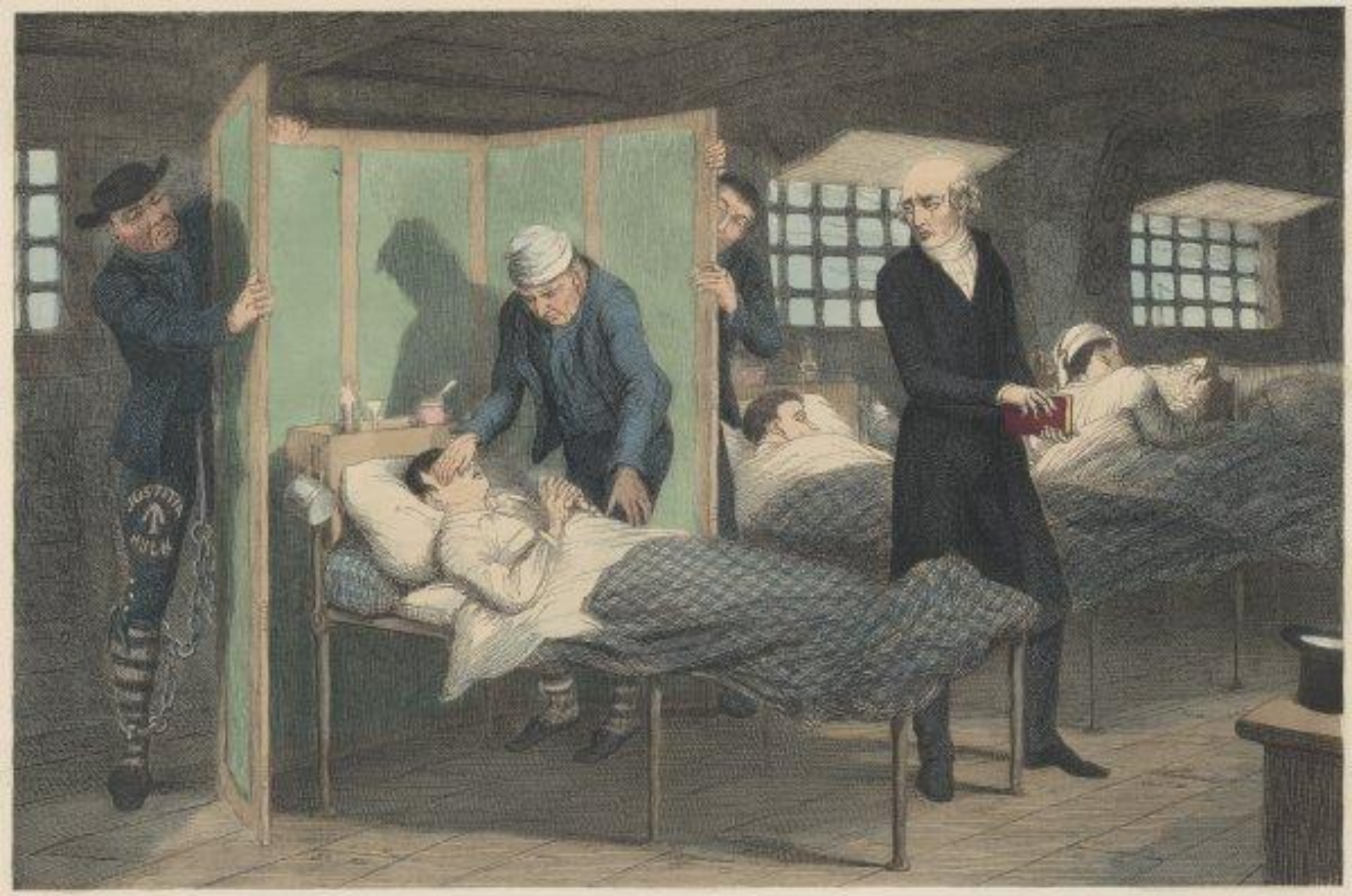
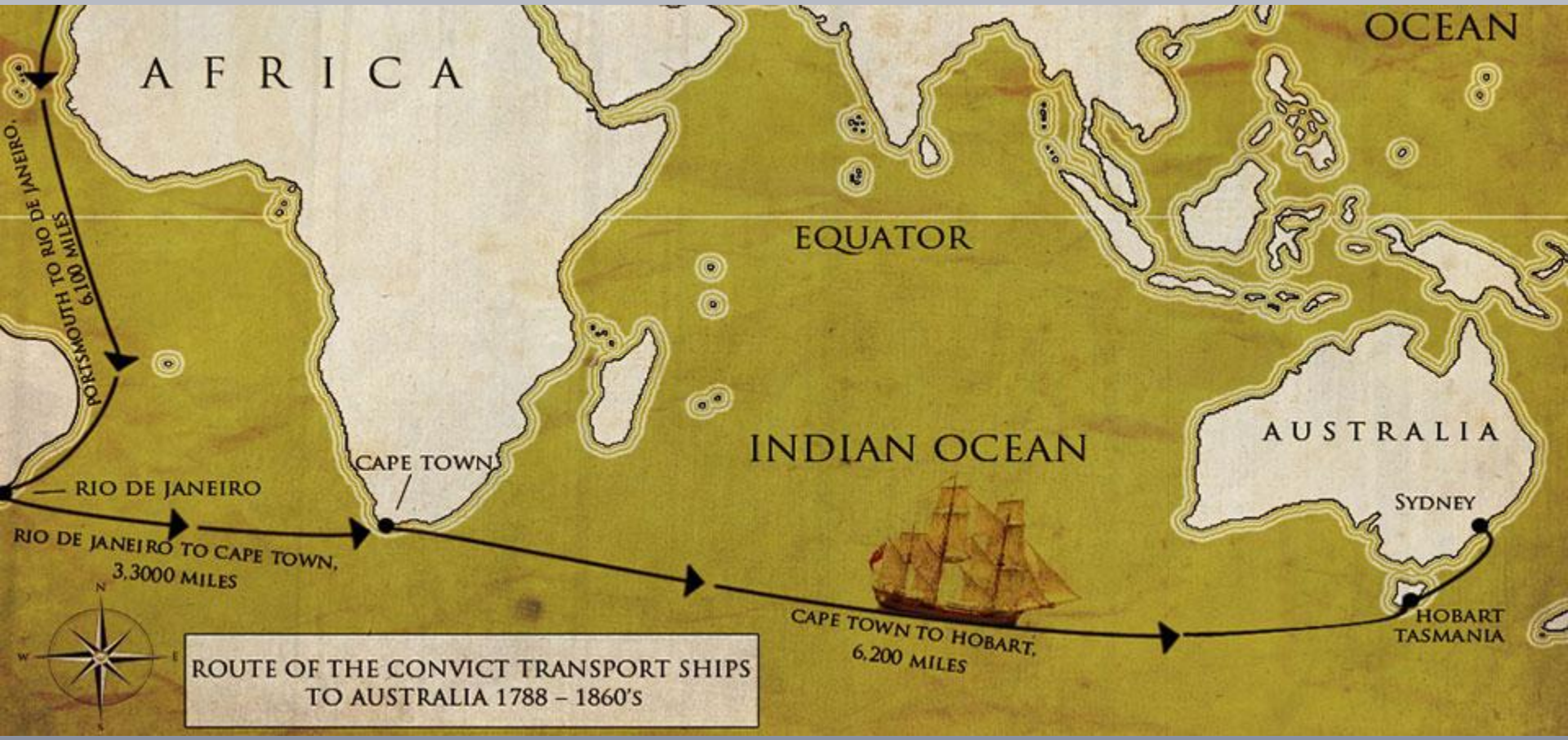


Death on the convict ship “Justitia” in the 1830s

The First Fleet enters into Port Jackson on January 26, 1788

HUDSON


AFRICA
OCEAN
EQUATOR
INDIAN OCEAN
AUSTRALIA
PORTSMOUTH TO RIO DE JANEIRO, 6,100 MILES
RIO DE JANEIRO
CAPE TOWN
RIO DE JANEIRO TO CAPE TOWN, 3,3000 MILES
CAPE TOWN TO HOBART, 6,200 MILES
SYDNEY
HOBART TASMANIA
ROUTE OF THE CONVICT TRANSPORT SHIPS TO AUSTRALIA 1788 – 1860's

The Early Years (1789-1815)

- The vast majority of 187,000 convicts who were sent to Australia arrived after 1815.
- The long Anglo-French Wars between 1788 and 1815 delayed a full commitment to transportation as a penal strategy.
- By the end of 1800, only 42 ships had gone to Australia.
- The peace in 1815 would lead to a dramatic increase – the annual outflow rose to 2,000-3,000 in the years after the Congress of Vienna, and then peaked in the 1830s at around 5,000 convicts per year.

A British cartoon mocking the first convict settlers

Australia After The Phillip Years

- When Arthur Phillip returned to England in 1792, the colony temporarily was in the hands of the military officers of the New South Wales Corps.
- The officers redirected the convicts to private farms.
- The economy improved significantly, with many convicts and ex-convicts involved in the new trading activities.

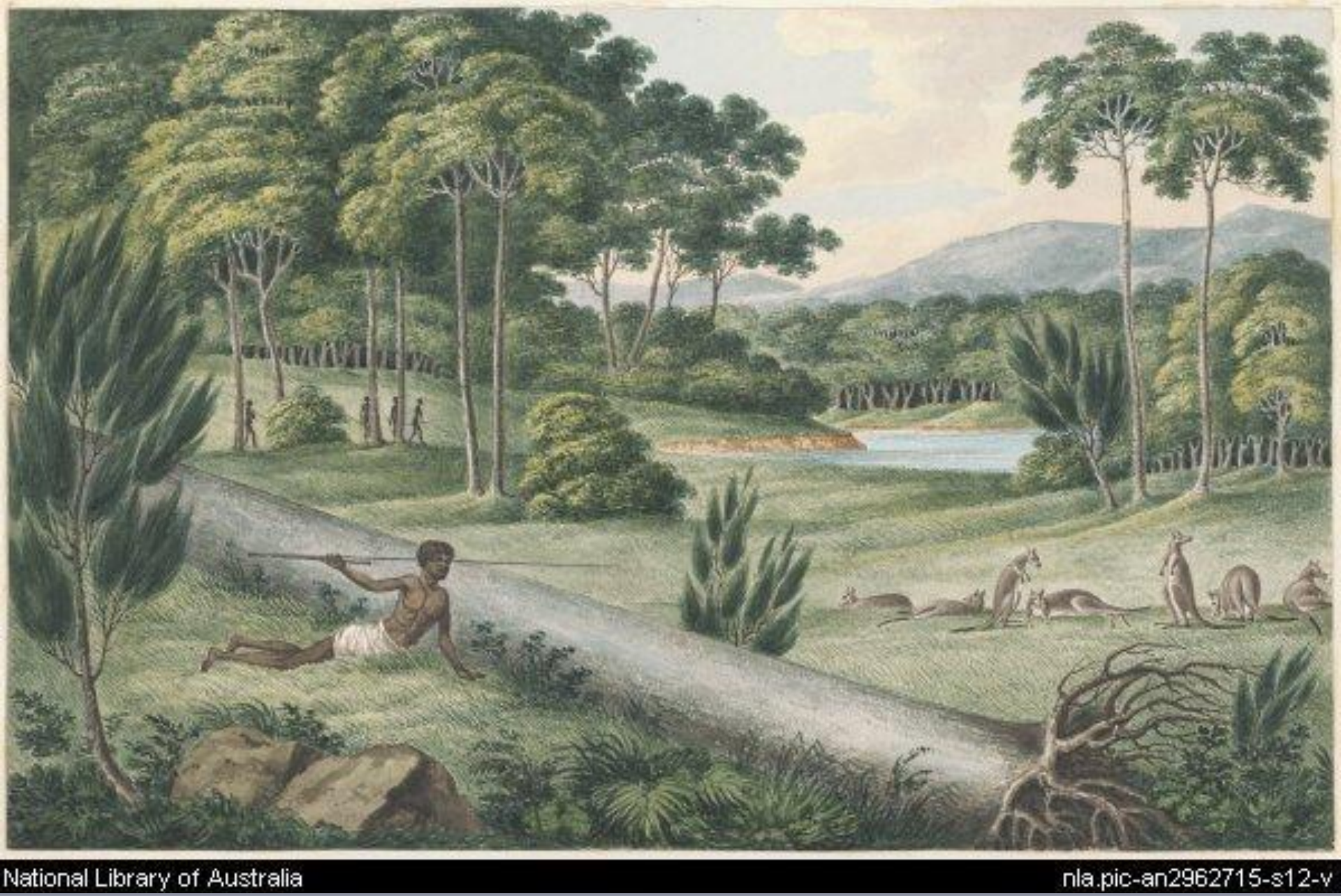
MAJOR GENERAL
LACHLAN MACQUARIE
1810 - 1821

Edward Charles Close's representation of early Australians (c. 1817)

Governor Philip King (1800-1806)

He introduced the ticket-of-leave system to Australia, the forerunner of parole

An 1872 representation of the Cook expedition landing at Botany Bay



Aborigines Hunting Kangaroos, Joseph Lycett (c. 1817)

Aboriginal-Settler Relations In New South Wales

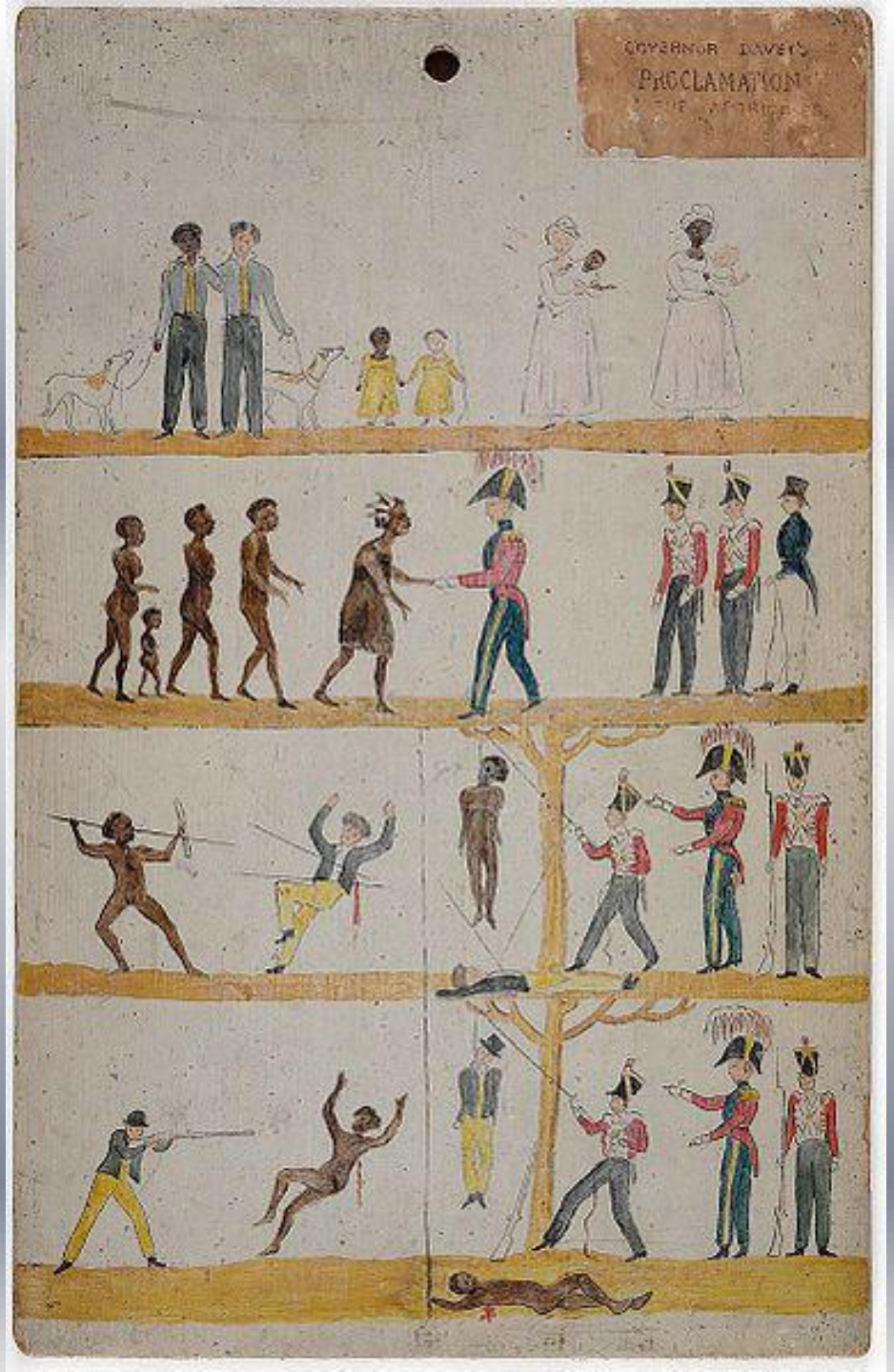
- When the First Fleet arrived, there were perhaps 500,000 Aborigines in Australia, though the estimates vary widely.
- The density of local populations was higher on the coast.
- There were perhaps 500 tribes at the time of the European invasion, each linked together by common religion, by language and by an intricate web of family relations.
- Smallpox and other epidemic diseases broke out soon after the British arrived.

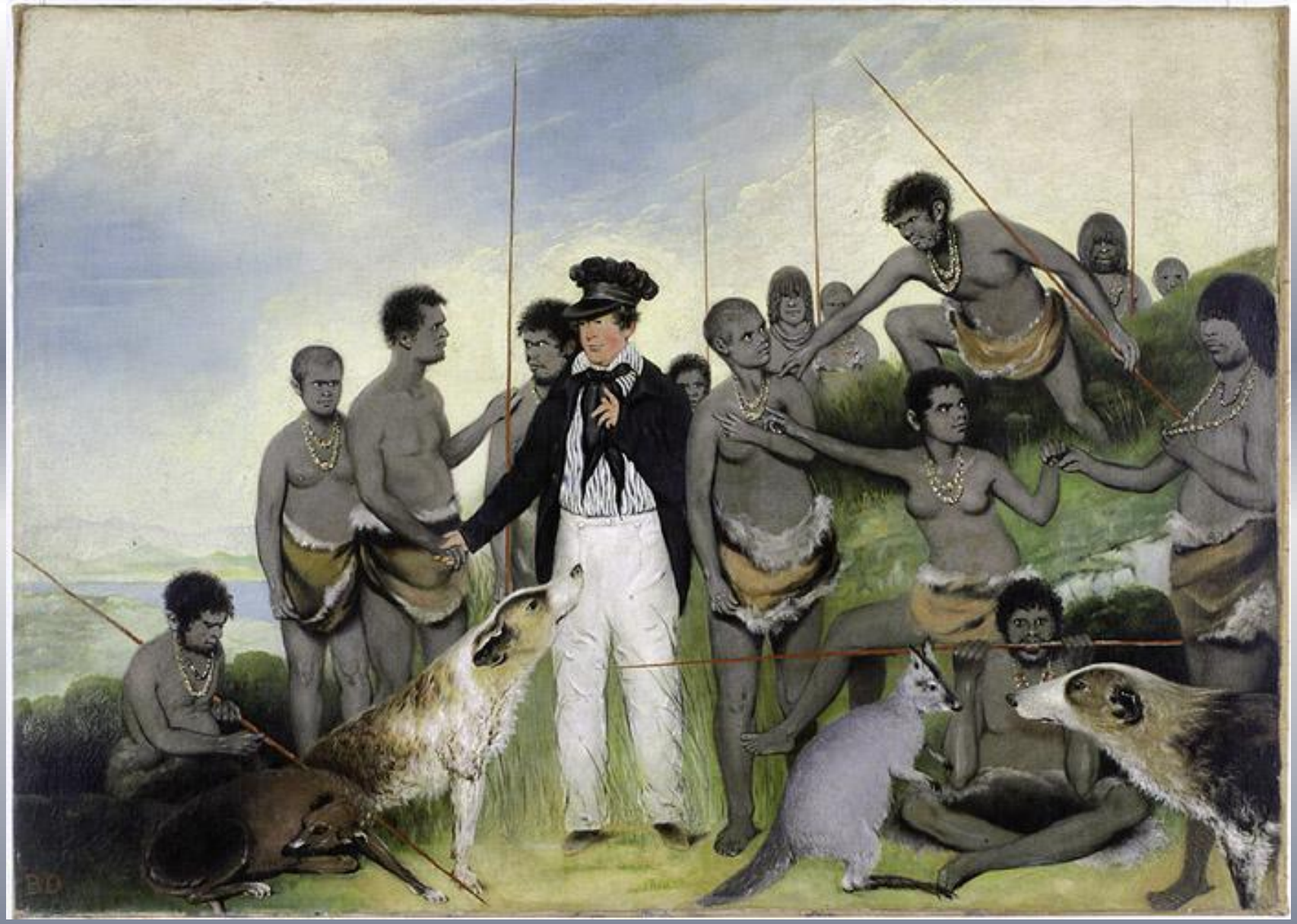
The Sydney Opera House is on the site of the old homestead of Bennelong

Bennelong accompanied Phillip back to England and spent 2 ½ years there. He would die in 1813 a broken man back in Sydney about the age of 50.

Tasmanian Aborigines portrayed in 1827

A notice-board from Governor George Arthur promising equal justice to blacks and whites alike, addressed to Aborigines (c. 1828).



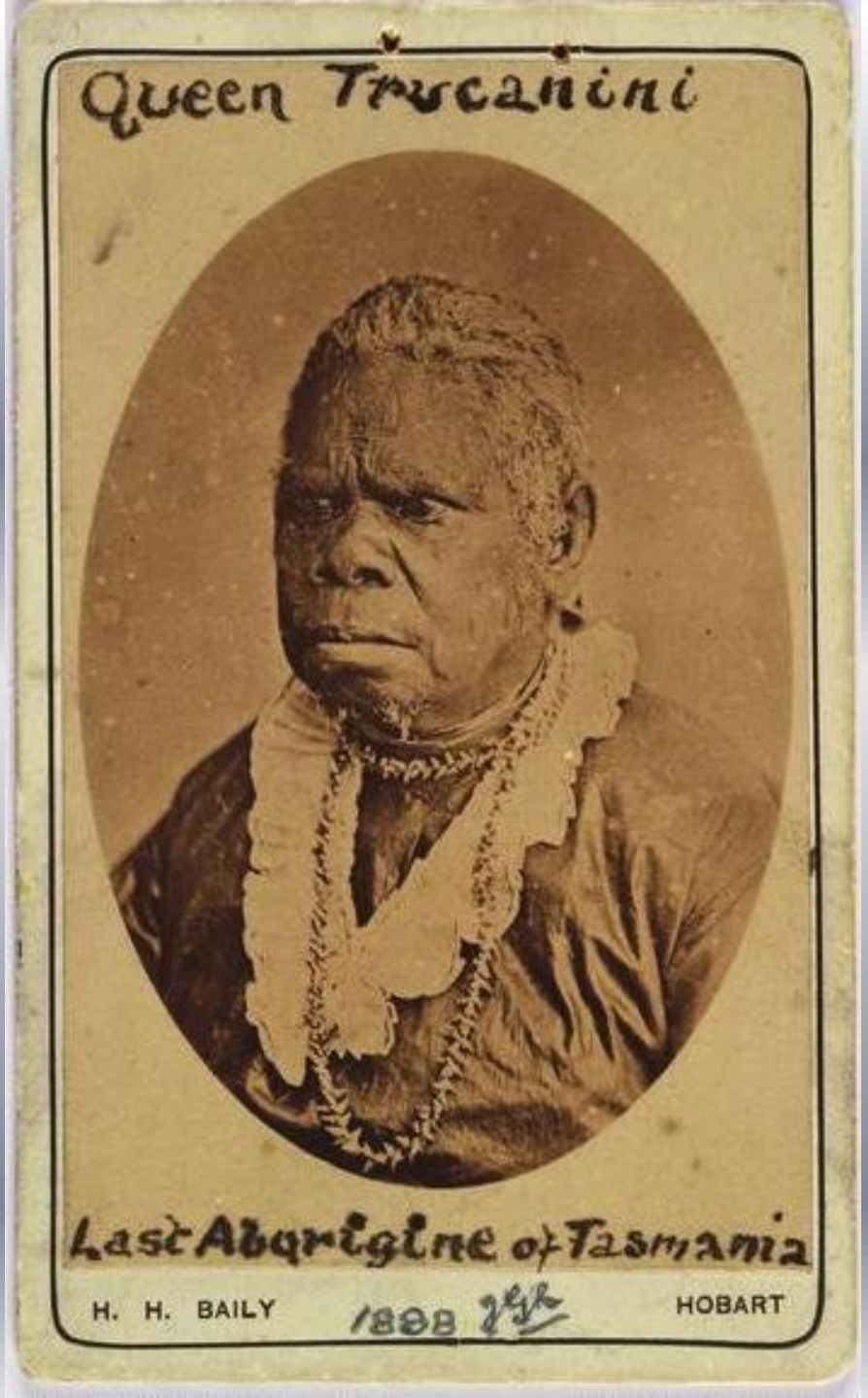


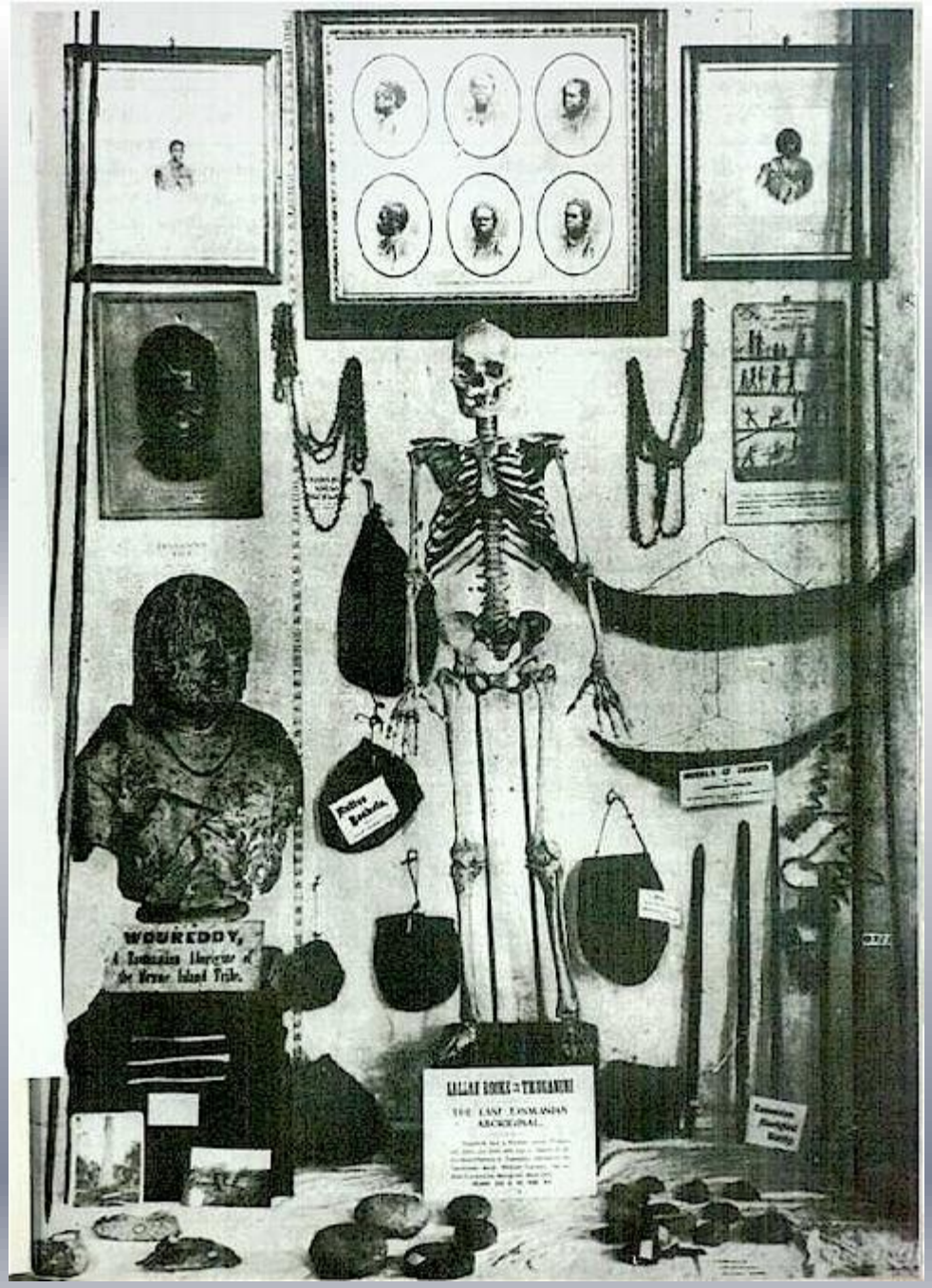
Benjamin Duterrau, “The Conciliation,” (1840)

The artist presents George Augustus Robinson as a benevolent figure.

Robinson would be the key figure in relocating the remaining Tasmanian Aborigines to Flinders Island

These four Tasmanians photographed in the 1860s were described by whites as the last four remaining.


Queen Truganini
Last Aborigine of Tasmania
H. H. BAILY
1888
HOBART



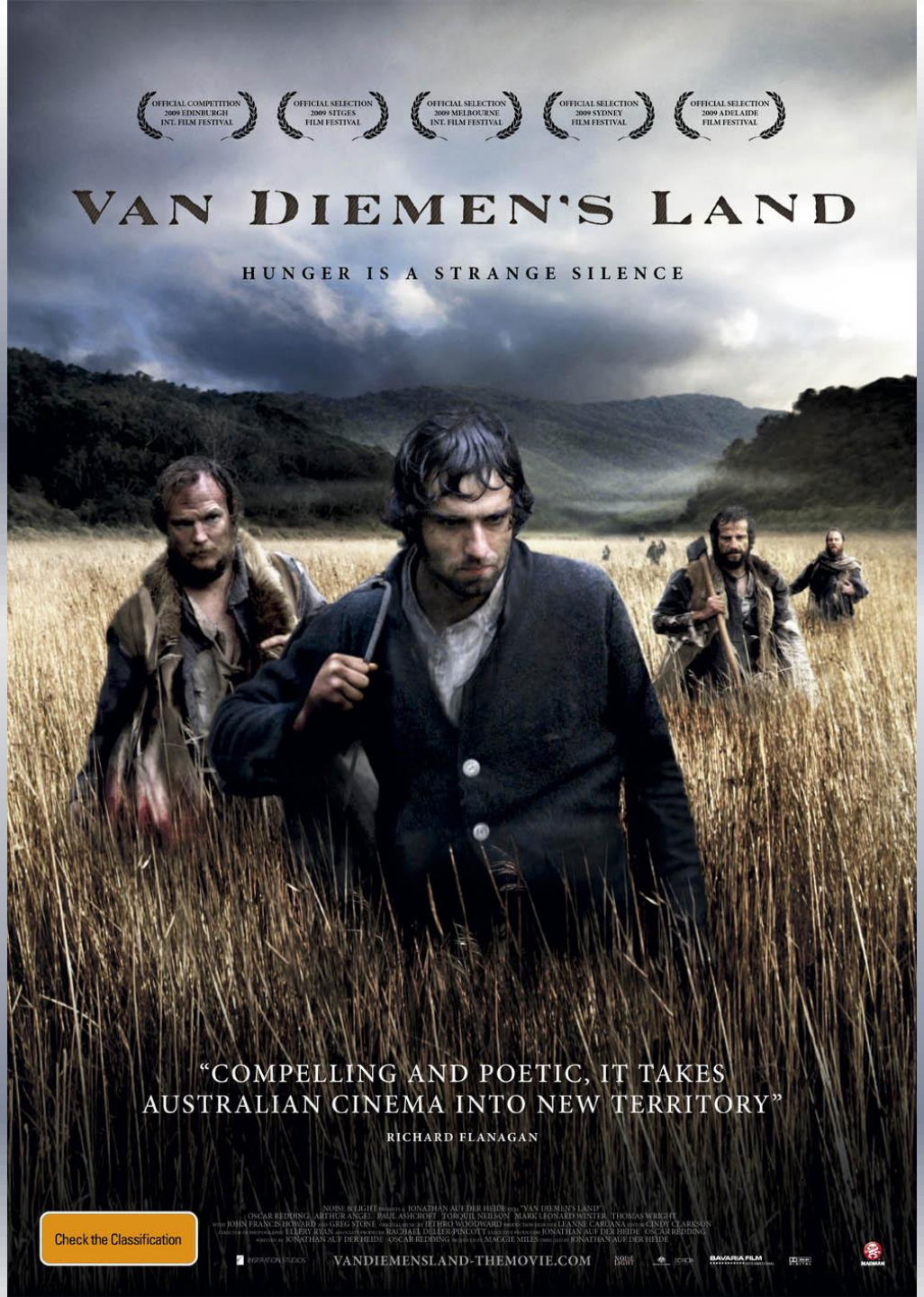
The skeleton of Trucanini on display in 1905 in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

Sotheby's withdrew busts of Trucanini and her husband Woureddy from a scheduled auction in 2009.

Bolters And Bushrangers

- In Australia, it was relatively easy to escape but very difficult to survive.
- In the early years, most of the runaways or “bolters” went inland.
- The fantasy of escape to China was a feature of the first decade or two of transportation.
- The first large group of “Chinese travelers” took off from Rose Hill in November 1791.
- In 1803, 15 Irish made a run for China from Castle Hill.
- In time, the bolters would become transformed into an Australian icon – the Bushranger.

Romola Garai
Jack Davenport
Alex O'Loughlin
and Sam Neill
The Incredible Journey Of
MARY BRYANT
Crime
Punishment
Redemption
Heroism
THE COMPLETE
2-PART MINISERIES
DVD


OFFICIAL COMPETITION
2009 EDINBURGH
INT. FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2009 SITGES
FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2009 MELBOURNE
INT. FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2009 SYDNEY
FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2009 ADELAIDE
FILM FESTIVAL
VAN DIEMEN'S LAND
HUNGER IS A STRANGE SILENCE
"COMPELLING AND POETIC, IT TAKES
AUSTRALIAN CINEMA INTO NEW TERRITORY"
RICHARD FLANAGAN
Check the Classification
VANDIEMENSLAND-THEMOVIE.COM

The death portrait of Alexander Pearce

The skull of Alexander Pearce in the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia

Tasmanian Bushrangers

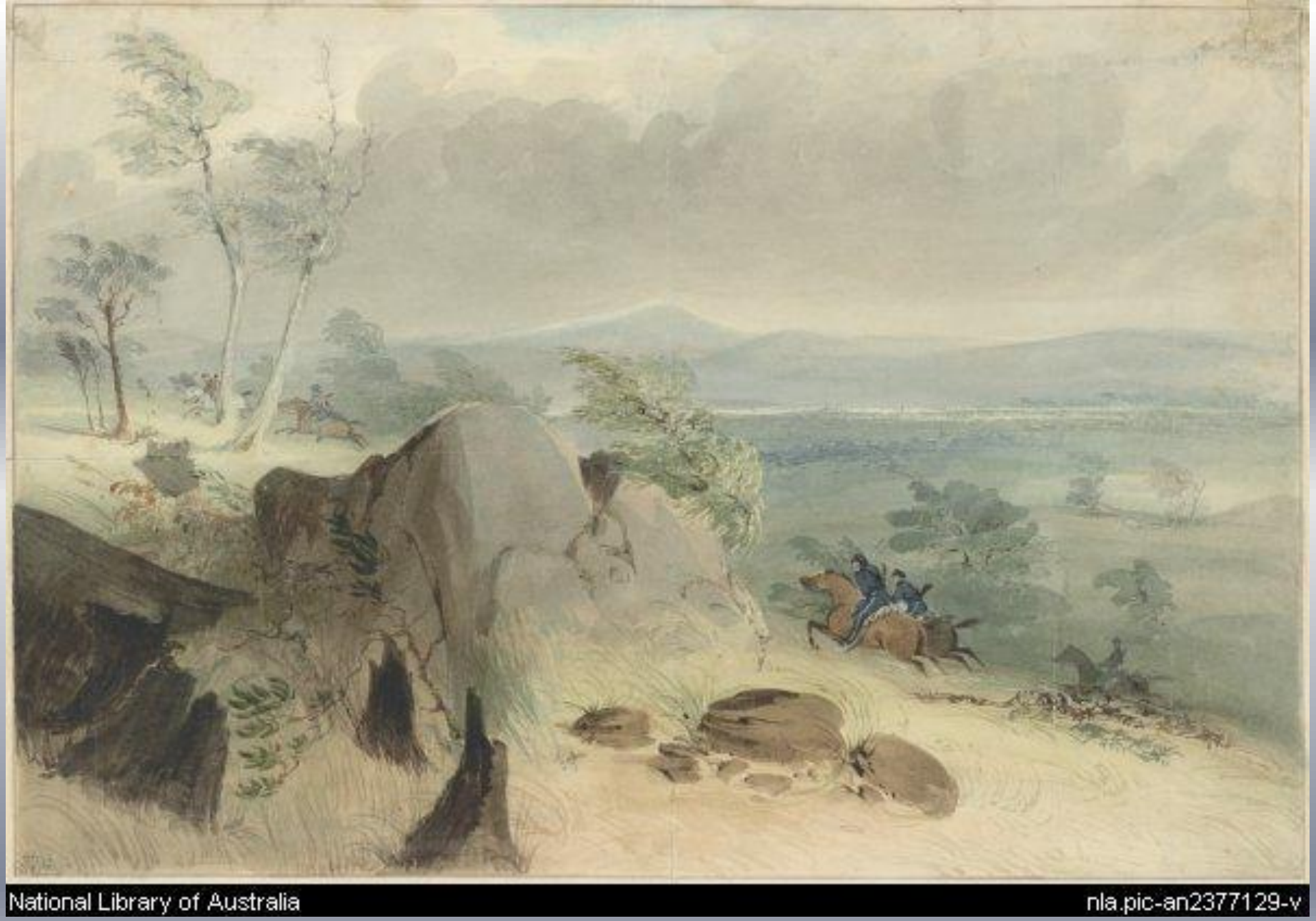
- It was in Van Diemen's Land that the legend of the bushranger first began to develop.
- Many Tasmanian bushrangers began as kangaroo hunters who formed gangs in the bush.
- Some settlers had a vested interest in protecting them and supported the rustling of sheep from wealthier farmers.
- Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Davey responded by proclaiming martial law and hanging executed thieves in chains on a small island off the Hobart docks.

Matthew Brady (1799-1826)

A notorious Van Diemen's Land Bushranger

Brady's Lookout in the Western Tiers of today's Tasmania

A representation of Bushrangers on the Mainland



Mounted police chasing suspected Bushrangers

BOLD JACK DONAHUE

There was a valiant highwayman of courage and renown who scorned to live in slavery or humble to the Crown;
In Dublin city fair and free where first his breath he drew 'twas there they christened him the brave and bold
Jack Donahue.

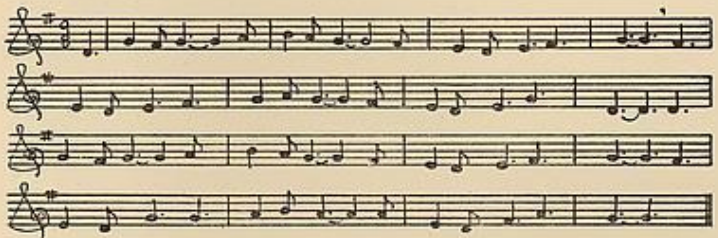
CHORUS
Come, all my hearties, we'll range the mountain side; together we will plunder, together we will ride.
We'll scour along the valleys and gallop o'er the plains, we scorn to live in slavery bowed down with iron chains

He scarce had been transported unto the Australian shore when he took to the highway as he had done before;
And every week in the newspapers was published something new concerning all the valiant deeds of bold
Jack Donahue

CHORUS
As Donahue was cruising one summer afternoon little was his notion that his death would be so soon,
When to his surprise the horse-police appeared in his view and in quick time they did advance upon Jack Donahue.
CHORUS
The sergeant of the horse-police discharged his carabine and called aloud on Donahue to fight or to resign.
"I'd rather range these hills around like wolf or kangaroo than work one hour for the government", cried bold
Jack Donahue.

CHORUS
Six rounds he fought the horse-police until the fatal ball which pierced his heart with cruel smart caused
Donahue to fall.
The sergeant and the corporal and all their cowardly crew, it took them all their time to fall the bold
Jack Donahue.

CHORUS
There were Freincy, Grant, bold Robin Hood, & Brennan & O'Hare, with Donahue the bushranger
none of them could compare.
And now he's gone to heaven I hope with the saints and angels too, may the Lord have mercy on the soul of
bold Jack Donahue.



Published by BANDICOOT BALLADS — John Manifold, Wynnum Nth Rd, Wynnum, Queensland
Printed by THE RAMS SKULL PRESS, Lording St, Lwr Ferntree Gully, Victoria
Lino-cut illustration R.G.Edwards

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Interior View of Cell House, new Illinois State Penitentiary at Stateville, near Joliet, Ill.—23

Jeremy Bentham As A Critic Of Transportation

- Bentham developed his version of the Penitentiary (the Panopticon) just as the plan to send convicts to New South Wales was being adopted.
- In 1802, he would write a pamphlet, “Panopticon Versus New South Wales.”
- He criticized transportation as expensive; as unpredictable in the punishment administered; as corrupted by the profit principle; and as too far removed from central control.

John Thomas Bigge

His 1819 report insisted transportation must become a fate to dread. He advocated drawing much sharper social and economic distinctions between convicts/ex-convicts and free emigrants through such reforms as keeping convicts out of towns; assigning them to hard labor under the more prosperous free emigrants; ending the practice of paying wages to convicts and of giving ex-convicts land at the end of their terms of service; and centralizing record-keeping.

Thomas Bribane

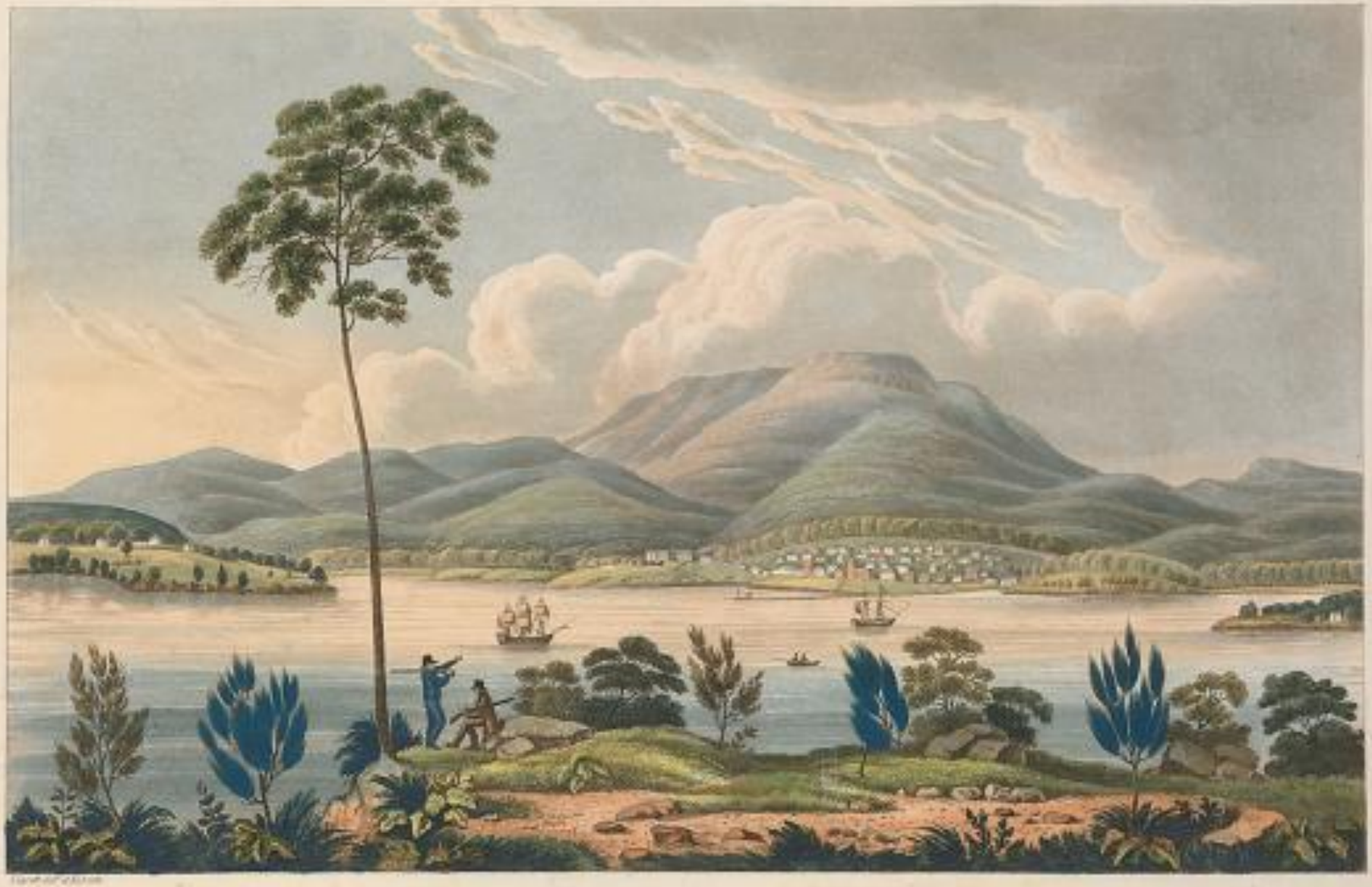
Governor of New South Wales (1821-1825)

Ralph Darling

Governor of New South Wales (1826-1831)

Reforms Of Governor Darling

- Beginning in 1827, each convict was given an identification number.
- He eliminated convict clerks in sensitive government offices and regularized ticket-of-leave practices.
- The Office of the Principal Superintendent of Convicts was established to process and record all convict matters.
- More oversight was instituted in regards to overseeing masters and refusing convicts to abusive or lax masters.



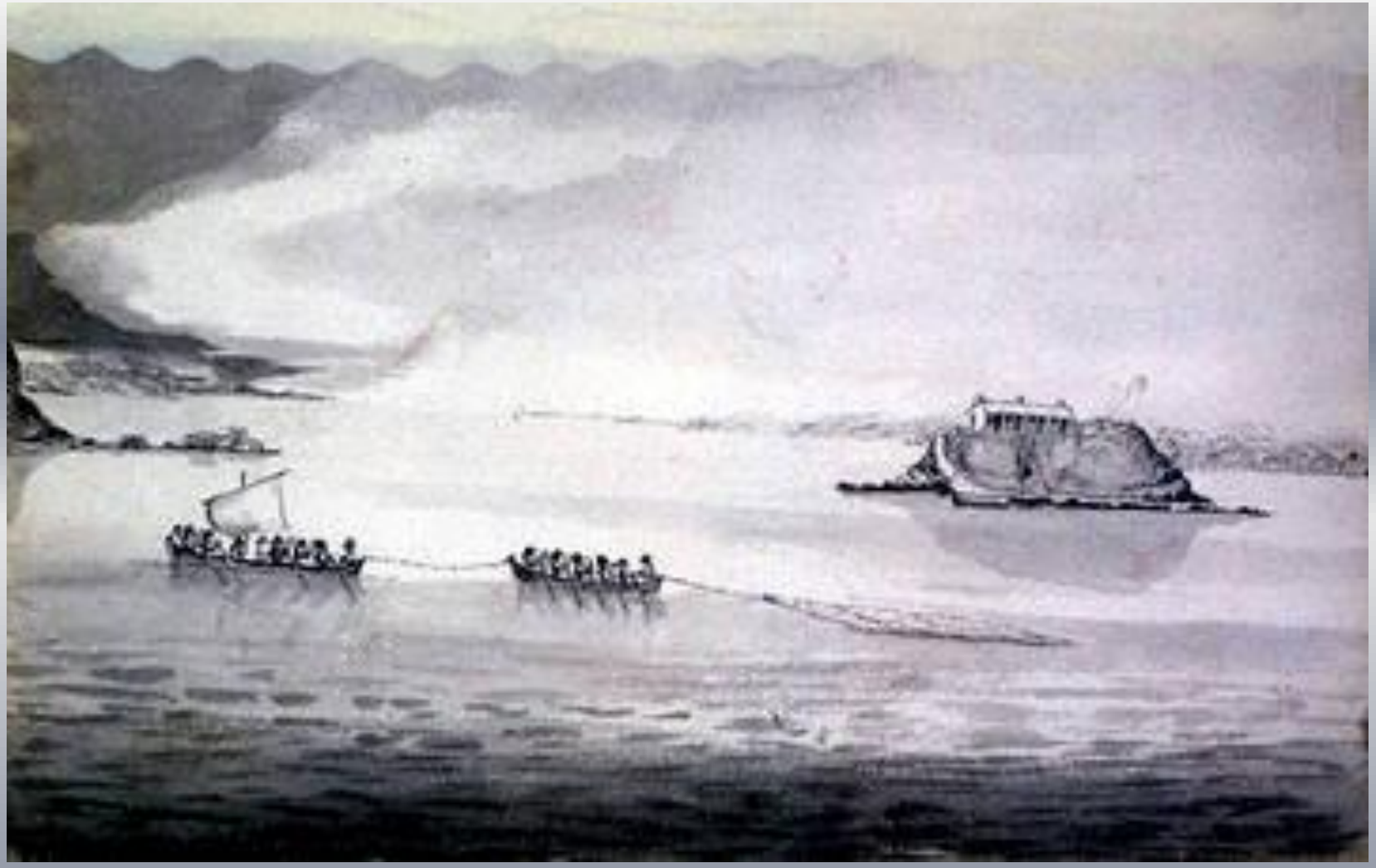
DISTANT VIEW OF HOBART TOWN,

Van Diemen's Land, from Bluffhead.

An early print of Macquarie Harbor, founded as a penal settlement in 1821

Frenchman’s Cap in Macquarie Harbor

Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbor



Grummet Island (c. 1824)

Van Diemen's Land Under Arthur (1824-1836)

- Described by Robert Hughes as a "God-bothering, blue-nosed wowser."
- He thought of Van Diemen's Land as a jail and thought any free people who lived there must put up with the inconveniences of a penal society – police, spies, travel passes, trade restrictions and a restricted press.
- He divided Van Diemen's Land into 9 police districts and gave his magistrates considerable power under his control.
- Convict assignments were heavily regulated.
- By 1830, his Black Books offered Arthur thorough files on all inhabitants, convict and free.
- He established 7 levels of punishment.

GOVERNOR ARTHUR.

SUPPLEMENT.

GOVERNOR GEO. ARTHUR

Is Ordered HOME!

LORD GLENELG closes his Despatch as follows:—"I have felt it my duty, to advise his Majesty, that you should be IMMEDIATELY RECALLED; and I have to convey to you, his Majesty's commands, that, on receipt of this Despatch, you will, with as little delay as possible, repair to this Office. ("Signed) GLENELG."

TO-MORROW OUGHT TO BE A DAY OF GENERAL

THANKSGIVING!

For the deliverance from the iron-hand of GOVERNOR ARTHUR. We have now a prospect of breathing. The accursed gang of bloodsuckers will be destroyed, Boys will be seen no more upon Police Benches, to insult Respectable Men. Perjury will cease to be countenanced, and a gang of Felons will be no longer permitted to violate the

LAWS OF CIVILIZED SOCIETY.

COLONISTS,

The dismissal of Arthur from the Governorship of unhappy TASMANIA, is a BLESSING, that will be felt by the worthy, and be duly appreciated. The Impounding Law, which was made to benefit the great Members of Council, will be abolished. The Turkey and Persian Act will meet with the same fate; and the Acts of abomination practised by the hirelings, and secret emissaries of the Government, upon the People, will no longer be countenanced.

REJOICE!

FOR THE DAY OF

Retribution

HAS

ARRIVED.

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Port Arthur (pictured here in 1854)

Charles O’Hara Booth arrived at Port Arthur in 1833

Eaglehawk Neck as photographed in 1939

Bloodhounds on
Eaglehawke Neck
to prevent the
escape of convicts

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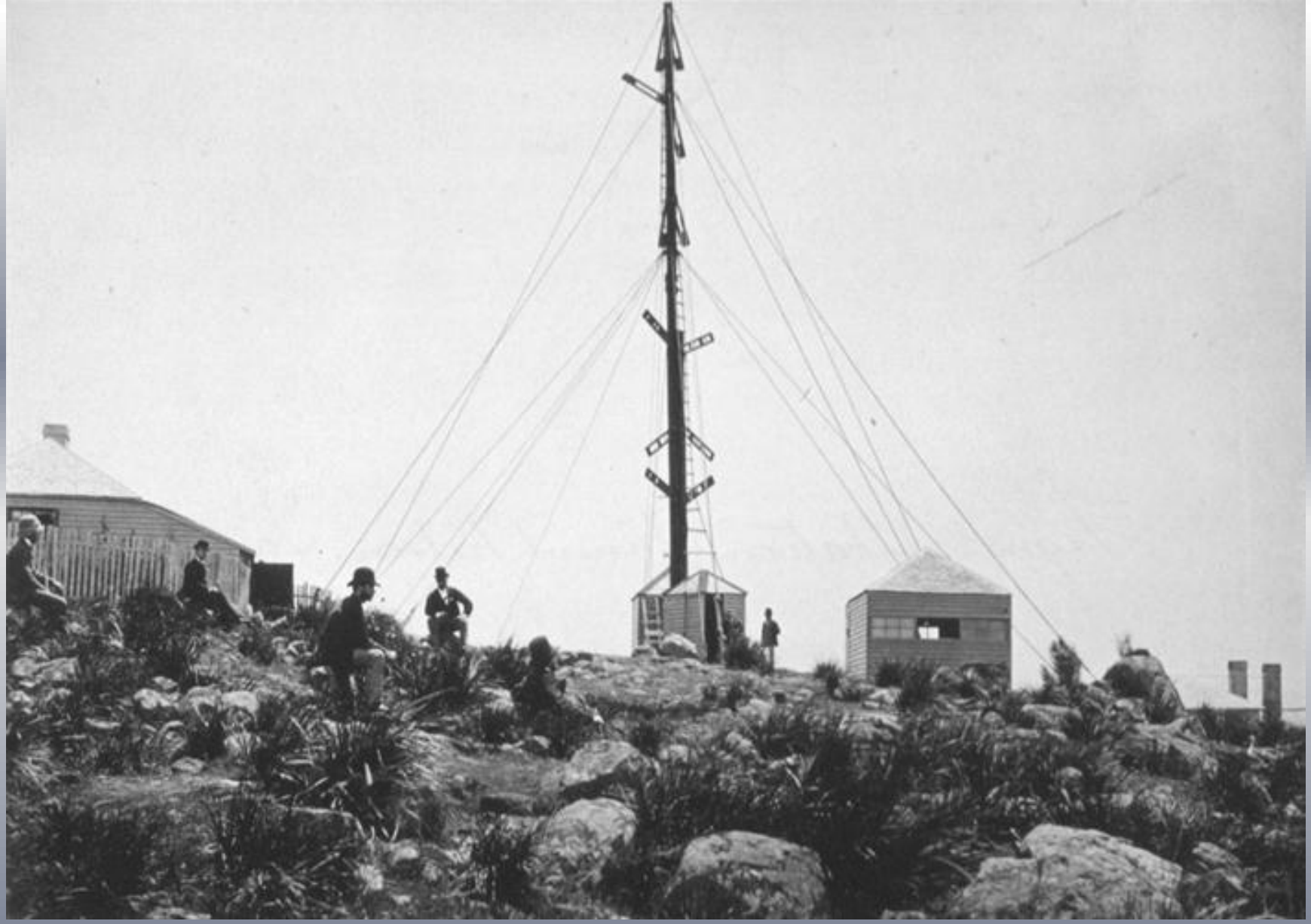

Part of Booth's signal system at Mt. Nelson

The remains of the coal operations at Port Arthur

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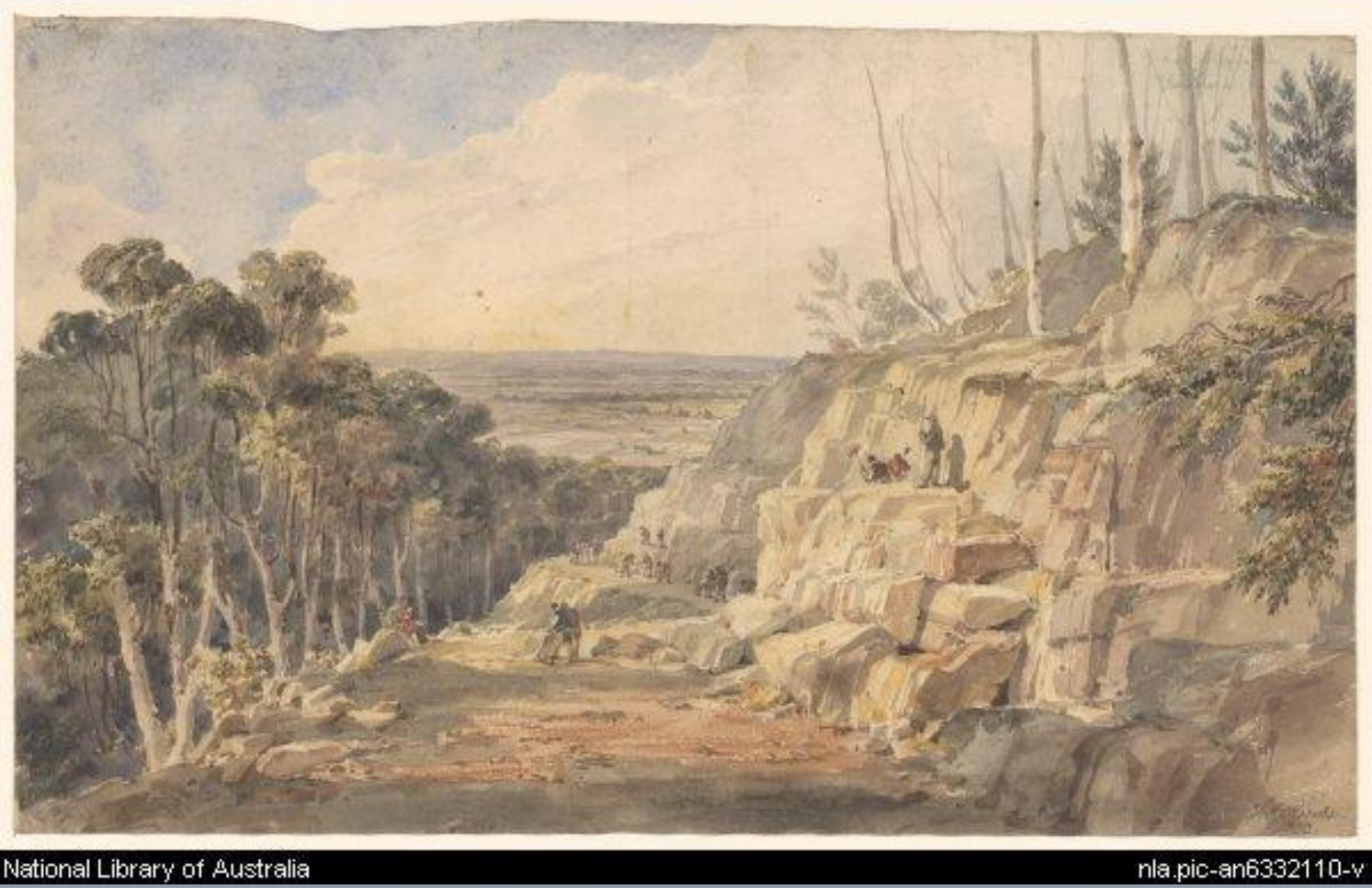
The beginnings of the convict tramway at Port Arthur

Point Puer

Places Of Dread In New South Wales

- New South Wales had its own penal settlements, at New Castle, Port Macquarie, Moreton, and Norfolk Island.
- As part of Governor Darling's reforms, he struggled to make these places more terrible and prison-like to deter convicts from further crime, just as the British government wanted New South Wales to be a fearful place that would help to keep its own population in order.
- He tried to stamp out private enterprise at the settlements.
- He created two categories of convicts and restricted the more desirable jobs to the members of the first class.

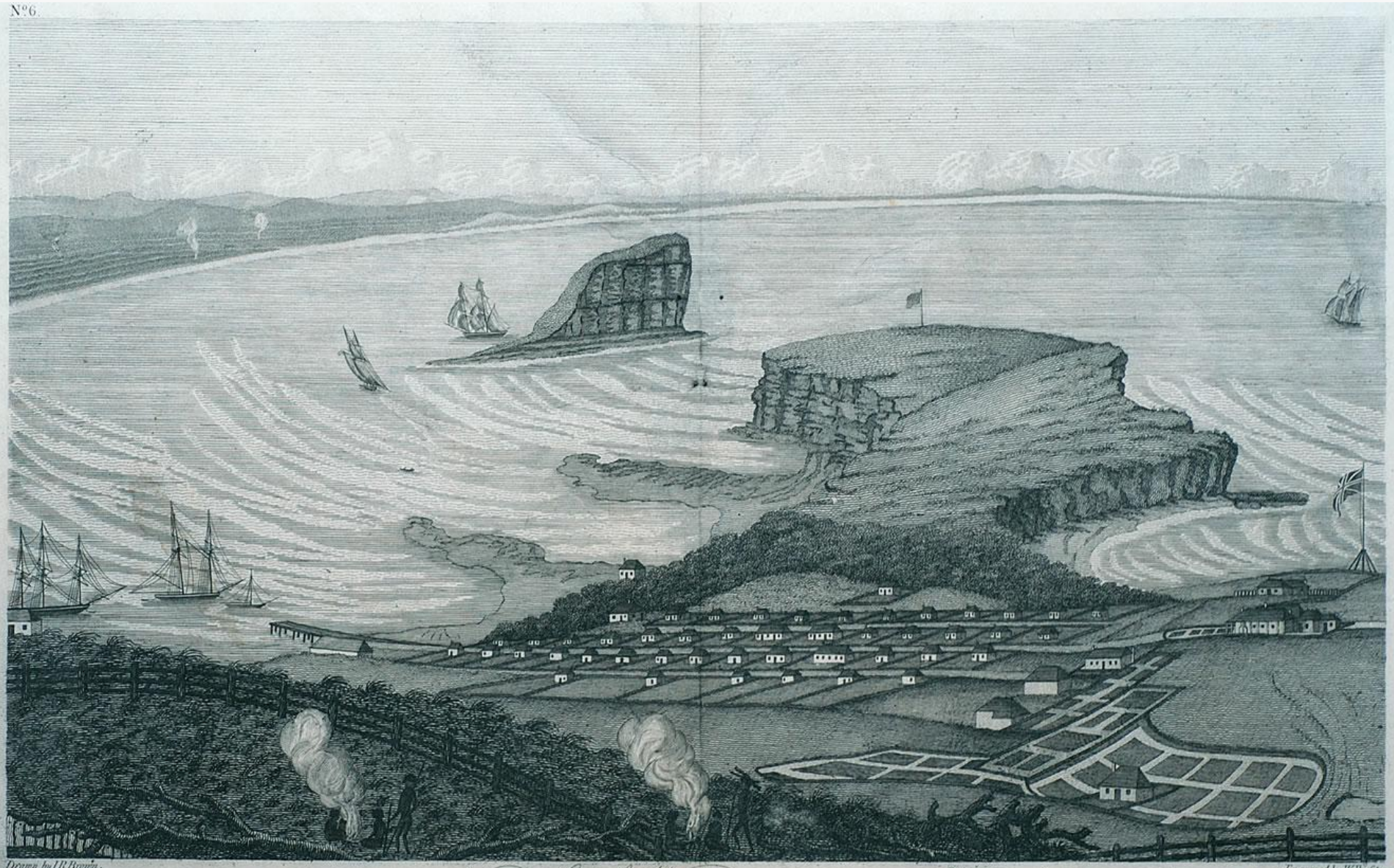
Convicts breaking stones during road-building (1826)



Building a road through the Blue Mountains (1833)

Richard Bourke

Governor of New South Wales (1831-1837)



Drawn by I.R.Browne. Engraved by W.Preston.

NEWCASTLE, *in New South Wales, with a distant View of* POINT STEPHEN.

Taken from Prospect Hille.

Dedicated to his Excellency Lachlan Macquarie, Esq.re Governor of New South Wales, &c. &c. &c.

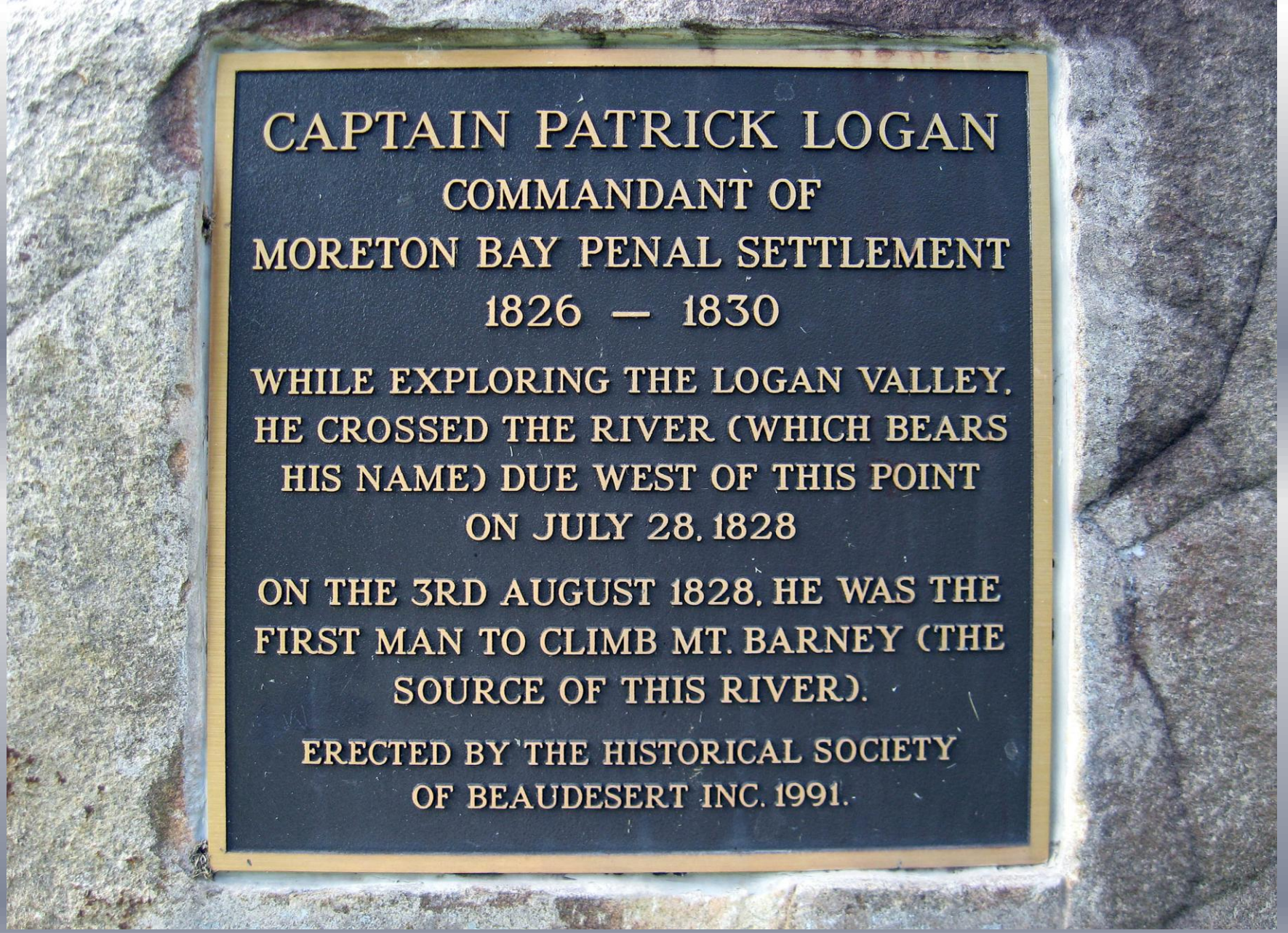
Published Nov.r 30th 1812, by A. West. Sydney.

Newcastle as represented by Joseph Lycett (c. 1818)

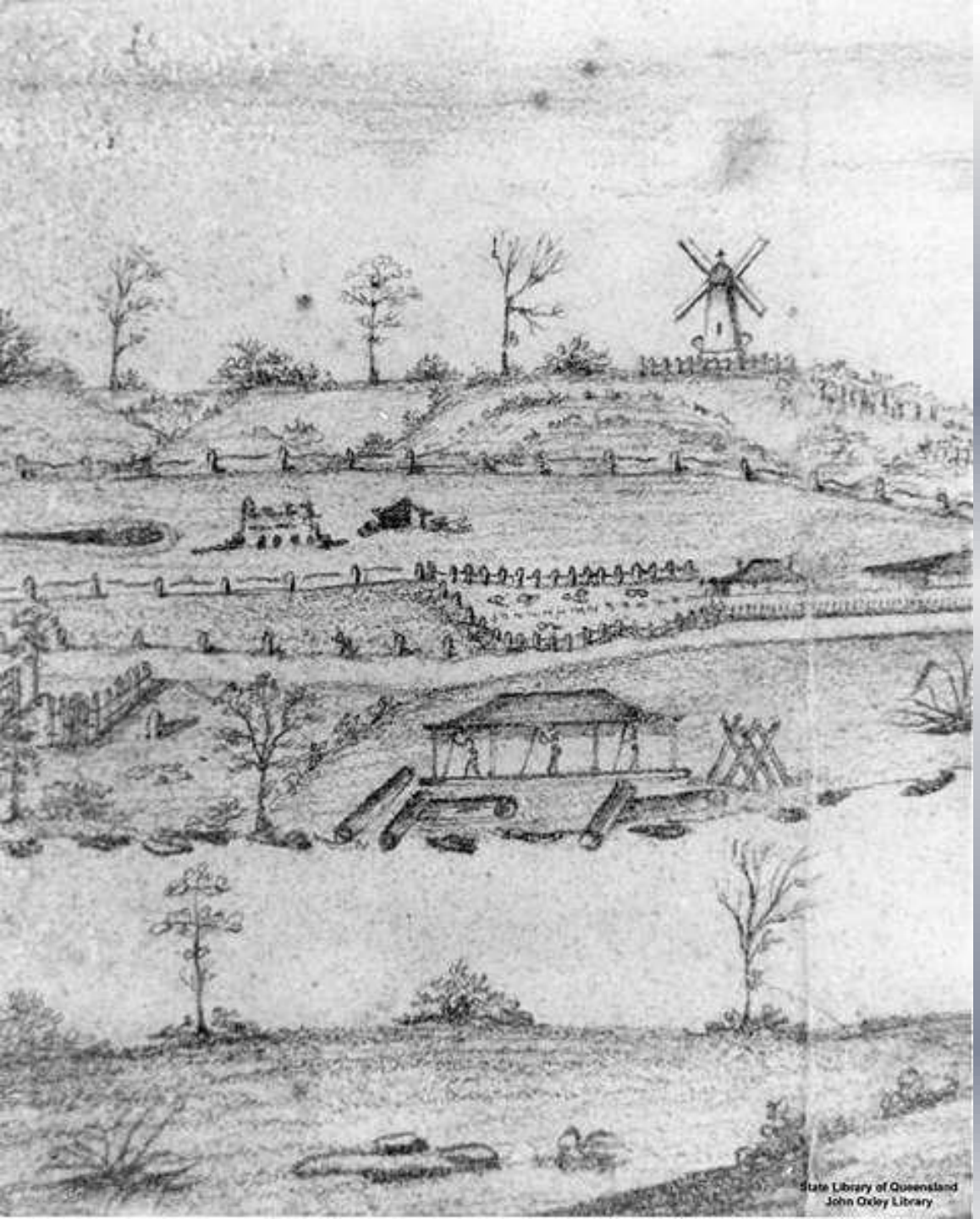
A very early print of Port Macquarie (1825)

Captain Patrick Logan

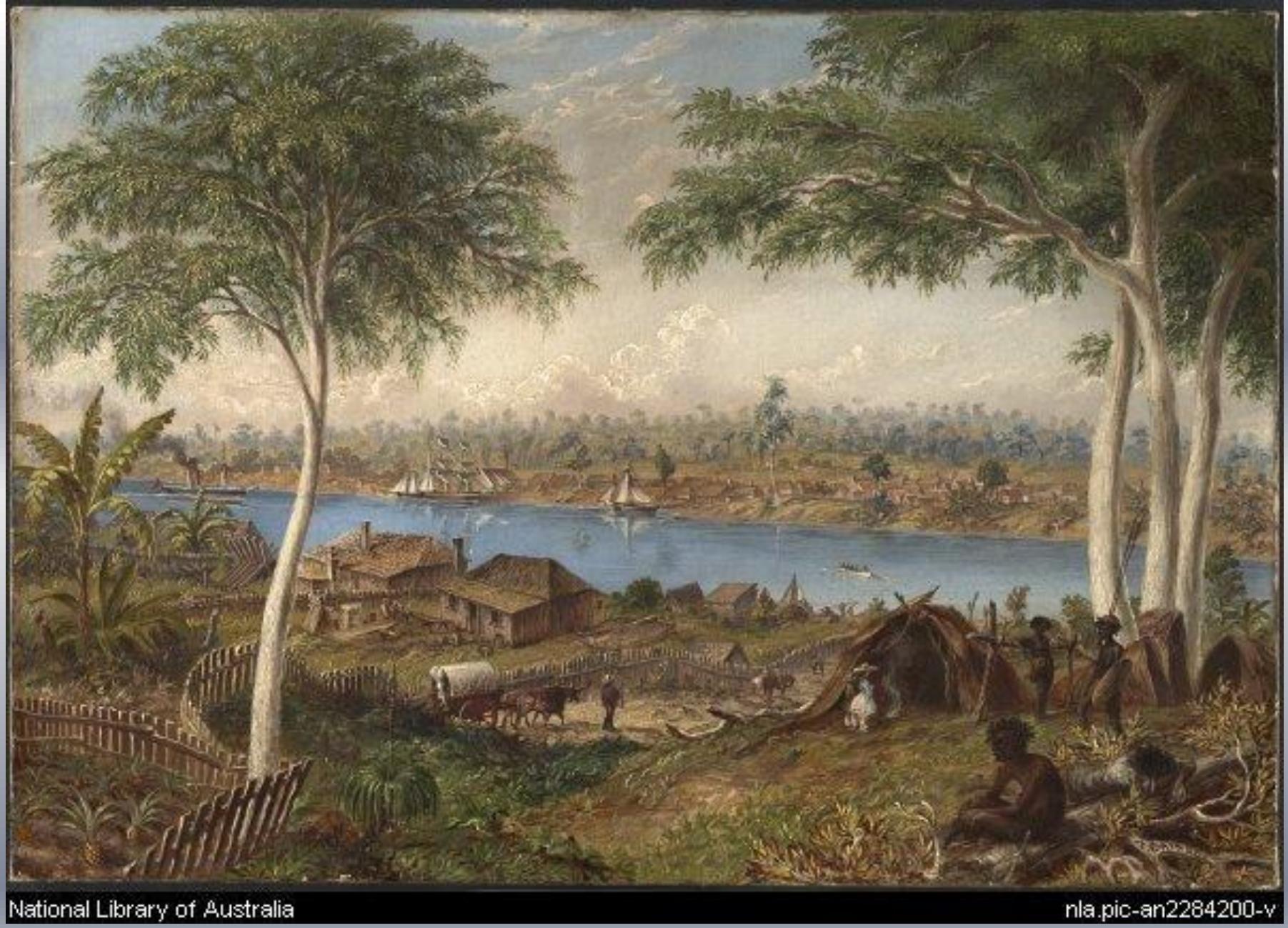
The notorious commandant at Moreton Bay (1826-1830)



Captain Logan Monument (Gleneagle)



Moreton Bay as represented by Henry S. Boucher Bowerman (c. 1835)

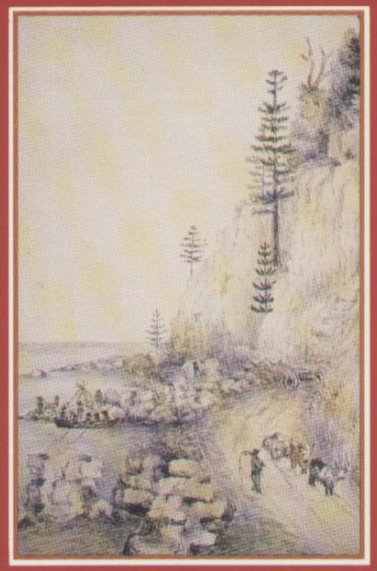


South Brisbane from the north shore of Moreton Bay (1868)

The Old Windmill in downtown Brisbane today

Western
Samoa
Papua
New
Guinea
Cook
Islands
Vanuatu
New
Caledonia
Australia
Norfolk
Island
New
Zealand

Norfolk Island, 1805

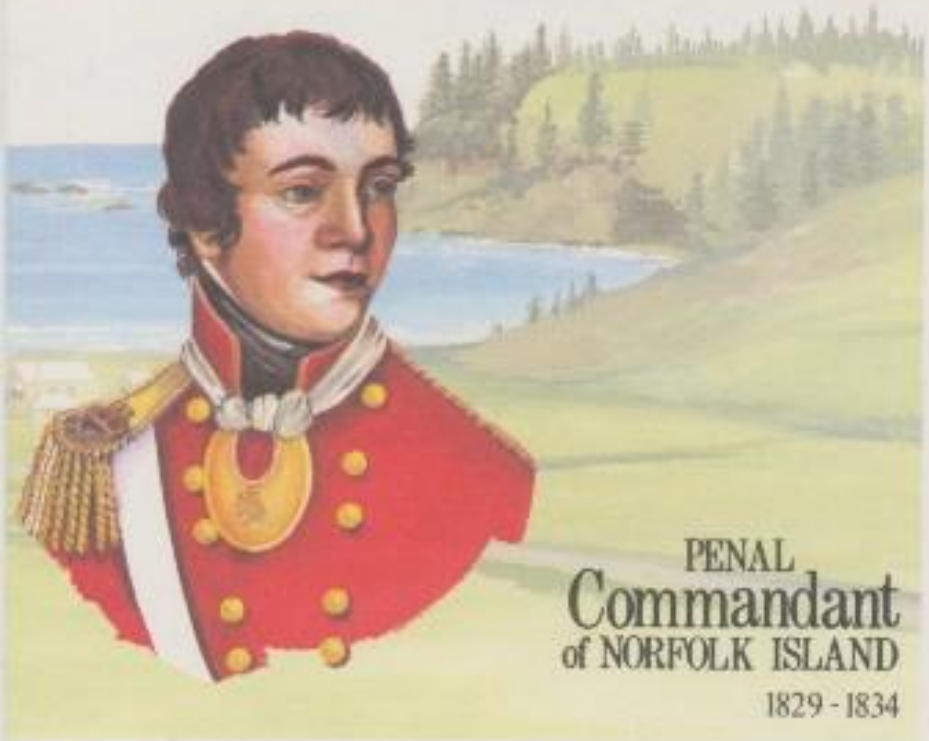


NORFOLK ISLAND

and its Second Settlement 1825 - 1855

Raymond Nobbs

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL
James Thomas Morisset



PENAL
Commandant
of NORFOLK ISLAND
1829 - 1834

The ruins of the jail on Norfolk Island

The ruins of the Gallows Gate at Norfolk Island (photographed 1946)

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THE

FELL TYRANT,

OR THE

SUFFERING CONVICT,

SHOWING THE HORRID AND DREADFUL SUFFERING OF THE CONVICTS OF NORFOLK ISLAND, AND MORETON BAY, OUR TWO PENAL SETTLEMENTS IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

WITH THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
WILLIAM R———S.

LONDON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED
BY J. WARD, 167, HIGH HOLBORN,
AND TO BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.
1836.
(Price Sixpence.)

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William Molesworth

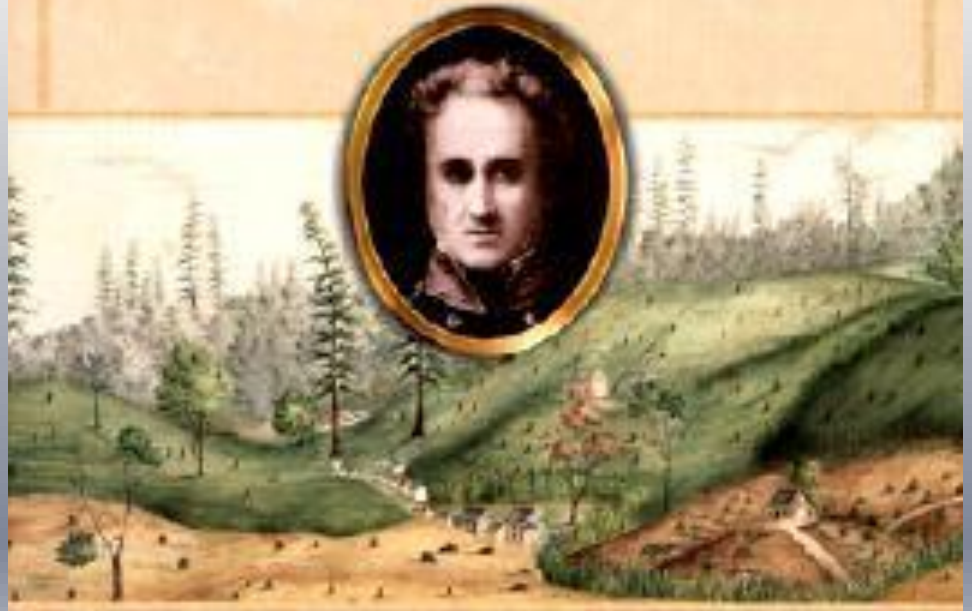
An outspoken Parliamentary critic of transportation, he chaired a 1837-38 committee to examine the practice

Alexander Maconochie

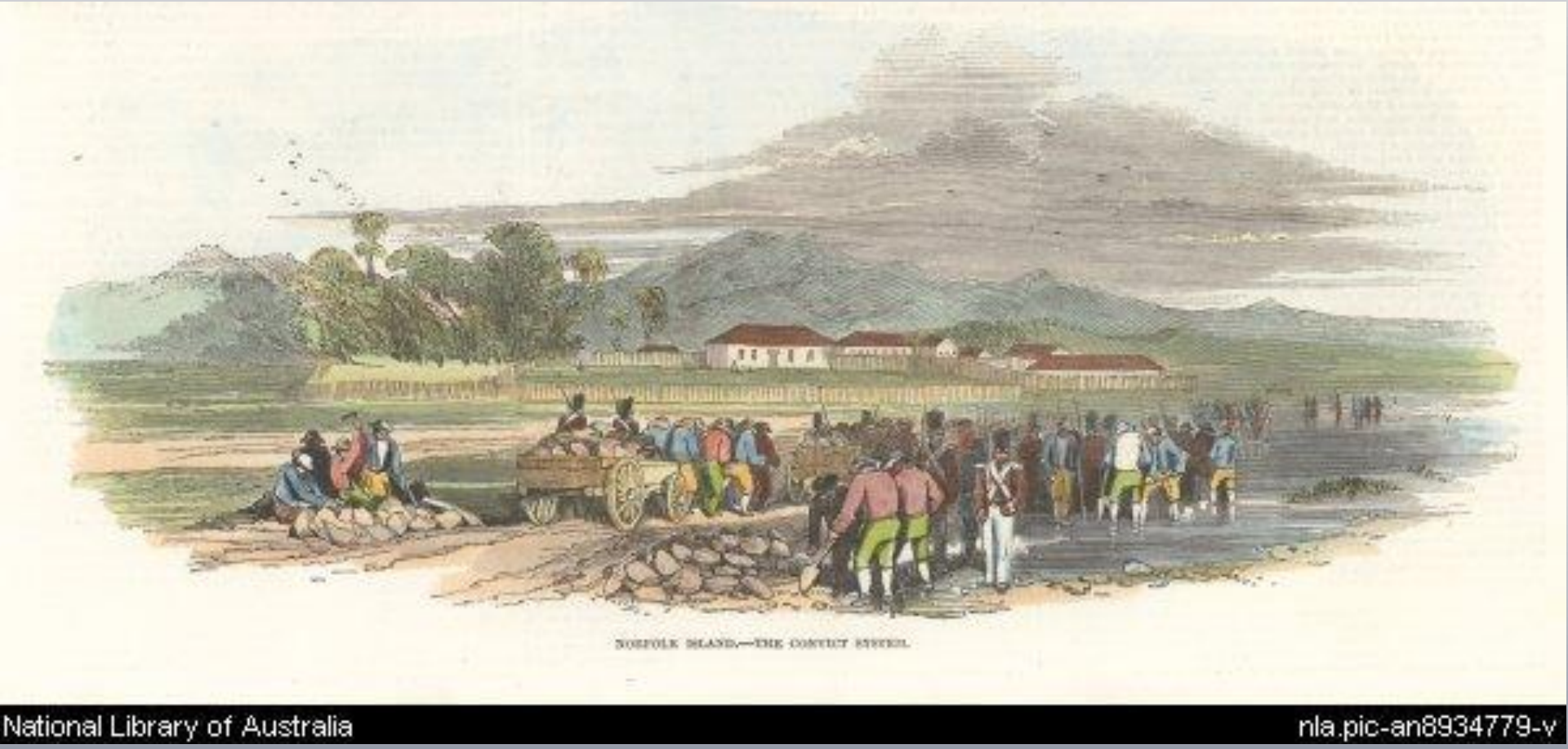
Private secretary to Governor John Franklin and Australian penal reformer

MACONOCHIE'S GENTLEMEN

The Story of
NORFOLK ISLAND
and the Roots of
Modern Prison Reform



NORVAL MORRIS



A Norfolk Island work gang pictured three years after Maconochie's departure in 1844

MOML

Legal Treatises, 1800-1926

The principles of punishment : on which the mark system of prison discipline is advocated.

Alexander Maconochie

The Final Days

- The last convict transport in New South Wales dropped its 269 male passengers at Sydney Cove on November 18, 1840.
- In the 1840s, all transported convicts went to Van Diemen's Land.
- 26,000 convicts arrived in Van Diemen's Land between 1841 and 1850.
- A vocal anti-transportation lobby in New South Wales resisted the reopening of that land to convicts.
- Transportation to Van Diemen's Land was abandoned in 1852.

Convict

John

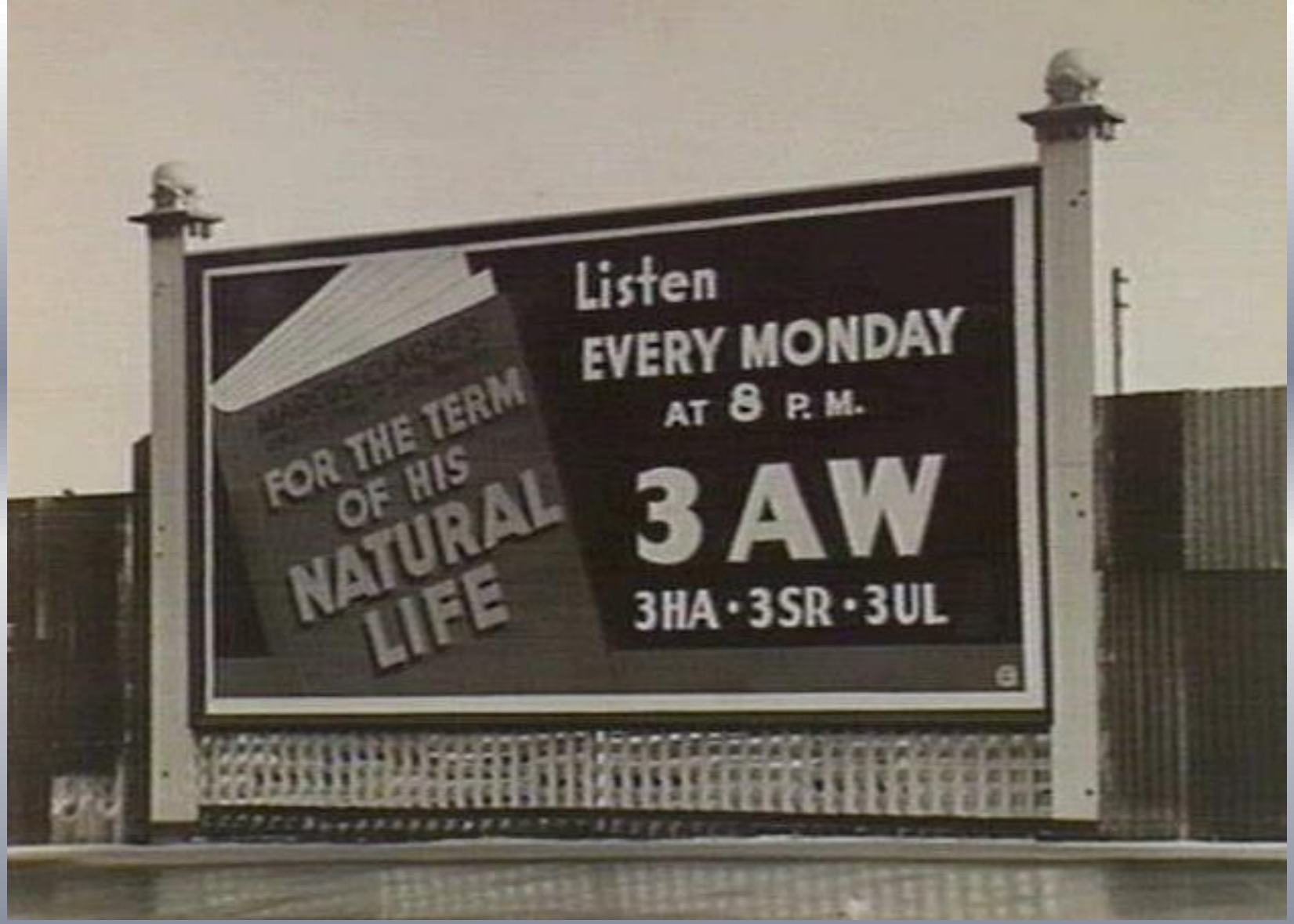
Fitzpatrick

Photographed

at Port Arthur

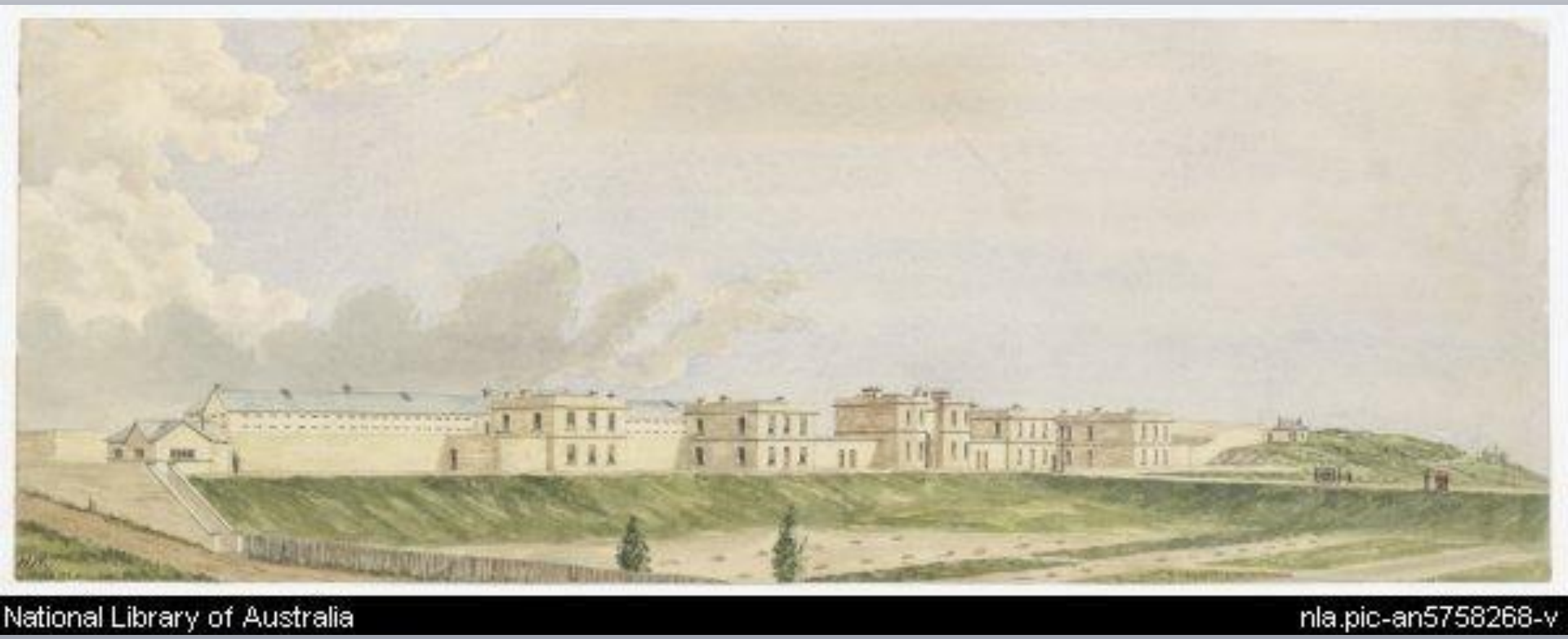
in 1874

An elderly Tasmanian convict as curiosity



A 1940s-era Melbourne billboard advertising an audio edition of Clarke's *His Natural Life*

Clarke's novel features the double suicides of the Point Puer boys Tommy and Billy



The officers' quarters and guard centre at Fremantle (1859)

The French And Transportation

- Just as the British were abandoning transportation, the French started it.
- Emperor Louis-Napoleon supported the sending of convicts to Guyana beginning in 1852 and to New Caledonia from 1865.
- Neither of these French colonies prospered in anything like the way that New South Wales had.

Leaving the ships at Sydney Harbor

The Flogging of Charles Maher.

The Flogging of Charles Maher 250. lashes. (single flogger).

pl. 3

little effect in subduing the most hardened criminal. Thursday April 11 I well remember the date. began the most stormy weather on record. here the cascade was partly destroyed.

The flogging of Charles Maher allmost brought about a mutiny. his back was quite bare of skin and flesh. Poor wretch he received 250 lashes and upon receiving 200. Himberly refused to count meaning thereby that his punishment was enough

The Transportees To Australia

- Eight in ten were thieves.
- Most were urban dwellers rather than yeoman peasants.
- The average age was 26.
- After 1815, transportation was reserved for less trivial crimes.
- Seven in ten came from England; one in five from Ireland.
- Men outnumbered women six-to-one.

The Martyrs Monument in Edinburgh commemorates the exiles shipped to Australia in 1794

Thomas Muir

The most prominent of the “Scottish Martyrs” of 1794

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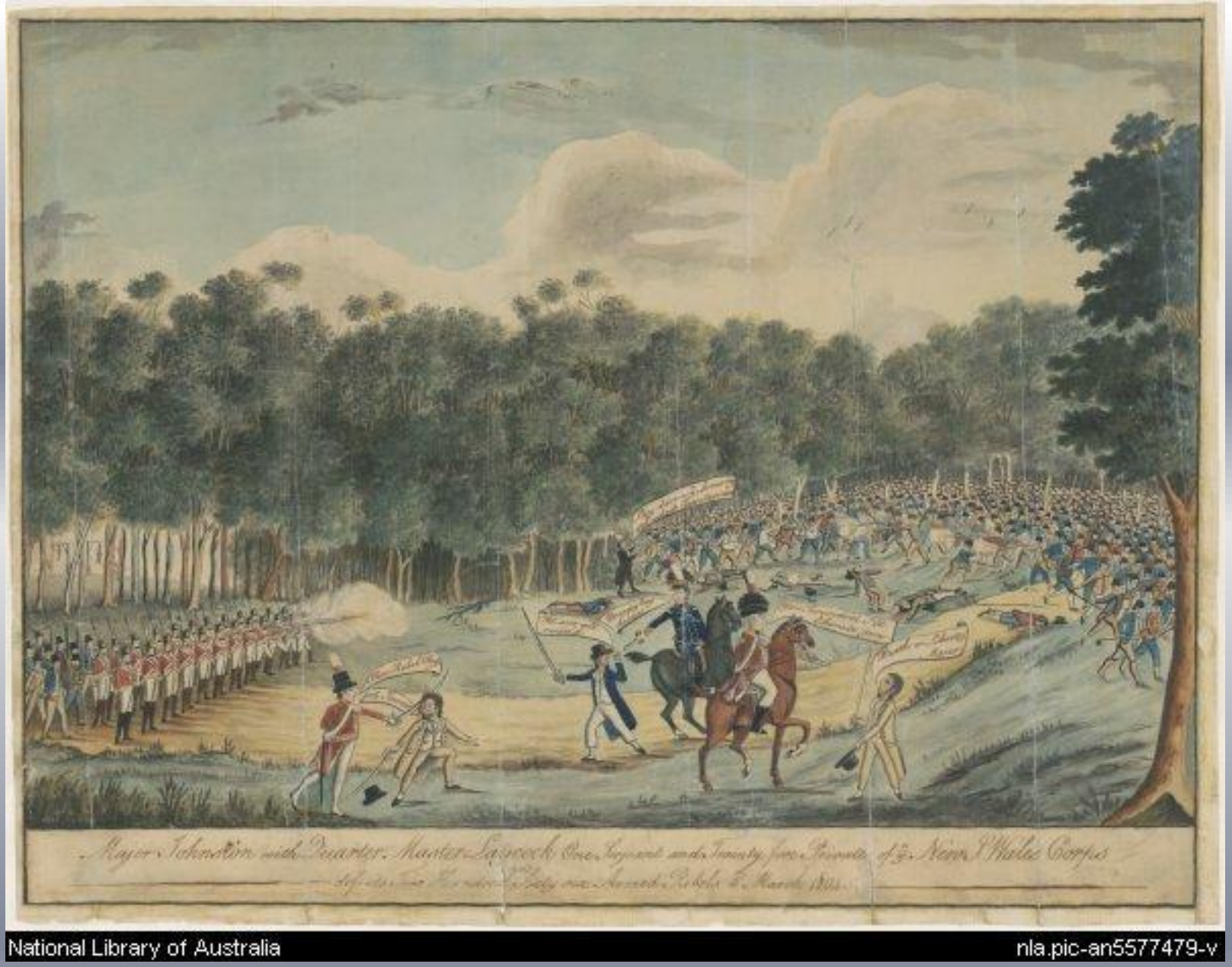
A cartoon associated with the 1798 Irish rebellion and consequent mass deportation to Australia



The Castle Hill Uprising of 1804 was one of a very few significant convict rebellions in the history of colonial Australia

Other Political Exiles

- The Luddites of 1812-1813; food rioters from East Anglia in 1816; radical weavers from Scotland in 1820 and from Yorkshire in 1821; Swing rioters and machine-breakers in the early 1830s; the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 1834; more than 100 Chartists between 1839 and 1848.
- Political activists from the colonies were also sent to Australia.
- From 1828 to 1838, the Supreme Court at the Cape transported 30-40 South African political activists annually.
- In 1838, 153 Canadians who had been involved in the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada were transported.

BLACK-EYED SUE, and SWEET POLL of PLYMOUTH,
Taking leave of their Lovers who are going to Botany Bay.
Published 25th June, 1791 by Robt. Sayer & Co. Fleet Street, London.

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Samuel Marsden

Perhaps the most influential of the churchmen who attempted to combat perceived immorality in New South Wales

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The Female Factory at Parramatta in 1826