

## 2.0 HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

### 2.1. History

#### 2.1.1. Exile beyond the seas

From its inception in English law in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, transportation, or enforced banishment, had a dual purpose: to deter criminals and to supply the colonies with labour. It also eased the increasing pressure on town and country places of confinement. There were a number of advantages to this solution for dealing with the lack of state-run prisons. The system was cheap; prisoners worked for the public good; there was some possibility of reform and, with only a slight probability that transportees might return to their homeland, a permanent solution was affected to the contagion (and even inherited defect) of crime. In the early years of the British Colony in New South Wales, transportation was itself the main punishment. In a remote, uncharted land thousands of miles from a friendly port and accessible only by sea, the whole Colony was a prison.

Governor Macquarie's attempts at reform, with inducements by which the emancipist might regain 'that Rank in Society which he had forfeited', were humane but the success and material prosperity of many emancipists gave an unwanted message. If New South Wales was a land of opportunity and held 'few effective terrors', then transportation had no deterrent effect.

In the early 1820s, following the Bigge Report, convict assignment was increased, to provide cheap labour to free settlers and to relieve the burden on the British Treasury. For those who continued to offend, or whose crimes were such that they could not be assigned, life was made much harder. Increasing severity became government policy and for those in government employment, labour was arduous. If fear of transportation were no longer a deterrent to crime, then the regime of punishment would be. Places of secondary punishment gave ample scope for enforced labour in unpleasant conditions, away from the main centres of population, but isolation too had its drawbacks. Lack of close supervision could bring out the worst in administrators, as well as their charges and distant, isolated places were expensive to maintain.

#### 2.1.2. Transportation and its critics

By the 1830s the system of transportation was being widely criticised in Britain. The idea that punishment should reform, rather than terrify and harden, the criminal had been part of the discussion about crime and punishment since the First Fleet, but this radical philosophy had not initially found favour with the establishment whose power base and wealth resided in the ownership of land. Fifty years on, social and moral reformers were in the ascendant. With notable supporters in powerful places in government, the British government was once again considering the efficacy, or otherwise, of transportation as a form of punishment and as a deterrent to crime.

Colonial opinion was varied. For those who actually lived in the penal colony, the economics and practicalities of the system were perhaps of more importance than the niceties of moral reform. Free migrants opposed the unwelcome competition of free convict labour, but in a vast country with little infrastructure cheap labour was very much needed. For others, the continuing arrival of convicts hindered political reform, as long as the emancipists' status in society was unresolved. Assignment seemed to provide a reasonable basis for reformation, but others thought that the system was a lottery, with little uniformity.<sup>1</sup>

In 1837 the Molesworth Committee, a Select Committee of the House of Commons, began its inquiry into the system of transportation, 'its efficacy as punishment, its influence on the moral state of society in the penal colonies and how far it is susceptible to improvement.'<sup>2</sup> It was not only transportation that was under review, but also the society that had formed around it. The Committee's recommendations had, according to more than one historian, little to do with the evidence presented to it.<sup>3</sup> Transportation was exile and convict labour was slavery, an institution that gave some men power over others and in the process corrupted both parties. The vocabulary was a powerful one, as slavery had recently been abolished throughout the British Empire and it enabled the Committee to redefine convict labour and those who benefited from it. Australia, a colony founded by transportation (the only such colony in the empire) had been corrupted from birth. Colonists were surprised to find themselves vilified by this depiction of their lives, which many thought was based upon ignorance and prejudice; but any defence of the system could be interpreted as self-interest, and hence sure proof of corruption.

#### 2.1.3. Local solutions

Changing philosophies in Britain about crime, punishment and reform throughout the 1830s led to

uncertainty in the colonies with rumours 'almost every year' about changes and the possibility of the reduction, or even cessation, of transportation.<sup>4</sup> With a considerable time lag in the exchange of despatches and instructions between London and Australia and with the lengthy process of constructing specialised penal facilities, these difficulties combined to make transportation less of an organised 'system' than an accumulation of expedients by local administrators.

In December 1835 instructions were sent to Governor Bourke to reduce the penal establishment at Moreton Bay and to report on the 'moral effect' of banishment to Norfolk Island. Replying in November 1837, Bourke reported that the penal establishment at Moreton Bay had been considerably reduced and that the system of management at Norfolk Island produced 'no real reformation of heart'. There remained however the question of what to do with secondary offenders if Norfolk Island were to be closed down. Bourke suggested that the sentences of many of these men could be commuted to hard labour for a given period within the colony, although there would still be 'a remnant of unhappy men who cannot with propriety be restored to society'. A Bill to substitute hard labour for transportation to a place of secondary punishment was introduced into the Legislative Council late in 1837 but was deferred on learning of the appointment of the Molesworth Committee.

When the Bill was reintroduced by the new Governor, Sir George Gipps, the following year it encountered considerable opposition, particularly from wealthy graziers who did not relish the return of cattle stealers from Norfolk Island, a class of offenders 'extremely obnoxious' to them.<sup>5</sup> But eventually overcrowding on Norfolk Island forced the Council's hand. In June 1838 an Act was passed enabling secondary offenders 'of good conduct' who had been sentenced by the Colonial courts to Norfolk Island or Moreton Bay, to earn a conditional remission of parts of their sentences, by working in irons on the roads or on other public works. The Act, 'expedient for the public service in New South Wales' had several advantages. It enabled the Governor to move prisoners from Norfolk Island or Moreton Bay for deployment elsewhere, making labour available for public works where it was most needed, while remitting sentences had the potential to reduce costs by removing such men from the convict system early. The Act was a practical solution to a local problem. In a climate of changing views about the object of punishment, it also provided a rather different opportunity for prisoner reform.<sup>6</sup>

In Sydney, Goat Island provided a suitable source of hard labour and a secure location for a convict workforce. First used in the 1820s for quarrying sandstone, the island was further developed in the 1830s as a military and colonial arsenal, housing a large powder magazine, stores, guard house and other associated buildings.<sup>7</sup> By the end of 1838 these works were almost complete and Gipps had to find an alternative place of useful work and secure incarceration for the prisoners withdrawn from Norfolk Island. The solution was another island in the harbour, known as Cockatoo Island.<sup>8</sup>

On the other side of the globe, the Molesworth Committee's recommendations included the discontinuance of transportation to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 'as soon as practicable' and much stricter regulation of the rules for reducing sentences by good conduct. The mainland of the Colony was now too well settled for any experiments in penology but these would continue on Norfolk Island and in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>9</sup> The new 'science of punishment' was to be based upon the reformation of the mind. With appropriate systems of classification, discipline and reward, the punishment would now fit the crime and would start the prisoner on the road to a new life. An old concept was revived to create a new type of prison to effect this change, the penitentiary, whose name reflected its purpose. Hard work, separation and the curative power of personal redemption would transform the criminal into a hard working member of society.<sup>10</sup>

In 1840 transportation to New South Wales was suspended, but it was to be many years before all its involuntary migrants ceased to be a burden on the British Treasury. The majority of those who had been transported to New South Wales were assigned, or had tickets-of-leave, but there remained about 5,000 prisoners who were still under punishment or who, through illness or disability, were still maintained by the government.

#### 2.1.4. The first phase of building construction on Cockatoo Island: 1839-1841

In February 1839 an initial contingent of sixty commuted prisoners from Norfolk Island was sent to Cockatoo Island under military escort, under the charge of the officer commanding Goat Island, Lieutenant Bentley of the 50th Regiment. The establishment was a convict stockade, worked by men in irons, with 'no indulgence beyond the strict Government ration'.<sup>11</sup> The island enjoyed the essential requirements of a place of secondary punishment. It was secure and provided productive hard work, but while it was isolated, it was not distant and so was 'under the very eye of Authority' and easy to provision. With an ample supply of excellent sandstone, Cockatoo Island could be quarried to supply building materials for Sydney. If further changes in penal policy were proposed by the British government and a new system of convict management, then Cockatoo Island would be well suited for

it.<sup>12</sup>

Denis Lyons was placed in charge of the establishment and working overseers were provided from amongst the prisoners who were on probation for tickets-of-leave.<sup>13</sup> Temporary accommodation for the Superintendent of Convicts and the Foreman of Works took the form of two portable houses,<sup>14</sup> while the prisoners were housed in tents and in prison boxes that had previously been used on Goat Island.<sup>15</sup> Among the first tasks was the construction of a wharf, essential for the safe supply of goods and provisions and most important of all, boring a well, as the island had no source of fresh water.<sup>16</sup> By May the number of prisoners had been increased to 167.<sup>17</sup>

Construction work was under the direction of the Colonial Engineer's Department and with his despatch in July 1839, informing the Colonial Office of the new establishment, Gipps enclosed a 'Report, estimate and plan' of a permanent barracks for 200 prisoners, prepared by the Colonial Engineer, Major George Barney RE. The plan was for a single storey, stone building with a hipped roof, containing two large wards 50 feet by 19 feet, lit and ventilated by barred windows high up under the eaves and with four small rooms in the centre for the overseers. The stone was to be 'quarried and wrought by the prisoners and the buildings to be altogether put up by them'. The estimate also included the cost of tools and 'indulgences to deserving persons.'<sup>18</sup> An element of incentive had been added into the system.

Gipps had already approved the expenditure and by the end of March 1840 work was well underway on the barracks, cookhouse, mess shed and hospital. In addition to the main buildings, work on the island also included:

*six granaries excavated in the solid rock averaging 19 feet deep and 20 feet in diameter; No. 2 well sunk 52 feet thro the solid rock; foundations laid of permanent workshops; wharf at east side of Island extended 30 feet in length and 10 feet in width; excavation made for a tank in the solid rock 50 feet long 30 feet wide & 16 feet deep; two boats repaired.*<sup>19</sup>

By September 1840 the cookhouse, mess shed and an additional hospital ward had all been completed and 'the whole of the buildings required for the accommodation working of 300 prisoners completed with the exception of the fitting up of the quarters last finished, sinking the well & covering the tank over'. Permanent workshops had been erected and work on the wharf and jetty and on the road leading to them was continuing.<sup>20</sup>

By March 1841 the interior of the mess shed and of the Hospital No. 3 ward had been fitted up, the arch over the tank completed, the wharf extended to 100 feet in length and the jetty to deep water. 'A considerable saving' had been effected 'by procuring trees and getting the timber sawn by the prisoners instead of purchasing & also of working up old iron.'<sup>21</sup> Eight more silos were being excavated and were completed the same year, to be followed by another six in 1841-1842.<sup>22</sup>

An undated plan provides details of the permanent buildings erected in the period from 1839 to early in 1841.<sup>23</sup> The main buildings for the accommodation of the prisoners were built of local stone and were grouped around three sides of a square, open on the west side. The plan of the main barracks, forming the east wing, differed slightly from that drawn for the 1839 estimates with the provision of three (rather than four) cells for overseers in the central section between the two large wards. Sleeping arrangements consisted of two tiers of sloping bed platforms.<sup>24</sup> The north wing was an open mess shed, with the cookhouse at the west end, beneath which were stores and two solitary cells. The range on the south side of the yard contained another ward for prisoners at the east end (somewhat smaller than the two main wards), a convalescent ward, dispensary, dispenser's room and hospital. Drainage from the yard was channelled out under the mess shed.

The fact that the accommodation was described as 'the whole of the buildings required for ... 300 prisoners' compared with the 'permanent barracks for 200 prisoners' in the 1839 estimates indicates that the amount of sleeping space for each prisoner had already been reduced. Conditions in the barracks at Cockatoo Island were already becoming crowded.<sup>25</sup> To the east of the barracks and at some distance from them, was the lumber yard and its workshops; the blacksmith's shop, carpenter's shop, engineer's stores and office on one side of the yard and on the other, the overseers' mess room, stores and the superintendent's office. The arrangement highlighted the demarcation between the two officers. The superintendent and his overseers were responsible for the convict workforce; the engineer was in charge of the works.

By March 1841 the prisoners' accommodation was complete. The buildings were simple and functional, as befitted a place of hard labour. Cockatoo Island did not conform to any of the new ideas in penology and individual reform, nor did it have any of the apparatus to affect such schemes. It was

a place for unremitting work, for the public good. 'The view from the island is one of the finest near Sydney' remarked the *Sydney Gazette*, as the establishment was being formed.<sup>26</sup> The worst punishment of all for the men on Cockatoo Island would be 'that they are constantly in view of civilized life and tantalized with the sight of the blessings of freedom, yet find themselves shut out from the one and denied the other.'<sup>27</sup> Hell, for the men of Cockatoo Island, would be the sight of what they had lost.

#### 2.1.5. The grain silos: 1839-1841

The most controversial aspect of the initial establishment at Cockatoo Island, as far as the British government was concerned, was the storage of large quantities of government grain in the silos that had been excavated into the sandstone. An English version of a paper on this technique of grain storage, read by Baron Terneux to the Paris Society for the Encouragement of Arts in 1830, had appeared in the *New South Wales Calendar and Post Office Directory* for 1835 and the *Sydney Gazette* referred to this when it reported in May 1839 that preparations were being made for the construction of two silos on Cockatoo Island.<sup>28</sup> Over the next two years twenty silos were excavated ranging in size from 14 to 19 feet deep and from 18 to 20 feet in diameter and each capable of holding from 3,000 to 5,000 bushels of grain.<sup>29</sup> In 1841 the technique was thought sufficiently worthy of notice for a paper on the subject to be printed in the *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council* detailing the work on Cockatoo Island and a similar experiment by William Macarthur on his property at Camden.<sup>30</sup>

Governor Gipps' decision to store grain on the island was clearly one in which concerns about public order loomed large, as he reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in November 1840. Following a grain shortage and huge fluctuations in the price of wheat in 1839, it seemed appropriate to try to protect against future shortages and so Gipps had purchased wheat 'that would have either been exported or used for distillation and so lost to the Colony'. There were already 20,000 bushels of grain stored on Cockatoo Island and additional silos were in progress giving a total capacity of 100,000 bushels. The storage method was excellent and even if the grain had weevils in it when it was stored, when the silos were re-opened 'there was not a living insect in it of any kind' and the quality remained good. 'Looking at the great increase that may be expected in our population in the course of the next twelve months, and the probability also of a demand on the Australian Colonies for provisions to support the War in China,' Gipps wrote, 'I feel confident that the measure I have adopted is one of common prudence.'<sup>31</sup>

With a six-month lapse in the receipt of despatches between Sydney and London it was not until a year later, in December 1841, that Gipps received a reply from Russell, which he immediately tabled for the Legislative Council. Gipps' careful provision for the Colony's welfare was much disapproved of and was 'open to all the ordinary objections to the interference of a Government with the Corn Trade'. All of the wheat stored in the silos was to be sold at auction and the money spent on it refunded to government.<sup>32</sup> The British government was committed to a policy of economic liberalism in regard to the food supply and, despite the unusual circumstances of a penal colony, market forces were to be left alone.<sup>33</sup> Members of the Legislative Council voiced their support for Gipps, but the Governor was bound to obey instructions from the home government and the grain was eventually sold.

Whether the last six silos had been completed when Russell's despatch was received, is not known. Work on these had been started between April and September 1841<sup>34</sup> and was completed between October 1841 and March 1842.<sup>35</sup> Despite this setback, the silos continued to play a useful role on Cockatoo Island. They were being used for their original purpose in October 1852 when three prisoners were suffocated while removing grain and in 1854 some were being used to store lime.<sup>36</sup> They were later used for water storage.

#### 2.1.6. A permanent establishment 1841

In 1841 Gipps received confirmation from the British government that New South Wales was no longer to be a penal establishment. Van Diemen's Land, its associated islands and Norfolk Island would however remain as places of transportation. At the latter Captain Maconochie would put into action his social experiment in penal reform and discipline. In order to trial Maconochie's scheme, Norfolk Island would be used solely for prisoners newly arrived from Britain. Prisoners who were convicted in New South Wales of transportable offences would need to be accommodated elsewhere. Russell suggested Goat Island but left it to Gipps' discretion and local knowledge to determine an appropriate place of confinement.<sup>37</sup>

Gipps' choice was Cockatoo Island and in these new circumstances the island became a permanent establishment as a place of confinement. Additional accommodation would be required and an estimate and plan, drawn by the Colonial Engineer, was accordingly forwarded.<sup>38</sup> The new barrack

was intended to accommodate 500 prisoners and 20 overseers and was of a much more imposing design than the existing barracks. When no longer required for prisoners, it could be re-used as stores.<sup>39</sup> Offenders who required 'close confinement' would be sent to Van Diemen's Land.

Gipps' plan was soon put in jeopardy by Lieut-Governor Franklin's refusal to take more prisoners in Van Diemen's Land. In a climate of 'much apprehension amongst the Colonists' the Legislative Council refused to pass the necessary legislation to detain in New South Wales those doubly convicted prisoners who would previously have been transported to Norfolk Island. Gipps considered Cockatoo Island to be 'the place of greatest security within the Colony, not actually a Prison', but this was not an opinion shared by the colonists.<sup>40</sup> Transportation had ended but the worst offenders were now to be housed much closer to the heart of the Colony and to a major centre of population than they had been when the convict system was in full swing.

Gipps finally managed to get the legislation passed, for one year only, on the understanding that this was to allow time for the British government to make a decision on the matter.<sup>41</sup> Exile was still the preferred option, as far as many colonists were concerned, for 'men of known desperate character, and those who may have formed dangerous connexions within the Colony'.<sup>42</sup>

With the passage of the necessary Act, Gipps moved swiftly to establish the new order at Cockatoo Island, which was officially gazetted on 1 October 1841 as a place for the reception of male offenders under sentence of transportation.<sup>43</sup> Charles Ormsby was appointed as Superintendent with John Rawson, a military pensioner who had been appointed to island in February, as his Assistant. Ormsby's remuneration was reasonably generous, equalling that of his previous employment as Assistant Superintendent (and later Superintendent of Agriculture) on Norfolk Island although the Cockatoo Island establishment as a whole was run on lean lines, given the number and type of prisoners who were confined there.<sup>44</sup>

Charles Ormsby's appointment was somewhat unusual. Penal establishments were usually under the control of a commandant, a serving or recently retired military officer, whose social status ensured some level of respect from those under his command. Ormsby did not enjoy these advantages, a factor that was to play a crucial part in the future social and organisational dynamics of Cockatoo Island.

Regulations for the island were approved by the Executive Council and Ormsby took charge as the prisoners under sentence of transportation who were held in 'Woolloomooloo Gaol' [the stockade at Darlinghurst] were moved to Cockatoo Island. Ormsby's position was a delicate one. 'With respect to the conduct of the works on which the men are employed and to the occupation of the buildings on the island' he was to take directions from the Commanding Royal Engineer. In respect of the removal of prisoners from the island or of the mitigation of any sentence, he was to take directions from the Superintendent of Convicts. Nor was he to interfere with the military duties of the guard.<sup>45</sup> In the intersecting layers of control on Cockatoo Island, the Superintendent's lot was not a happy one.

#### 2.1.7. The second phase of building construction 1841-1844

With an increased workforce and a need for greater security, work began in 1841 on permanent accommodation for the island's military guard, a combined guard house and barracks for 56 soldiers to the west of the prisoners' accommodation. The barracks 'fitted up complete including shelving arm racks &c' and the guardhouse were finished by September 1842.<sup>46</sup> As a permanent establishment Cockatoo Island also needed larger and somewhat better provision for prison discipline than the two cells under the cook house and a range of twelve solitary cells was planned to the south of the military barracks, on the edge of the escarpment. The ground had been excavated by March 1842<sup>47</sup> but construction was slowed by difficulties with the stonecutters and the overseer's disinclination to obey instructions.<sup>48</sup> The work was finally completed by March 1843 and described as 'A range of twelve solitary cells 8'x 5' each, with a loft over the whole, built with joggled masonry and roofed in complete, except the fitments'.<sup>49</sup> In the following six months walls were built round the cellblock.<sup>50</sup>

The design was an uncomfortable and soul-destroying one. The cells were excavated out of the solid rock (just like the grain silos) and were accessed by a ladder through a trap door from the 'loft' above, a design similar to a cell block erected at Longridge on Norfolk Island when Charles Ormsby was serving as Assistant Superintendent.<sup>51</sup> The cells had scarcely been completed before the Medical Officer and Visiting Magistrate reported that they were so cold and damp, they should not be used in winter and their use was accordingly prohibited by the Governor 'at present'.<sup>52</sup> The fact that the cells were sited on a cliff edge enabled the Superintendent, in later years, to report that there were 'no dark cells and none below ground' at Cockatoo Island, although it is unlikely that this was the impression gained by those who occupied them.<sup>53</sup>

Preparations were also made at this period to build the new prisoners' barracks, the plans for which had been sent to England by Gipps in September 1841. Some ground had already been excavated 'for Barrack at north end of the Island' by September 1841 but the exact location is not known.<sup>54</sup> Later reports indicated that it was a plan that required considerable excavation. By March 1843 the 'site of the proposed New Barracks' had been excavated to a depth of some eleven feet and the rubble 'thrown out to form the South wharf'.<sup>55</sup> In November the new barracks was included on the list of works not yet done, 'because the slates ordered from England in September 1841 have not arrived'.<sup>56</sup> For whatever reason, it was a plan that proceeded no further.

Two buildings that rated little mention in the list of works undertaken by the Colonial Engineer's Department were the quarters for the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent. The portable houses that had been brought to the island in 1839 may still have been in use as the establishment moved onto a permanent footing two years later, but these were presumably small and unsuitable for families. Charles Ormsby's family lived in a tent on the island from November to December 1841 until his house was fit to occupy, as it was too expensive to rent lodgings for them in Sydney.<sup>57</sup> According to Ormsby's own account he built his house 'so far as materials were concerned, at my own private expense' although the labour would have been provided by prisoners.<sup>58</sup>

The Superintendent's original residence was very modest with just two rooms and attic space accessible by a narrow stair. The house was on the highest point of the island, as was the practice in penal establishments, not only to set the Superintendent or Commandant physically apart, but also to give a commanding view of all that went on.<sup>59</sup> It was also next to the main group of grain silos. In 1844 the house was enlarged under the direction of the Colonial Engineer.<sup>60</sup> The cost of the materials was again borne by Ormsby as the Engineering Officer had agreed to the work only 'on condition it should cost the Government nothing'. The addition doubled the size of the residence, with two new rooms built on the east side of the original.<sup>61</sup> When Ormsby's management of the island was under scrutiny in 1849, he was able to produce accounts for the 'Quantities of materials in Verandah of Superintendent's Quarters Cockatoo island' and 'Quantities of Materials in the additions to the Superintendent's Quarters at Cockatoo Island' both with costs, suggesting that a verandah may also have been part of the additions built at this time, or was another improvement.<sup>62</sup> Details of any work on the Assistant Superintendent's quarters are completely lacking other than a reference to 'building Mr Rawson's kitchen' in August 1842.<sup>63</sup>

As well as new construction, the prisoners' work included: making and repairing roads; building a lime kiln; forming the wharf; pointing the military barracks; whitewashing the prisoners' barrack; building stone sentry boxes; filling in between the sentry posts; quarrying rock; cutting flagging and attending to water courses. Escape attempts prompted some attention to existing accommodation and the roof of the No. 1 ward in the prisoners' barracks was lined with boards in 1843 to prevent prisoners removing the roof shingles.<sup>64</sup> By October 1844 all of the major building on Cockatoo Island was completed and the lumberyard began doing work for other establishments. These included preparing sashes and frames and cutting and preparing ridge stones for the new military barracks (the Victoria Barracks) which was under construction by the Colonial Engineer's Department now under the command of Major James Gordon RE.<sup>65</sup>

When Superintendent Ormsby reported on the state of the establishment early in 1842 there were 342 prisoners on the island. The two main wards (Nos. 1 & 2) each housed 130 men and ward No. 3 another 70, with twelve in the overseers' ward and twenty-three men sleeping 'in the hospital, cookhouse &c.' With the accommodation already overcrowded, it was getting difficult to carry out the only form of classification that had been ordered by the Governor, to keep the Norfolk Island men separate from those who had been sentenced to transportation.<sup>66</sup> Separate provision had originally been made for aboriginal prisoners, of whom there were usually just a handful, but by November 1842 this room was used by the constables, presumably due to overcrowding.<sup>67</sup>

#### 2.1.8. Declining numbers: 1844-1847

The legislation that enabled men who would previously have been transported to Norfolk Island to be retained at Cockatoo Island was renewed in 1842 and 1843<sup>68</sup> but by the end of 1844 was no longer needed. When Maconochie's experiment was abandoned in 1844, all of the doubly convicted prisoners under sentence of transportation who were on Cockatoo Island were sent to Norfolk Island. By March 1844 overcrowding at Cockatoo Island had eased.<sup>69</sup> As the remaining convict population of the Colony decreased rapidly in the 1840s, the prison population on Cockatoo Island did likewise; from 206 in 1845, to 138 in 1846 and down to 85 in 1847.<sup>70</sup> By this time numbers were so low that there were no prisoners left who could be trusted to serve as overseers or constables, an integral part of the system.<sup>71</sup>

Opinions varied as to the nature and conduct of the convicts on Cockatoo Island in the early 1840s. Captain Long Innes, applying for remuneration for his services as Visiting Magistrate from 1842-1847 considered that his duties had been onerous, dealing with prisoners 'whose constant plots, intrigues and attempts at insurrection rendered daily visits to the Island almost indispensably necessary.'<sup>72</sup> Governor Gipps' assessment of the regime that had offered remission for time served working in irons was somewhat more sanguine. Having Cockatoo Island 'under the eye of government' outweighed any of the advantages that were supposed to attach to the remote penal stations and there were fewer escapes from Cockatoo Island, only four miles from Sydney, than there were from Norfolk Island, which was 700 miles from the nearest land.<sup>73</sup> About 1,440 prisoners had been brought to Cockatoo Island from Norfolk Island, the majority of whom had their sentences commuted, according to the provisions of the 1841 Act. Their conduct, Gipps reported, 'both on that Island and after their release from it, has been such as fully to vindicate the Act, indeed to prove in a remarkable degree the policy no less than the mercy of it.'<sup>74</sup> Cockatoo Island had, in its own small way, been a form of penal experiment in the early 1840s and one that had been reasonably successful.

#### 2.1.9. The island prison

During the 1840s Cockatoo Island functioned in the backwash of experiments in penology and changes in the convict system, serving as a temporary expedient in the time lag between the despatch and receipt of instructions from the home government and filling the gap between penal policy and practicality. But by 1847, with a population of only 85, it seemed as if Cockatoo Island's days as a penal establishment might soon be over.

In October 1847 Earl Grey sent instructions for the convict establishment in New South Wales to be reduced. As many prisoners as possible would be given tickets-of-leave or conditional pardons, thus relieving the government of the expense of their upkeep and those who could not be released on such terms would be sent to Van Diemen's Land. But once again, as in 1841, there was insufficient accommodation for this suggested arrangement to be carried out. The only feasible alternative, to which Fitz Roy reluctantly agreed – on the 'distinct understanding' that the responsibility for not carrying out the British government's instructions would rest with the government of Van Diemen's Land - again involved the use of Cockatoo Island. Norfolk Island would be used for convicts still serving their original sentences and 'requiring strict coercion', while secondary offenders and other convicts who had been sentenced to punishment, deprived of their tickets-of-leave or returned from private service, would be placed on Cockatoo Island.<sup>75</sup>

The proposed compromise coincided with the transfer of Cockatoo Island to the Colony and with it, the expense of running the penal establishment. The convicts would be employed on 'colonial works' and so the salaries of the officers on the establishment would be met by the Colonial Treasury. The only expense for the British government would be provisions and clothing for about one hundred men whose original sentences of transportation had not expired.<sup>76</sup>

#### 2.1.10. Plans for a dry dock

While Cockatoo Island had initially been intended as a temporary penal establishment, the possibility that the island might be used to provide important harbour facilities for the growing metropolis had been evident to many. As the population of the Colony grew and its importance as a trading centre in the Pacific increased, Governor Gipps and others entertained the hope that Port Jackson might become a naval station for the British fleet. If this were to be the case, then a dry dock would be an essential part of such an establishment.

As a distant and remote British settlement, shipping was a vital lifeline for the Australian colonies. In the early years of settlement merchants, shipbuilders and traders had quickly taken up waterside allotments at Sydney Cove and by the time Commissioner Bigge undertook his enquiry into the workings of the colony, wharfage was already in short supply. One of Governor Macquarie's initiatives had been to rebuild the rudimentary government dockyard on the west side of Sydney Cove where four docks were carved out of the sandstone foreshore. Here the convict workforce repaired and built government boats and unloaded government cargoes.

From the 1820s the need for additional wharfage played an important part in planning the future form of Sydney, as did the state of Sydney Cove, which was rapidly silting up with the detritus of fifty years of settlement and sewage. But if new wharfage were to be built for commercial enterprises, then the government dockyard would need to be relocated. The Surveyor General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, turned his mind to larger issues and to the implications of Sydney's position in the network of British possessions in the Pacific and Indian oceans. 'In time of War' Port Jackson might become the

principal dockyard for refitting British ships on the Indian Station. A site on the north side of the harbour, on the western shore of Hulk Bay, seemed to be 'an eligible Situation for the Establishment of Dock Yard with a Naval Hospital'.<sup>77</sup> It was however to be some time before building docks became a government priority.

Despite improvements made in the Macquarie period, the government dockyard was wound down by the 1830s and most government work was put out to contract. By 1836 when a Select Committee of the Legislative Council recommended the construction of a semi-circular quay at Sydney Cove, a plan that would land lock the government dockyard, much of its work had already been overtaken by private enterprise in Darling Harbour and beyond.

In October 1845 the Legislative Council asked Governor Gipps 'to represent to Her Majesty's Government the advantages that would accrue to the Empire at large as well as to the Colony by the construction of a Dry Dock capable of docking Men of War at Sydney and to request that they will give direction to have such a dock constructed by convict labour.'<sup>78</sup> Gipps backed the petition with his own endorsement of the plan. Cockatoo Island was the best place in Sydney Harbour for a naval establishment 'especially if Sydney be made, as I trust it shortly will be, a station for Men of War' and he had already 'directed the labour of the Convicts accordingly, in clearing and preparing the Island'.<sup>79</sup> Cockatoo Island, now essentially a bare rock within the inner harbour, was a sheltered, safe and defensible location with a workforce that had been sentenced to hard labour. With a dwindling amount of work on the island, other than quarrying, the construction of a dry dock offered a source of constructive work with a desirable outcome for the Colony.

The response to the Legislative Council's petition came in May 1847 and was laid before the Legislative Council by Gipps' successor, Sir Charles Fitz Roy. The Admiralty approved of the work in general and of the location, but was not prepared to recommend that it be paid for by the British Treasury.<sup>80</sup> So the Governor took matters into his own hands. Less than three weeks later Fitz Roy placed before the Council a report and estimate for the construction of a dry dock at Cockatoo Island. With an estimated cost of just over £4,000 if built by convict labour (a proposal that did not find universal favour among the inhabitants of Sydney)<sup>81</sup> and a timetable of 470 days work for 100 men, Fitz Roy suggested that the project should proceed immediately.<sup>82</sup>

A Select Committee of the Legislative Council reported favourably on the proposal and by late September the matter was decided. The construction of a dry dock within the harbour of Port Jackson 'would be of great and permanent advantage to the Colony' and would be executed by convict labour. The possibility that the island could eventually be used as a naval depot and that the dock would be used by ships of the Royal Navy formed an important part of the Committee's deliberations.<sup>83</sup> On 22 October 1847 the Colonial Secretary instructed the Commanding Royal Engineer, Lieut-Colonel James Gordon to proceed.<sup>84</sup>

The new work came at an opportune time. In Van Diemen's Land the probation system was in crisis and, in an attempt to ease the situation, transportation to the island had been discontinued. New South Wales once again had to find somewhere to accommodate the sort of prisoners it usually wanted to send elsewhere. Hard labour, building a dry dock, offered a suitable solution in secure surroundings. In November 1847 Cockatoo Island was once again gazetted as a place where male offenders under sentence of transportation could be detained and be liable to hard labour.<sup>85</sup>

#### 2.1.11. The engineers

The report and estimate for the dry dock presented to the Select Committee in 1847 were prepared by Gother Kerr Mann, working under the supervision of Lieut-Colonel James Gordon. Mann, who was born in Ireland in 1809, had 'passed an examination as a civil engineer' but then entered the East India Company's service. After retiring on half-pay, due to ill health, he arrived in Sydney in 1836 where he worked as a surveyor and later as a civil engineer. Mann had no practical experience of dock construction but had consulted 'various works on the subject' and was clearly well versed on recent work at the Royal Dockyards in England and on current developments in shipping.<sup>86</sup> First referred to as the Assistant Engineer or 'Professional Assistant', by February 1849 Mann was officially in charge of construction work at Cockatoo Island and had the title of Civil Engineer.<sup>87</sup> Thereafter he reported directly to the Colonial Secretary and to the Select Committee of the Legislative Council that was charged with the oversight of the work. Mann was to remain in charge of the dock and its prison work force, in various capacities, until 1869 when the penal establishment on Cockatoo Island closed.

Although the construction of the dry dock was not officially sanctioned until October 1847, the proposal had enjoyed gubernatorial support since Gipps' general instruction in 1845 for prisoners to be engaged in 'clearing and preparing the island'.<sup>88</sup> His successor, Governor Fitz Roy, gave similar but



more explicit instructions, which were the cause of a dispute in December 1846 between Superintendent Ormsby and the Engineer. Ormsby claimed that his instructions came directly from the Governor when he was on a visit to the island, while the Engineer had no plans for the dock's construction. The fracas was essentially a demarcation dispute, because the regulations made it clear that the Superintendent had no role in directing building works on the island. What it showed however was that Fitz Roy's involvement in the proposed dry dock was a practical one at ground level, in anticipation of the introduction of the scheme, in more definite form, into the Legislative Council.

While Mann's acquaintance with dock construction was, by his own admission, purely theoretical he had available, comparatively close at hand, the advice of another Royal Engineer who could give him 'the very best information in the world'.<sup>89</sup> Sir William Denison, 'considered the greatest authority on dock construction' was appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land in June 1846 and arrived in Hobart Town in January 1847. Denison's professional career, prior to his colonial appointment, had been in the Royal Engineers in which he had received a commission in 1826. From 1827 until 1831 he had served in Canada where he was employed in the construction of the Rideau Canal. His work on the strength of American timbers earned him the Telford medal and he was appointed an associate of the Institute of Civil Engineers. Following his return to England in 1831 he was variously engaged as an instructor of cadets at Chatham and in making astronomical observations until, in 1837, he was placed in charge of works at the Woolwich dockyard.

For the next nine years Denison worked for the Admiralty where he was responsible for the planning and construction of new works at the Royal Dockyards at Woolwich, Deptford and Portsmouth and was also sent to inspect similar work in the dockyards at Bermuda, services for which he was knighted, on the recommendation of Lord Auckland, the First Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>90</sup> Denison's work coincided with a period during which the Royal Dockyards were being extensively enlarged and modernised to meet new demands occasioned by the change from sail to steam. The new technology saw a complete change in dockyard working and in the size and scale of new docks, as steam vessels, foundries, machine shops and steam powered machinery replaced sawpits and sail lofts.<sup>91</sup> The docks at Woolwich were the first to undergo this change and it was Denison who designed and constructed 'a most perfect factory establishment, with docks and building slips'. Extensive plans for Portsmouth followed until his appointment to Van Diemen's Land intervened.<sup>92</sup>

At his new posting Denison's interest in science continued, as did his practical involvement in engineering. In July 1849 he read a paper 'On Docks - Dry, Wet, and Floating' to the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land, 'illustrated by a series of elaborately-finished diagrams'. In it Denison outlined all of the basic principles of dock design that were to be critical in the construction of the dry dock at Cockatoo Island.<sup>93</sup>

#### 2.1.12. Developing the plan

From 1847 to 1850 the plans for the dry dock at Cockatoo Island were developed and refined by Mann, with the advice and assistance of the Admiralty and of Sir William Denison. From an initial specification to accommodate the largest ship that could enter the inner harbour, the plans were amended to meet the emerging needs of steam vessels and a rapid growth in the size of shipping. In November 1848 there was the welcome news that the Admiralty would make a contribution to the cost of the new dry dock, on condition that it could accommodate a large frigate or steamer and that Royal Navy ships should have preference for its use, when necessary. The Admiralty sent its own plan for an enlarged dock and the Legislative Council's Select Committee recommended that the proposal should be 'immediately embraced', 'upon the scale and in precise conformity with the plan transmitted by their Lordships'.<sup>94</sup>

Shortly afterwards, in December 1849 Mann went to Van Diemen's Land to discuss the plans at first hand with Sir William Denison. With excavation work proceeding well he was now better informed about the nature of the rock through which the dock was being excavated. Denison's advice encompassed all aspects of the dock's construction and working and it is clear that his practical experience made a substantial contribution to the final form of the work and to the choice of the machinery to operate it.<sup>95</sup> By the end of 1850 most of the details had been decided and plans were sent to England to enable tenders to be called for the supply of the iron caisson and pumps, which could not be obtained within the Colony.

#### 2.1.13. Work on the ground

Like many major public works, the dock came under close scrutiny and was the subject of considerable criticism during the nine years that it took to build, a far cry from the initial time estimate for its completion. The work was the first of its kind in the Australian colonies, was being built by prison

labour and, unlike most dry docks, was being excavated out of solid rock. The initial plans and estimates for its construction had included detailed hydrographic surveys and much expert naval opinion, but were noticeably lacking in details of the contours of the island. Like Goat Island some years earlier, Cockatoo Island was being quarried for building stone, but the site chosen for the dock, on the south-east side of the island, required the removal of large sandstone cliffs in order to clear a large enough area to begin excavating the dock. The estimates that had been prepared were 'exclusive of surface work' but it was here that a vast amount of labour had to be expended before there could be any progress on the dock itself.<sup>96</sup>

Some of the quarrying was done by blasting and in September 1848 the first charge of 500 lbs for the 'first dry dock in this hemisphere' was witnessed by the Colonial Secretary and other dignitaries.<sup>97</sup> Mann's technique of blasting enabled a large section of the cliff to be removed without fragmentation so that the stone could then be worked as building materials for the dock, but the site still had to be cleared by manual labour.<sup>98</sup>

The early years were optimistic. In September 1849 the Select Committee of the Legislative Council reported that progress was 'most satisfactory'. Mann thought that the men were conducting themselves 'very well indeed' but recommended the introduction of task work by which prisoners could earn wages for work done over the set task, as an inducement to greater industry. The proposal required two more overseers but seemed a reasonable one which 'could not fail to have a beneficial influence on the convict in stimulating his industry, and counteracting that tendency to listlessness and indolence, which invariably accompany compulsory and wholly unrequited labour'. Hopes were high that the project would bring considerable benefits and that the dock would also include a naval depot. There was nowhere else amongst the British dependencies in the Southern Hemisphere where a man-of-war could refit and Port Jackson had all that could be desired for the purpose. Mann estimated that the excavation work could be completed in about eighteen months, if he had a workforce of two hundred men and that this target could be improved upon with task work.<sup>99</sup>

Two years later in November 1851, the Governor's instructions to Mann 'to expedite the work by every means' were clearly becoming a little more forthright. Mann's report in response included a plan showing the extent of the cliffs that had been removed, the amount of the dock that had been excavated and progress on filling in, to extend the workable area around the dock. Rock to an average height of 45 feet had been cleared from the whole area of the dock, often by blasting, a heavy and 'unappreciable work'. Progress was hampered by the changing and largely unskilled convict workforce and Mann asked for 'a few experienced free mechanics' to help to speed up the work. He was completely unable to give any accurate estimate of how long the work might take to complete, but suggested about two years.<sup>100</sup>

By the end of 1851 tenders had been accepted for the supply of the caisson and pumping machinery, but on the site itself there was little real sign of anything even closely resembling a dock.<sup>101</sup> By now the relationship between the Civil Engineer and the Legislative Council was clearly very fraught and in July 1852 another Select Committee was appointed to inquire into the progress made in the construction of the dock and to report whether there were any means by which the work could be hastened. The Committee was also charged with another 'Special Instruction'; to inquire into the working of the penal system adopted at Cockatoo Island 'and to report whether any improvements can be introduced to secure its greater efficiency'.<sup>102</sup>

#### 2.1.14. The 1852 inquiry

In the course of its inquiry the Select Committee tackled the perennial questions of penal policy: how to get enough work out of prisoners; the nature and purpose of punishment; and the place of deterrence, reformation and terror in the treatment of offenders. Charles Ormsby and John McLerie, the Visiting Magistrate, detailed the day-to-day working of the island, while the Secretary to the Classification Board, Alexander Dumas, took the opportunity to try to promote his own career by outlining, at length, a system of taskwork of his own devising.

On the engineering side, Mann charted the alterations to the plans and to the anticipated method of construction which had resulted in increased costs: the amount of rock overburden above the dock site had been underestimated; the area cleared had been increased to locate the dock further in from the water to prevent leaks; the size of the dock had been increased to meet Admiralty requirements; and the nature of the rock had necessitated lining parts of the dock with stone and constructing the floor as an inverted masonry arch. Most of these changes were inevitable in a project of this scale, where there had been little quantitative information to inform the original plans and all of them had been adequately documented in correspondence with the Colonial Secretary. What the Committee may have found somewhat more difficult to accept was Mann's assertion that it was 'utterly impossible' to

estimate with any accuracy when the dock would be completed.<sup>103</sup>

The upshot of these enquiries was a set of recommendations that appeared to have little to do with the evidence presented to the Committee, least of all that given by those who had an intimate knowledge of the realities of working within the prison system. The Committee was clearly uncertain about the purpose of Cockatoo Island as a penal establishment, which was perhaps not surprising as it had never been run according to any specific penal philosophy and was simply a place for hard labour, but even in this it was judged to be inefficient. The Committee could not suggest any way in which the work could be speeded up, but were nevertheless 'compelled to express their opinion that both the management and the discipline of the convicts are defective, and that there does not appear to be anything like the proper amount of labor obtained from them.' Ormsby was recommended to be replaced by 'a gentleman of active habits, a strict disciplinarian, of high character and of great experience' while the prisoners should be housed in a hulk and their accommodation used to house as many free labourers as possible who would reside on the island with their families. A comparison of the original cost estimates and of the expenditure still needed to complete the work 'created very considerable surprise' in the minds of the Committee.<sup>104</sup> The Engineer should reside on the island, or be there during working hours, or should appoint an Assistant Engineer to supervise the works.

The Report allowed members of the Legislative Council to vent their frustration, but its recommendations went unheeded. Two years later, when asked whether he had given any instructions to put the recommendations into effect, Governor Fitz Roy replied in the negative, as he 'had not received any intimation' that the Report had been adopted by the House.<sup>105</sup> Charles Ormsby kept his job, the prisoners remained in their barracks and the Engineer continued to live at home in Greenwich.

#### 2.1.15. Visible progress and the completion of the dock: 1853-1857

Although Mann had on various occasions advocated the use of free labour, a strong demand for labour in the Colony following the gold rush, combined with Cockatoo Island's penal status, removed this option although it was frequently urged by members of the Legislative Council. With ample opportunities for well paid work elsewhere, free men showed an antipathy to working in close proximity to prisoners and Mann was clearly reluctant to employ men who could leave to take up other employment at any time. At least this option was not open to the prisoners, nor was that of heading to the gold fields. Some progress was however made along the lines advocated by the Select Committee. In November 1852 an Assistant Engineer was appointed to the works and towards the end of the following year was resident on the island.<sup>106</sup>

When Mann presented his next report in July 1853 to the Estimates Committee of the Legislative Council, there were more definite signs of progress. The main body of the dock had been excavated leaving only the area at the entrance to be completed, although much of this work was under water and would be difficult and time consuming. The machinery for the dock had arrived and with it five men who had been employed in its construction in England, two working engineers, two riveters and boilermakers and a blacksmith. Much of the stonework for the engine house had been prepared, as had that for the inverted arch for the dock floor. It seemed that the dock might now be operative in about eighteen months.

On Monday 5 June 1854 Governor Charles Fitz Roy laid the first stone of the sill of the dock 'and was pleased to approve of this important work being named "The Fitz Roy Dock"'. An engraved copper plate commemorating the event was placed under the stone. The last sentence of the inscription noted that 'The Level of the Bed of this Stone is 52 feet below the original surface of the Island at this spot'. The Engineer had made his point; much of the work had indeed been 'unappreciable'.<sup>107</sup>

The last parts of the work were the most difficult and dangerous but by now it seemed that the Legislative Council was assured that the work was moving towards completion and there were no more Select Committees. In July 1856 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the mouth of the dock would be blown down in two months.<sup>108</sup>

The dock was used for the first time on 30 September 1857 by the colonial steam dredge "Hercules" which remained until 8 October. The next occupant, a ship of the Royal Navy was more impressive. On 1 December 1857 HMS *Herald*, under the command of Captain H M Denham entered the Fitz Roy Dock to be overhauled and was undocked on 5 December. Captain Denham reported that 'the most perfect order was observed during the unusual contact with a penal settlement in a ship whose crew were in the novel position of occupying her while in Dry Dock'.<sup>109</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* took the opportunity to question another enquiry into the running of the penal establishment that was then in progress. 'The most perfect order and discipline appears to be exercised amongst the men. Mr

Superintendent Ormsby and his assistants may well challenge inquiry into the management of the people'.<sup>110</sup> In May 1859 the Peninsular & Oriental Company's steamer "Benares" was the dry dock's first commercial user.<sup>111</sup>

#### 2.1.16. The workshops

Of equal importance with the dock were its pumps, the machinery for ship repairs and the workshops in which to house them. With the arrival of the machinery from England early in 1853, work began on the engine house and the first section of the workshops. The design of the workshops appears to owe much to that of the 'steam factory' at the Royal Dockyard in Portsmouth. An account and plans of the work at Portsmouth were published in 1853 in the *Professional Papers of the Royal Engineers* by Captain James who had taken over the work there from Sir William Denison on the latter's appointment to Van Diemen's Land. Denison had been the first editor of the *Papers* and it seems likely that both he and Mann would have received copies of the publication, Captain James' contribution to which had been compiled in September 1851.<sup>112</sup>

Like the work around the dock, the construction of the workshops involved the removal of more sandstone cliffs to provide space for the new buildings and to reclaim more ground around them. William Cahill, the Principal Foreman, reported that the 'greater portion of the foundations were set under water, as the tides would permit'.<sup>113</sup> By c. 1858-1859, shortly after the dry dock had come into use, the engine house and six bays of the workshops at Cockatoo Island had been completed.<sup>114</sup> It seems likely that the original lumber yard was abandoned at this time, or used only for domestic tasks associated with the upkeep of the prison buildings, to be replaced by the new workshops, as the dock became the main workplace.

By 1861 an extension to the workshops was under construction and was completed by the end of 1864.<sup>115</sup> A central entrance and six more bays were added, terminating in another, separate building at the north end, identical to and balancing the engine house at the south. Photographs show that, in the process of building the extension, the roof of the workshops was altered to provide clerestory lighting, closely comparable with the Portsmouth steam factory.<sup>116</sup> A cupola over the central entrance to the Cockatoo Island workshops provided a decorative feature that was also comparable with the Royal Dockyards. A much more elaborate element had been planned by Mann but in December 1861 a prisoner 'deliberately and wilfully destroyed the ornamental stonework' that was in preparation 'for the pediment over the entrance archway to the new work-shops'.<sup>117</sup> William Derrincourt, in his reminiscences of life as a convict at Cockatoo Island, identified the man as Swan, 'a tasteful and skilled workman in ornamental stone-cutting and scroll-work' who had been directed to carve 'an immense ornament for the dome of the engineering house – a stone representation of the Royal Arms'. Swan, who had been working on the piece for about two years, 'beat his magnificent carving to pieces with a sledge-hammer' when the overseer replaced his assistant with someone whom he did not like.<sup>118</sup>

#### 2.1.17. A growing establishment

As Cockatoo Island changed from being a British penal establishment to a colonial one, the number of civil officers employed in its administration increased. From 1839 to 1847 the island had been run by the Superintendent, Charles Ormsby and his Assistant; security was maintained by the military guard and prison labour was under the direction of the Engineer's Department. A dispenser had been appointed in 1846, but other than this officer, all of the other tasks necessary to run the penal establishment, including the supervision of labour, were carried out by prisoners.

In 1848, when the construction of the dry dock was officially sanctioned, more free officers were appointed. In August a Foreman of Works was requested as it appeared to be 'impossible to obtain from the Convicts the amount of work that ought to be reasonably expected from them unless there is on the spot a person to be held responsible for a vigilant superintendence'. William Little, formerly Superintendent of the Victoria Barracks stockade, was recommended and requested permission to bring his wife and children with him to Island as he could not afford to maintain them in Sydney 'his children being all so young as to be unable to earn any thing towards their maintenance'.<sup>119</sup> Two overseers and a clerk, who also doubled as the Clerk of Petty Sessions, also joined the establishment and like the Foreman were allowed quarters.<sup>120</sup> When the dispenser's room in the hospital was taken over to accommodate an increasing number of sick prisoners, the dispenser was given a small weatherboard residence and was relieved of being quartered in his place of work.<sup>121</sup> A small community of free officers and their families was beginning to be formed, living at the east end of the island away from the main prison buildings but in close proximity to the lumber yard, quarries and the dock site.

Early in 1849 an officer was placed in charge of the military guard. His quarters, to plans drawn by the Engineer's Department in 1848, were built close to the military barracks and guard house but enjoyed some privacy on the north side in the form of a garden. These quarters were one of the last buildings to be designed by the Colonial Engineer's Department. By the time James Gordon relinquished command in January 1849, his Department's role in superintending construction on Cockatoo Island had ceased, as it had already become a colonial establishment.<sup>122</sup> Like all other buildings on the island, the house was constructed by prison labour, as was some of its furniture. The Visiting Magistrate thought that, 'Taking into consideration the Solitary position of the Officer of the Guard on Cockatoo Island and the Description of Duty he has to perform' the items required were not unreasonable'.<sup>123</sup> Boredom was an occupational hazard and with few women on the island boating, fishing, cards and chess had to fill the officer's time, assisted by 'the choicest brands'.<sup>124</sup>

Further additions to the free resident community came as the result of the new labour arrangements and the increasing complexity of work on the dock. In 1850 two more overseers were appointed (as per the recommendations of the 1849 Select Committee) and new quarters were built to a very plain design drawn by Mann.<sup>125</sup> Three paired houses to this plan were built between 1851 and 1853, the first having a storehouse associated with it.<sup>126</sup> Arrangements for the accommodation of the clerk, appointed in 1851 to administer the new system of task work, were less substantial and consisted of a weatherboard house valued at £20. The first occupant, Joseph P Collier was also the island schoolmaster but this aspect of his duties appears to have lapsed after a couple of years.<sup>127</sup> Later plans show a schoolroom in the range of buildings behind his quarters.<sup>128</sup> When the workers who accompanied the new machinery from England to supervise its erection and working arrived in February 1853, temporary houses were provided in the garden of the Superintendent's house but by February 1854 the men had moved off the island, preferring to live elsewhere.<sup>129</sup> Two more foremen were appointed in 1854, to progress the work on the dock. By 1857 there were 89 free persons on the island (excluding the military) comprising 45 adults and 44 children.<sup>130</sup>

The most significant player in the construction of the dry dock, the Engineer G K Mann, was notable by his absence from the resident population of Cockatoo Island, a fact that was often remarked upon as discontent with the progress of the dock mounted. An Assistant Engineer was appointed in November 1852 and by late the following year a substantial house had been built for this officer on the east side of the island, but Mann continued to refute the need for his own presence close to the works.<sup>131</sup>

#### 2.1.18. Housing the guard

The military guard on the island varied in number, dependent not just upon the size of the prison population but also upon the larger demands of empire. In 1850, as part of a general reduction of British forces, the guard (which had originally numbered 58 rank and file) was reduced and additional police constables were employed instead.<sup>132</sup> By 1852 the military contingent consisted of a subaltern, a sergeant, four corporals and 32 privates.<sup>133</sup> The police continued to fill the gap and was increased to twelve in 1853 by which time the force was sufficiently large to be under the command of an inspector and a sergeant.

In April 1858 the military were withdrawn and the island police guard was increased to 30 constables<sup>134</sup> rising to 39 in 1862.<sup>135</sup> When the military returned again, in 1862, the contingent consisted of an officer, a sergeant and 26 rank and file. The police force was reduced to ten constables but the change was short lived. Two years later, during the second Maori War, the military were finally withdrawn and the police force once again assumed its former strength.<sup>136</sup> During 1866 with less than two hundred prisoners at Cockatoo Island the police force was more than halved, from 36 constables to 15, under a senior sergeant and two senior constables and remained at this level until the penal establishment closed in October 1869.<sup>137</sup>

Quite where all of the police force lived is uncertain. Some accommodation was provided in 1850<sup>138</sup> and a police barracks was built in 1853<sup>139</sup> presumably used by the single men, but some of force were married and had their families with them on the island. Some of the smaller buildings to the east of the Superintendent's quarters and shown in the 1857 plans, which had previously been used by the mechanics who had come out from England, may have been used as police married quarters. The military barracks could also have been adapted to house some of the police and their families between 1858 and 1862. The Inspector and Sergeant would have required more salubrious accommodation than the constables and it is possible that, in the period from 1854 to 1862, during which the military force was much reduced and then withdrawn, the military officer's quarters were adapted for use as shared quarters for these officers, both, in 1857, being single men.

For some it seems, the posting was reasonable agreeable. Writing in October 1856 to his brother and sister, one of the constables described his duties as 'sitting in a boat, armed, to make sure that no-one

escapes'. The pay was £8. 8s a month, with 'good rooms to live in, coals, candles, flour, beef, mutton, soap and all articles, even tobacco supplied by government, except butter, shirts and stockings'. Convict servants were an added bonus. His man, 'a darkey' called Peter' was 'one of the kindest and willing ones'. But the sadness of the place was still telling: 'of all places for Prisoners it his [sic] awful to see a wife come to see her Husband he being sent here for 15 years'.<sup>140</sup>

#### 2.1.19. The prison population

Although Cockatoo Island was designated as a place for hard labour, the prison population consisted of the usual mixture of men common to such establishments, including invalids, lunatics, the lame and the blind and those of 'doubtful character'.<sup>141</sup> Many prisoners worked within the prison, or as servants to prison officers. While this was sometimes the subject of abuse and often the cause of complaint by Mann, who wanted as large a work force as possible for the dock, the infrastructure of the prison was dependent upon prison labour and many of its occupants were totally unfit for hard labour.

Security on the island was tight. Sentries were set at regular intervals around the shoreline during the day and when their work was completed the prisoners were confined to barracks and surrounded by a tighter ring of sentry posts. Escape attempts were usually unsuccessful, with a few notable exceptions. The common conviction that the waters surrounding the island were shark infested may have helped to minimise the numbers who thought it worth the swim to try to make the shore, as did the prospect of being shot at by the police.

From 1848 when Cockatoo Island became a colonial gaol and work on the dock got under way, the prison population began to rise dramatically. In 1849 there were just under four hundred men on the island and by 1852 just under five hundred. In 1851 the mess house was converted into another dormitory and a new mess house built on the west side of the quadrangle.<sup>142</sup> The prison accommodation was frequently massively overcrowded and verminous, the food was poor and inadequate, outbreaks of sickness were common, there were no bathing facilities other than the dock (when it was finally completed) and the prisoners frequently had insufficient clothing. Unnatural practices' were a common feature of prison life, made all the easier at night by overcrowded dormitories and little supervision. In 1848 the Visiting Magistrate had the three cells in the main barracks divided by a wooden partition, to enable him to remove six prisoners who are 'supposed to be most addicted to unnatural and filthy practices'.<sup>143</sup> Ormsby too commented on the attractiveness of young offenders, 'fair haired boys' whom he was obliged to keep separate from the men.<sup>144</sup> By the late 1850s overt homosexuality was a cause of major complaint and later one of the main features of an enquiry into prisons generally.

The health of Aboriginal prisoners, of whom there were always a small number, was of particular concern due to their high mortality rate in custody, for no obvious cause. Governor Fitz Roy asked a small committee of health officers to meet for the purpose of considering 'some alternative, which would be less destructive to the lives of the Aborigines than confinement' at Cockatoo Island. There were few alternatives, the Committee reported, as Aboriginal prisoners 'do not bear captivity but pine and die in any situation'. If circumstances permitted, then consideration should be given to their liberation, if at all possible.<sup>145</sup>

An investigation in 1849 into complaints about some of Superintendent Ormsby's activities suggested that he had found an alternative source of work for some of the prisoners, in line with his previous appointment as Superintendent of Agriculture on Norfolk Island. Many of the complaints were petty, malicious and essentially 'not proven' but the investigation provided interesting information about the way in which Ormsby supplemented his income. The evidence for a charge of 'Fattening and killing 1,000 lbs weight of pork, fed on prisoners' rations for his own use and benefit' was not conclusive but it was noted that 'eight Pigs, ten goats and one hundred and seventy head of poultry are now on Mr Ormsby's premises'. There was also an extensive range of walled gardens at the east end of the island, centred round the Superintendent's residence.

Ormsby was given a severe reprimand for having 'disregarded the rule by which he is prohibited, under the express penalty of immediate dismissal from Office, from employing on his own account or for his own advantage any of the Prisoners on the Island besides the three servants allowed to him' but kept his job because of 'the general efficiency of his management of the prisoners on the island'. In the light of the evidence for a lack of suitable employment for those who were exempt from work on the dock, tailoring, shoemaking and gardening became accepted forms of alternative labour. Ormsby was allowed his own private garden but all of the other gardens on the island were to be 'part of the public works' and to be cultivated for the benefit of the establishment.<sup>146</sup> By the 1850s the area to the south of the prisoners barracks was used as the prisoners' gardens, while other areas adjacent to the Superintendent's house were occupied by the residences and gardens of newer free workers,

employed in association with the dock.<sup>147</sup>

#### 2.1.20. Extending the dock 1858-1860s

As soon as the dry dock was finished there were plans to extend it and by 1858 the work was under way. Like the original dock, this too took a very long time. More of the adjacent cliff had to be excavated and in the process the road between the wharf and the prisoners' barracks was removed.<sup>148</sup> Excavation appears to have stopped just short of the water tanks and filtering bed that were an essential part of the island's water supply. A larger dock required greater pumping capacity and this time the machinery was made 'on the establishment, from original designs' using the resources and expertise of P N Russell's foundry, G K Mann and the Cockatoo Island engine shop and workshops.<sup>149</sup> Two 22-inch pumps were being made in the early 1860s and two sumps excavated for them, 'twenty-four feet through solid rock'.<sup>150</sup> By 1865 the pumping machinery consisted of four 22-inch cylinder lift pumps and the dock could be emptied in four hours. The setting for a new boiler, also made in the workshops, was about to be completed at which time the 80 feet high circular chimney 'built entirely by prison labour' would be brought into use.<sup>151</sup> Derrincourt noted that the circular parapet of the chimney was also Swan's work.<sup>152</sup> Excavation for the elongation of the dock had been carried to its full depth and was capable of being brought into use, in case of emergency. The stone for the altars was in preparation but part of the cliff that abutted the head of the dock was yet to be removed. Despite all these efforts, it was difficult to keep pace with developments in ship building. In his report in May 1865 Mann advocated 'immediate steps being taken for the construction of an additional dock of sufficient capacity for future requirements'. Cockatoo Island was still the best location. With an easy approach, ample depth of water 'and well behind any defences that may be erected' the locality was 'evidently destined to become the Naval Arsenal of the Colony'.<sup>153</sup>

#### 2.1.21. Prison security: free and bond

With the dock and workshops in use, managing prison labour became more complicated. Prisoners were withdrawn as a security precaution as ships left the dock, but Cockatoo Island now presented a curious mix of free workers and prison labour. Vessels in dock and private engineering establishments could hire the machinery in the workshops at an hourly rate and could bring their own skilled labour force to the island for the purpose. As the workshops offered some of the largest machinery in the Colony, their use was by no means limited to maritime work.<sup>154</sup> Ships in dock were repaired by the owner's own workmen and their crews were often temporarily resident on the island as work took place. As Captain Denham had remarked in 1857, a stint in a penal establishment dry dock was something of a novelty. By the early 1860s the dock was occupied for about half the year and there were a great many free persons coming and going, in and around the island.

Perhaps the most illustrious visitors were the crew of *HMS Galatea*, the Duke of Edinburgh's ship, which was in dry dock at Cockatoo Island for repairs from 7-24 February 1868, in the end days of the penal establishment. While Captain Mann and his family offered the hospitality of their home to the officers, the ship's company camped on a 'fine piece of ground in front of the dock'. Here they played rounders, quoits, or skittles or 'sat round their washing-tubs all day, up to their elbows in soap suds, rubbing their clothes out, which seems to be a British sailor's idea of Paradise'. Despite an unfortunate event at Clontarf, the crew's time on Cockatoo Island 'was a very agreeable sort of penal servitude which none of them would object to undergo again'.<sup>155</sup>

#### 2.1.22. Task work and tensions at the dock

As a place of hard labour, various schemes were used to try to extract the maximum amount of work from a reluctant workforce who laboured from 6 am to 5 pm in the summer and from 7 am to 4 pm in the winter. In 1851 task work was introduced by which, in return for good conduct, prisoners could earn remission of part of the probation period required before applying for a ticket-of-leave. The system was further refined in 1853 with the men divided into three classes 'to prevent the active, the intelligent, and the healthy being placed in a better position than the weak, the ignorant, and the sickly, and to diminish, as far as possible, the inequalities produced by these and other causes'. With three classes of workers and sixty-one categories of 'trade' it was perhaps not surprising that it required a full time clerk to administer the scheme. The men were remunerated for 'over work' (that is work performed over and above the task set for their 8 1/4 hour day) with some of the amount earned being used for 'personal indulgences' such as tea, sugar and tobacco, and the rest placed in the Savings Bank awaiting the prisoner's release.<sup>156</sup>

There was, inevitably, an inherent tension between the management of Cockatoo Island as a gaol and the construction of the dock and between the personnel responsible for each of these functions. The gaol required tight security and an adherence to rules and regulations to prevent this being

compromised. Ormsby and his staff were responsible for the prisoners but Mann and his staff directed the use of their labour. The fact that there was often little sympathy or understanding between the two parties was evident in various enquiries into the progress of the dock and into the conduct and management of the gaol. The presence of free persons added an unwelcome dynamic into the operation of a prison and when this was combined with social differences, the mixture occasionally became volatile. Ormsby was no gentleman, but clearly some of the men employed at the dock were arrogant and overbearing and it was perhaps not surprising that the Superintendent sometimes resorted to 'improper language'.<sup>157</sup>

When a dispute in 1855 got out of hand, the Board convened to investigate reported that the 'main cause of misunderstandings which have, from time to time occurred since the Civil Engineer's Department has been connected with Cockatoo Island will be apparent in comparing the interpretation of the power vested in the visiting Magistrate, as taken by Captain McLerie with that by Captain Mann'. The Visiting Magistrate 'thinks his control extends over every person and building on the Island with the exception of those connected with the Dry Dock and considers himself at liberty to make minor alterations to existing rules without reference to the Government. Captain Mann does not recognize the authority of the visiting magistrate over his Department'. The Superintendent's attitude reflected 'opinions prevailing with his superior [the Visiting Magistrate] which we do not subscribe to'. The 'misunderstandings' also had much to do with social class. 'Officers and others holding the social position of gentlemen' and in the employment of the Government, should not be subject to forcible detention by police. Nor should the Superintendent 'restrain officials of another Department leaving the Island, especially when that department is under an Officer whose position is not inferior to his own, and he cannot reconcile the restriction imposed on the Engineer department, with the liberty granted to officials of similar standing in the Superintendent's family or under his orders.' It had all got rather out of hand and the 'good of the public service' had been lost sight of.<sup>158</sup>

A more serious enquiry in 1857-1858 saw the eventual end of Ormsby's long career on Cockatoo Island and his replacement in 1 August 1859 by G K Mann who became both Superintendent of the prison and Engineer at the dockyard. In the process Mann finally had to move to live on the island, but not until substantial changes had been made to Ormsby's old residence. According to the evidence of Henry Clarke, the extension of the Superintendent's house occupied much of the workforce from August 1859 until October 1860. The work left few men at the dock, except for 'one day in June, when there was a Committee on the island' when about thirty men were put to work at the dock and withdrawn back to work on the house when the Committee left. The orientation of the old house was reversed and the new looked to the east, and not over the prison. William Cahill the Foreman of Engineers reported that a 'great amount of timber' was used for the additions and alterations making a house 84 ft by 35 ft with nine or ten rooms and 'two kitchens under one roof but detached from main building'. The conversion involved a lot of work connecting the new building with the old one, 'in breaking through the walls for doors and windows and making them good again'. Henry Clarke did the plastering including cornices. The end result was a stylish gentleman's residence for Mann, his wife and his six daughters.<sup>159</sup> The creation of a much larger house, facing in the opposite direction from its predecessor must also have required considerable work on the garden including the removal of old outbuildings.

#### 2.1.23. New regulations

If Mann had imagined that control of the prison would make the direction of work on the dock easier, then he was somewhat mistaken. On 1 June 1858 new regulations were brought in, making it mandatory for prisoners convicted from that date to work the entire period of their probation before being eligible for tickets-of-leave. At Cockatoo Island the effect of this change was to put side by side, in the same work gangs, men who gained nothing by their work with those who could earn remission, which could be as much as half a day for every day worked. The introduction of the new system 'had a marked effect upon the general conduct of the Prisoners' resulting in 'an inordinate amount of insubordination' causing considerable problems, in particular, for tasks that could not be coerced, such as diving operations at the dock.<sup>160</sup> By the end of 1860 the prisoners were in a state of open revolt with many refusing to work. Punishment, in the form of solitary confinement for fourteen days at Darlinghurst, effected little change with the prisoners simply refusing to work again on their return. With about a third of the men refusing to work, the strike caused serious disruption.<sup>161</sup>

#### 2.1.24. The prisoners' friend: Henry Parkes and the 1861 Select Committee

In 1861 a Select Committee investigation into public prisons, chaired by Henry Parkes, brought into the open the overcrowded state of Cockatoo Island, its appalling living conditions, the problem of homosexuality and the prisoners' grievances about the 1858 regulations and about partiality in the application of rules and regulations. Old timers in the gaol system knew that the way things were run



at Cockatoo Island differed from other prisons, to the disadvantage of many. Mann had little truck with prisoners' complaints about free overseers and was generally unapproachable. As one prisoner remarked: 'There is more difficulty in seeing Captain Mann, under general circumstances, than in seeing Queen Victoria'. When the Select Committee visited the island so many prisoners wanted to address them that each dormitory was asked to elect two men as their delegates and in this way each of the five wards was heard by Committee.

Mann's response to allegations of the practice of sodomy within the prison and to other matters, including prisoners' complaints that their petitions were not forwarded to the appropriate authorities, seemed somewhat casual and his knowledge of the workings of parts of the prison system scant. While Mann himself had repeatedly complained about the lack of men available to undertake work at the dock, there was evidence of considerable amounts of labour being expended on his own residence, in a manner far exceeding any excesses of Ormsby's.

The Select Committee commented unfavourably on the living conditions at Cockatoo Island, the problem of the dual system of regulations and on prison discipline which was 'very imperfect, and in no way determined by any of the moral axioms of the present age which have been established by philosophical investigations on the subject.' 'Much improvement' was called for by the Committee but the establishment at Cockatoo Island was ill suited for reform and unlike any other prison it was devoted to one major public work – the completion of the dock and its associated buildings. <sup>162</sup>

Some changes were made after the Select Committee enquiry to bring Cockatoo Island more in line with other prisons. The terminology of prison life changed and the overseers became 'warders'. In the dormitories hammocks replaced bed boards. <sup>163</sup> Fewer men could be accommodated in the wards with this arrangement but numbers at Cockatoo Island were falling. In 1863 a school for prisoners was established on the island but was only of interest to the men when they received remuneration for going. When the prison closed J Hatton, the teacher for six years, left his own testimony to the Superintendent's interest in the enterprise in the last entry in his school register. 'During the Six years and upwards that I am on the Island Captain Mann visited the School only Three times - namely the 28 February 1865, 5 June 1866, 26 November 1867. J Hatton.' <sup>164</sup> By now there was only one man left on the island who was still serving a sentence passed by a British court. All of the others had been sentenced in the Colony. On 21 October 1869 Cockatoo Island prison closed and all of the remaining prisoners were moved to Darlinghurst. The dock continued its working life but the position of Civil Engineer ceased to exist.

#### 2.1.25. The Industrial Schools

It was perhaps ironic that Henry Parkes, who had chaired the inquiry that had laid bare the deficiencies of the penal establishment on Cockatoo Island, should be closely associated with the next stage of the island's institutional life, as the site for the Colony's new industrial schools and reformatory.

A dual scheme of education, with both National and Denominational schools, had been introduced in New South Wales in 1848, providing elementary education for many, but the problems of urban poverty, neglected and deprived children and of juvenile offenders remained. By the 1850s responsibility for the care of such children was being debated and accepted by government and in 1866 two Acts were passed to deal with these children. The *Industrial Schools Act* was intended to provide for the care, education and training of neglected and abandoned children while the *Reformatory Schools Act* provided an institution for persons under the age of 16 who had been brought before the courts and convicted of an offence punishable by at least fourteen days' imprisonment. <sup>165</sup> Both types of institution owed much to contemporary developments in England and Europe which were well known to the promoters of the industrial school and reformatory schemes and their progress and management were frequently gauged against these overseas examples.

In 1867 the Nautical School Ship *Vernon* was established as an industrial school for boys while for the girls an industrial school and a reformatory were established in the old military barracks at Newcastle. <sup>166</sup> One was to become the 'proud flagship' of child social welfare, the other 'its disgrace and shame'. <sup>167</sup>

#### 2.1.26. What's in a name? : from Cockatoo Island to Biloela

After a spectacularly unsuccessful start at the Newcastle barracks (a very cheap solution to providing accommodation), where the girls attacked authority, property and propriety, it was suggested that a better and less public home might be found for them in the abandoned prison buildings on Cockatoo Island. Their neighbours at Newcastle had been voluble in their opposition to having the girls in their

back yard, but the government employees who lived on Cockatoo Island were not in a position to complain.

In May 1871 arrangements were in progress to fit up the buildings for the reception of their new occupants.<sup>168</sup> A large official party, including the Governor and Lady Belmore, the Premier Sir James Martin, the Colonial Secretary the Hon John Robertson and the Minister for Works, the Hon James Byrnes visited the island on a tour of inspection. A fence ten feet high was being erected 'to screen the girls from the observation of persons employed at the Fitzroy Dock'.<sup>169</sup> A change of name would attempt to erase the convict associations of the past and the Industrial School and Reformatory were named Biloela – the Aboriginal name for the island.

The Reformatory and Industrial School were allocated the western end of the island which was separated from the dock, the workshops and the dock employees' residences by two lines of fence from the north and south shores to the boundary of the old lumber yard. The Reformatory, which was a separate establishment although within the Industrial School precinct, was housed in one of the former overseers' cottages [Building 9]<sup>170</sup> and was enclosed with a galvanised iron fence. The accommodation here was cramped, although the number of girls was small; 'a small cottage of four rooms and an out-house', not so prison-like as the old gaol, but with two rooms for the Matron and two for the girls, the dining room often had to double as a dormitory.<sup>171</sup>

For the Industrial School the old prison dormitories and dining hall served their original functions and the Superintendent George Lucas and his wife, who was also the Matron of the establishment, took up the old military officer's quarters. The military barracks and guard house were adapted for a variety of functions including a store, office, sewing room, laundry and shed. The house matron and two sub-matrons, all widows with families of their own, lived in the two other paired residences which may also have accommodated the teacher.<sup>172</sup> A new schoolroom was erected in the open area to the west of the old lumber yard. The gatekeeper, storekeeper and messenger were presumably accommodated close to their places of work, while the laundress' house was outside the fenced area of the school.<sup>173</sup>

Most of the girls arrived by boat from Newcastle at the end of May and obliged delighted loafers at the steamer wharf with 'a lot of low chaff'. The *Sydney Morning Herald* hoped that the change of residence 'will be the means of effecting a change for the better in the conduct of these unfortunate creatures'.<sup>174</sup>

For the next three years the Biloela Industrial School was a disaster, 'a sort of pandemonium', where the ignorance, mismanagement, physical cruelty and abuse of George Lucas and his wife were countered by increasing defiance from the inmates – and to some extent by other staff. The rioting continued, there was damage to property and outrageous behaviour. Lucas called in the police and even the officers of the *Vernon* to try to re-exert control, but nothing could restore any real semblance of order or purpose. One of the vital components of the system was having the right people to administer it, as much literature on the topic attested.

#### 2.1.27. Getting rid of the Superintendent

The detailed account of Biloela compiled by the Select Committee on Public Charities was a Dickensian story of the misuse of power by the ignorant and left little to the imagination about the personnel and conditions in the Industrial School. The change of name could not alter 'the character of the place' and Biloela had all the characteristics of a prison. The island had a 'neglected and dilapidated look' and the Committee expressed its surprise 'considering the length of time the place has been occupied as a penal establishment, with abundance of labour at the command of the authorities, that so little should have been done towards softening its bleak and ragged appearance.' For the eighty or so girls and the handful of infant boys (too young to go to the *Vernon*) who comprised the school's population, the surroundings were cheerless, there was no proper water supply, the sanitary arrangements were 'utterly neglected' and their treatment was appalling.

While little could be done to make the former prison a cheerful home, the main defect in the institution lay in the choice as its Superintendent of George Lucas, an uneducated, uncultivated and slovenly man and, much to his detriment, under the influence of a wife whose 'infirmity of temper' made her an unsuitable choice of helpmeet. In November 1873 with the school reported to be 'in a state of insurrection' the Parliamentary Committee visited the island. Confronted with tangible evidence of Lucas' physical violence, the Committee then found eight girls locked in a bare and dark room. Here, where the 'foul and sickly stench' attested to 'every call of nature being there answered by its inmates', they had spent five days, fed only on bread and water, drinking from a bucket and sleeping on the flagged floor. The 'violence of language and demeanour' displayed by Mr and Mrs Lucas when the Committee attempted to suggest that there might be some other way of dealing with the girls 'clearly indicated what was likely to occur when their sense of absolute power was untrammelled by the

presence of any one exercising a restraining influence'. When called upon to show why he should not be dismissed, Lucas' resigned and with this at least one aspect of Biloela began to change for the better.<sup>175</sup>

#### 2.1.28. The feminine touch

In March 1875 Mrs Selina Walker took charge of the institution, order and morale were restored and the inmates became 'a decently clad, tidy and apparently well-behaved lot of young girls', although little could be done to change their prison setting.<sup>176</sup> The management of the institution was now entirely in the hands of women, as recommended by many authorities on the topic. Discipline was 'gently maintained' and there was no longer any 'sullen or defiant resistance to authority'.<sup>177</sup> With an age range from about seven to eighteen, the girls were divided into junior and senior divisions and the two were kept separate as much as possible. For the younger children the Industrial School was in effect a boarding school while the senior girls were taught domestic skills as well as attending school, to prepare them to go into service.<sup>178</sup> With its mixed intake of the young and neglected and the older and worldly wise, the school's best results were with its younger pupils. Older girls sent to Biloela from the streets had already found the means of earning their living.<sup>179</sup>

The Reformatory continued as a separate establishment and managed to be a little more home-like than the Industrial School, but its administration by the Comptroller General of Prisons did little to dispel the prison reputation of Cockatoo Island and its occupants. In December 1876 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that there were fourteen girls aged from 9-10 to 16 years 'belonging to the criminal classes' in the reformatory with 'terms of imprisonment from 1-5 years'.<sup>180</sup>

While everyone agreed about 'the impropriety of rearing children, themselves innocent of crime, amid the surroundings of a prison', there was no immediate answer as to where else the Industrial School might be located and indecision meant that no funds were expended on improvements. Some repairs were made to the officers' quarters in about 1877-1878, but the Matron's cottage remained 'in a very neglected state'. A playground was eventually provided but the children had 'no shelter from high winds, sun or rain' on the exposed site.<sup>181</sup> The Reformatory was more fortunate and in 1879 it moved to new, purpose-built accommodation, 'Shaftesbury' at Watson's Bay.<sup>182</sup>

The addition of the former reformatory premises to the Industrial School enabled some improvements to be made in the accommodation. The boys, who had previously slept three to a bed in the hospital, were placed in the large timber building that had been built in the reformatory yard and the House Matron moved to the reformatory cottage to oversee them.<sup>183</sup> Other improvements apparently followed as a 'large outlay in repairs to buildings added to costs in 1881'.<sup>184</sup> The school now housed about 100 girls and 20 boys ranging in age from under four to eighteen.<sup>185</sup> The relief provided by additional space was however short lived for there were plans to construct another dry dock at Cockatoo Island to the west of the Fitz Roy Dock, bordering the Industrial School site.

#### 2.1.29. The new dock

By January 1882 work on the new dock was well under way. The Engineer and his two assistants were using Mrs Walker's office and crowding her out and a fence was built around the school to separate it from the dock site. In the process the school lost the use of its sewing room, office, two stores, laundry, drying ground and play ground, some of which were replaced by the re-use of the old buildings in the former lumber yard.<sup>186</sup> By 1883 life was becoming positively dangerous when blasting operations threw large pieces of rock and showers of smaller rocks on to the roofs of the school building and over a large part of the grounds.<sup>187</sup> Moral danger also loomed with large gangs of workmen employed in the immediate vicinity which 'cannot but have an undesirable effect on the senior girls.' Further attempts to make the school more effective by separating the younger 'innocent and neglected' children from the older girls who had already 'graduated in vice' were also thwarted by the reduction in the school grounds.<sup>188</sup>

While work on the dock failed to prompt the removal of the Industrial School, its future was being determined by a new approach to the care of children and by the changing needs of the prison service. A system of boarding out was now the accepted philosophy for the care of young children and the old asylum system, of which Biloela was such a poor example, was on the wane. Meanwhile the introduction into the adult prison service of a new, separate cell system for offenders required the reorganisation of much prison accommodation. In the absence of a new metropolitan penitentiary Biloela was to be brought back into operation as a temporary expedient, as a gaol for the 'broken down class of metropolitan vagrants'.<sup>189</sup>

In 1886 the Biloela Industrial School surrendered its Cockatoo Island site to the Department of Prisons

and moved to the former Roman Catholic Orphanage at Parramatta. Prior to the move, most of the younger girls were transferred to the protection of the State Children's Relief Board to be boarded out in private homes. In future there would be only senior committals to the institution.<sup>190</sup>

#### 2.1.30. The *Vernon*

Like Biloela, the Nautical School Ship (or Nautical Training Ship) *Vernon* was established under the *Industrial Schools Act* to care for neglected children. The use of a training ship as the home for the boys' industrial school solved three basic problems: it provided accommodation; it provided a structure of discipline and order within which boys could be educated and trained with a view to future employment; and it separated them from people and surroundings that might encourage, or prolong, juvenile delinquency. The time honoured tradition and manly pursuit of shipboard life was a simple institutional solution to the whole question of the management of boys, as demonstrated in British nautical training schools. No such easy answer existed for the training of girls who were much more difficult to deal with. The possibility of establishing a school in which youths would be trained for the merchant marine had been suggested as early as 1854 by Henry Parkes and had been promoted by his newspaper *The Empire* and was advanced again in 1866 by Parkes, as Colonial Secretary, when introducing the industrial school and reformatory bills into parliament.<sup>191</sup> In 1867, following the passage of the legislation, the *Vernon*, built in 1839 in Blackwall in England, was purchased and fitted out by the New South Wales government to serve as an industrial school for boys.<sup>192</sup> Its first Superintendent was J S V Mein and the ship was moored off Farm Cove.

Unlike the Biloela Industrial School, the *Vernon* was always well managed. In its earliest years the ship had about 100 boys who ranged in age from as young as two to three years old, to eighteen. Very many of the boys received on board were, Mann reported, 'crawling with vermin, clad in rags, covered in filth, and altogether in a deplorable woe-begone state, with a vicious, furtive, distrustful expression of countenance'. But 'with a plentiful use of soap and water, clean clothing, regular and wholesome diet, kind but firm treatment, and regular work, in a short time their appearance is so changed and improved that they could scarcely be recognized as the same lads.'<sup>193</sup> Most of school age were unable to read or write. The boys led a shipboard life, on ship's time with the day divided into watches and as well as their ordinary schooling were trained in pulling in boats, gun drill, tailoring, shoemaking and carpentry. By the age of 12, if they had been on the *Vernon* for a sufficient length of time and had made good progress, the boys were apprenticed out. Initially the results were variable, with faults on both sides. Some of the boys absconded to return to old ways and old friends but there were also unsuitable employers who hoped 'to extract the labour of an adult from a little boy' for whom they paid one or two shillings a week.<sup>194</sup>

By the mid-1870s the costs and efficacy of the *Vernon* were under question, particularly by Parkes' political opponents. As a means of preparing boys for a career at sea, the school was undoubtedly a failure, the Inspector of Public Charities Hugh Robison reported, as most were apprenticed as servants or farm labourers. Captain Mein and his officers maintained 'efficient yet kindly discipline' but the boys 'learn little in trades' and after considerable cost to the State 'disappear at best as farm drudges, or worse still return to the dangerous influences whence from a time they were rescued at such large cost'.<sup>195</sup> If however the purpose of the school was 'to rid the streets of its young arabs, and afford them the opportunity of becoming amenable to discipline and regular habits' then a 'fair share of success may be claimed'. But perhaps an equal amount of good could be done (at less cost) on an industrial farm?<sup>196</sup> In April 1878 Mein was replaced by F W Neitenstein, already a serving officer of the *Vernon* and the ship entered a new era of 'more energetic management'.

#### 2.1.31. The move to Cockatoo Island

While shipboard life provided the physical setting for reform, the *Vernon* also needed a land base, to raise its own food (to promote health and to reduce costs) and to provide more facilities for work and training. Clearly this was not possible with the ship moored off Mrs Macquarie's Point near the Botanic Gardens and in about 1871, perhaps as a result of the girls' move to the same location, the ship was moored off Cockatoo Island. The boys began the formidable task of getting the island's gardens in order and tree planting. The gardens had 'been permitted to go to wreck and lay idle', the ship's gardener James Duncan reported and the ground was so hard it had to be broken with a pick and dug over three times before planting. The boys acquitted themselves well and with a system of crop rotation the gardens began to supply the ship with vegetables: carrots, onions, turnips, celery, parsley, lettuce, cabbage, cauliflower, parsnips, and pumpkins. The gardens of the former Superintendent's residence were cleared and cropped and then handed back to Charles Cowper, the Water Police Magistrate who became the new occupant following Mann's departure.<sup>197</sup> A year later a boat shed and cow shed had been erected on the island and with plenty of rain, the gardens were flourishing. Some of the island's permanent residents were however less than helpful in these endeavours and whole

crops were stolen overnight despite James Duncan's best endeavours.<sup>198</sup> And if some of the men on the island were a potential moral hazard for the Biloela girls, the dock workers 'proverbially noted for having their conversation interlarded with frightful oaths and obscene expressions' certainly lowered the moral tone and were an unwanted influence on the boys,

The *Vernon's* first stay off Cockatoo Island was short lived and by 1874 the ship had been moved, first back to its old anchorage at Farm Cove and then to a spot between Garden Island and Mrs Macquarie's Chair.<sup>199</sup> The move coincided with early disappointment about the number of boys being apprenticed to seafaring and may have been made in order to return the boys to a place where they 'had the example of Royal Navy and Mercantile Marine ships' around them. It was also a more cheerful location than the doleful surroundings of Cockatoo Island.<sup>200</sup> The lack of a land base was however a considerable disadvantage.

Three years later the *Vernon* was moved back to a mooring at Cockatoo Island. This time the move was permanent and over the next thirty years part of the shore on the east side of the island became an integral part of the training ship's life and was properly equipped for both work and recreation. In the late 1870s and early 1880s the island was used for 'cricket, football and rounders and other outdoor games and amusements' and drill.<sup>201</sup> From the late 1880s the facilities became more elaborate with a swimming bath, gymnasium and playground, recreation hall and entertainment hall.

Soon after they had first left the island, much of the boys' landscaping work was being undone by the island's other residents. The pine trees were 'more or less destroyed' and the local children were breaking off most of the branches of the figs.<sup>202</sup> On their return the boys took up the challenge once more and were regularly gardening and planting trees and shrubs. They also levelled and formed the recreation and drill ground with 250 tons of soil brought across by punt from Hunter's Hill.<sup>203</sup> Pets were allowed on board and Cockatoo Island too was graced with aviaries and with gifts to the boys including a kangaroo and an emu.

From 1887 the younger boys were taken into the care of the State Children's Relief Board to be boarded out, as had also happened at Biloela, so the *Vernon* now only had boys over the age of eleven. The annual reports continued to stress that the boys were under surveillance both day and night. A new dormitory on shore was used from the late 1880s for the younger boys, relieving overcrowding.

#### 2.1.32. The ship and the community

Under Neitenstein's 'energetic management' the *Vernon*, and its successor in 1892 the *Sobraon*, became something of a Sydney institution, developing good relations with the community. The ship developed a corporate persona and spirit with its own brass band, choir and sports teams and became a model institution, regularly shown off to visitors. The Premier, government ministers, the Governor, politicians, overseas and interstate visitors, ships' commanders, foreign consuls, judges, representatives of religious and charitable organisations, the British football team and the Queensland cricket team all visited the ship and wrote their comments in the visitors' book.<sup>204</sup> The annual reports were frequently illustrated with photographs showing all aspects of the boys' life, schooling and recreation. There were, by contrast no photographs of the girls' industrial school. The Governor entertained the boys and officers at Government House and Sir Henry and Lady Parkes did likewise in their own home Hampton Villa, at Balmain on the Queen's Birthday.

Neitenstein's philosophy of reform was based (like Maconochie's years before) on incentives, a 'mark system' by which a boy earned rewards and freedoms as he progressed through the various divisions of the school. The scheme was an advanced one and unusual amongst such institutions in New South Wales.<sup>205</sup> When the boys were apprenticed and left the ship, their placements were monitored, by personal visits on occasion and by an ever increasing correspondence with the apprentices, their masters and with old boys who reported on their progress through life. Large parts of Neitenstein's huge annual reports to Parliament consisted of extracts from these letters, which put a human face to the 'problem child'. In the process Neitenstein also attempt to make a long term evaluation of the efficacy of the training school scheme, a feature of its operation that had not been carried out at similar institutions in Britain.<sup>206</sup>

#### 2.1.33. A changing system

By 1882 there were 188 boys on board and the numbers kept rising. But while the number of boys increased, the cost per head diminished, always a pleasing feature to politicians. The *NSS Vernon* was a success 'as a means of disciplining and directing into wholesome channels the superabundant activity and previously misapplied intelligence of neglected boys'. There was a need for more

accommodation.<sup>207</sup> On 8 November 1892 the institution was transferred to the *Sobraon*, three times as large as the *Vernon* and by the mid-1890s there were more than 500 boys on board. The nature of the institution had however changed. As Neitenstein noted in 1883 the ship 'practically become a Reformatory' as most of its entrants had committed at least one offence.<sup>208</sup> By 1895 it was 'the oldest established reformatory in Australasia'.<sup>209</sup>

The routine established by Neitenstein continued under his successor Captain W H Mason. The ship was 'still thought to be efficacious as a reformatory agent' but there were more new ideas about the care of children.<sup>210</sup> Institutional care was no longer the accepted norm and individual growth and development and the right to privacy came to dominate thinking about child welfare.<sup>211</sup> In July 1911 the era of the nautical schools came to an end and the *Sobraon's* function was transferred on shore to Brush Farm. The *Vernon* and the *Sobraon* had never gone to sea but they had nevertheless maintained a proud nautical tradition.

#### 2.1.34. Biloela Gaol 1888-1909

One of the problems that had long been of concern to prison reformers was 'the evils of association' where, in the absence of any system of classification and separation, young offenders learnt from the old and 'unnatural practices' flourished. From the 1860s under the Inspector of Prisons, Harold Maclean, regulations were introduced into New South Wales gaols that provided for the classification of prisoners, each class having its own regime of punishment and rehabilitation.<sup>212</sup> Appropriate accommodation was an integral component of the system, but the provision of new gaols, or the adaptation of existing buildings, could not be achieved swiftly or cheaply and penal practice often lagged behind penal philosophy. The first penal establishment at Cockatoo Island built in the 1840s had been notorious for its complete lack of any means of prisoner classification and separation and, having been little altered for use as the girls' industrial school, remained in exactly the same condition in the 1880s when it again became part of the prison system.

The re-establishment of a gaol on Cockatoo Island was intended to be a temporary expedient and was undertaken to provide more space at Darlinghurst so that a system of separate treatment for young offenders could be introduced there. Biloela, as it was still to be called, was far from being the ideal solution but with little prison accommodation in the metropolitan area it had to suffice. Maclean was not at all happy about the use of a prison that had sleeping accommodation only in large dormitories which 'is not to be defended, save in the exigency existing from the absence of a metropolitan penitentiary, and should only be regarded as temporary, pending the construction of such a prison, the necessity for which should not be lost sight of.' The class of prisoner to be sent to Biloela would however somewhat ameliorate this evil. The gaol would be used for habitual vagrants and petty offenders, whom it was almost impossible to reform anyway.<sup>213</sup> This temporary expedient, like many such arrangements, was to be long lived and continued until 1909 when 'metropolitan penitentiaries' were completed at Long Bay and Little Bay.

#### 2.1.35. Re-using old buildings

In January 1888 Biloela opened as a gaol for men and women, eventually housing an average of about 170-200 prisoners (with slightly more men than women) and a staff of twenty. A naïve, but informative plan of the prison, together with a comprehensive set of photographs taken for the Prisons Department, provide much useful information about the site in this period of its use. Internal evidence suggests that the plan was drawn in about 1897.<sup>214</sup> The new cook house and isolated cells for females, both built in 1896, are shown but there is no evidence of the conversion of the old kitchen into a discharge ward, nor is the old Water Police Magistrate's house shown as part of the gaol complex, both of which occurred in 1898.

In the new arrangement of things, the men were housed within the original Cockatoo Island penal establishment while the women's section of the gaol was largely within the walls of the old lumber yard. Within the men's quadrangle, to which a verandah was added on three sides, most of the buildings continued to serve the functions for which they had been originally built, with dormitories in the north and east wings and the hospital in the south wing. Near the men's prison, the original military officer's quarters [Building 2] was used by the prison governor. The house was extended on the east side including the addition of a bay window at the north-east corner, perhaps to provide a degree of surveillance along the main walk and down to the wharf.<sup>215</sup> A comparison of a survey of the island drawn in 1892 and the c. 1897 plan suggests that the addition was built between these two dates.<sup>216</sup> The cottages that had once housed the free overseers and later the reformatory and the staff of the industrial school provided married quarters for prison officers.

Much more work was needed to convert the old lumber yard into the women's section of the gaol. This



area, which had become dilapidated by the early 1880s, had been brought back into use by the industrial school when parts of its site and some of its accommodation had been commandeered for the construction of the Sutherland Dock. Using parts of the industrial school buildings and the existing walling and flooring, most of the basic facilities for the women's section of the gaol were provided within this space. Immediately outside the walls were the Deputy Governor's quarters, which had been built for the Fitz Roy Dock's senior foreman of works and had later served as the island's post office.

#### 2.1.36. The workforce

Biloela's prison workforce was unpromising. With a population that included vagrants, prostitutes, the drunk and disorderly and others serving minor sentences of only a few days or weeks, many of its inmates had few skills and stayed in gaol just long enough to be returned to health and sobriety. Some regarded it as a hospital, preferring treatment at Biloela to other institutions. For a significant proportion, Biloela was a revolving door which they entered and exited several times a year. As a result the prisoner turnover was high, with as many as 60-70 admissions each week, an annual total of more than 3,500.

The island's natural resources continued to provide a source of labour for men who were capable of some heavy work and stone was quarried and dressed in the 'paddock' between the men's and women's sections. In time-honoured fashion the prisoners also built parts of their own gaol. For women, the main source of work was needlework, making garments for the Government Stores. Work around the gaol also provided tasks for the weak, the infirm and that class of prisoners called 'incapables'. There was perhaps a strange irony in the employment of some prisoners making cabbage tree hats, once a valued source of employment and income for their predecessors in the original penal establishment, the prohibition of which had led to much discontent in the 1850s.

#### 2.1.37. Additions to the site and buildings

In the 1890s additions were made to the gaol grounds, bringing with them some useful building stock. The site proclaimed for the use of the gaol in June 1888 was essentially the area that had been fenced off for the industrial school in 1882-1883, but with the northern boundary set back along the cliff edge and so excluding the shoreline. It also included the former post office, which had not been a part of the industrial school and was converted for use by the Deputy Governor. In 1891 a small area that included the old task work clerk's quarters, formerly used by the laundress of Biloela industrial school, was added to the gaol site and the cottage became the Deputy Matron's quarters.<sup>217</sup>

Two years later, in 1893, the military barracks and guard house [Building 1], which had been commandeered during the construction of the Sutherland Dock, were added to the prison.<sup>218</sup> The old solitary cells had been demolished in making the dock and the guard house left teetering on the edge of the cliff. In 1887, shortly after the industrial school had moved, the main part of the barracks was being used as the dock engineer's office and quarters and the rear [west end] of the building as quarters for the dock inspector. This arrangement continued when the building was given back to the prison, with stores being substituted for office space but with the two sets of quarters re-used for the same purpose for prison staff. At the same time, a small area of land on the north side of the Deputy Governor's quarters was also added to the gaol grounds.<sup>219</sup>

#### 2.1.38. Biloela house and grounds

Most of the changes that were being affected in other prisons passed Biloela by, because its buildings could not be adapted to accommodate them. But when the Water Police Magistrate's residence [Building 22], once occupied by the Superintendents of the original penal establishment, was added to the gaol, Biloela was able to do its part in the new policy of cultivating prison grounds. The idea was one of many instituted by Frederick Nietenstein, now the Comptroller General of Prisons, who brought to his new job the same reforming zeal and energetic management that he had demonstrated when in charge of the NSS *Vernon* and *Sobraon*.<sup>220</sup> Part of the garden was already 'neglected' in 1892 but when it was handed over in August 1897 an 'immediate start' was made to clear and trench the ground.<sup>221</sup> Like the *Vernon* boys before them, the prisoners planted vegetables for the use of the institution, a reasonably successful enterprise although sometimes thwarted by the island's lack of water.<sup>222</sup> In 1901 a pump was erected in the 'large garden' to draw water from the silos giving a better supply for vegetable growing.<sup>223</sup> Not all of the gardening was edible. There were flower beds, grass borders and even decorative urns and in 1898 a reclamation wall was built in front of the gaol gate, leading to the wharf 'in order to improve the entrance by tree planting and widening the causeway to the gaol'.<sup>224</sup>

The old Superintendent's house [Building 22] was 'thoroughly renovated' and divided into 'barrack

quarters' for male and female unmarried warders, freeing up other accommodation for married staff. In addition to the dining and bedrooms, 'a spacious recreation room' was set apart in each of the quarters, which were 'roomy, healthy and most comfortable'.<sup>225</sup> The house and grounds were formally added to the gaol in 1898.<sup>226</sup>

#### 2.1.39. Additions in the 1890s and final closure

While the use of Biloela was 'temporary', it eventually became clear that this term was somewhat elastic and that funds would have to be expended on improvements to try to make Biloela more effective, despite its defects. By September 1893 'proper punishment cells' had been built in the male and female divisions, which produced 'a marked improvement in the behaviour of the prisoners of both sexes, inasmuch as breaches of order and prison discipline can now be properly dealt with'. The stone used in building the cells for the female division was quarried, rough dressed, and conveyed to the site by prison labour.<sup>227</sup> Isolated cells were added to the female wing in 1896.<sup>228</sup> In the same year a new kitchen was built along the west side of the men's quadrangle.<sup>229</sup> Two years later the old kitchen was converted into a discharge ward and the former discharge ward converted into a receiving ward. Again the work was performed by prison labour. After the water supply had been improved the previous year, a 'thorough system of sewerage' was affected, a considerable novelty on Cockatoo Island, and all of the water closets and urinals were connected to it.<sup>230</sup> In 1901 when the gaol regulations were revised, dark cells were done away with and those at Biloela were converted into light cells.<sup>231</sup>

The use of Biloela continued to prop up other parts of the prison system. Another of Neitenstein's reforms, 'restricted association', could not be instituted on the island, but in order to make the system effective elsewhere, women of the prostitute and vagrant class under short sentence were sent to Biloela where they were imprisoned 'under non-reformative and unhopeful conditions'.<sup>232</sup> As there were a large number of women in this category, the accommodation in the female section had to be revised and the workroom enlarged in 1897-1898.<sup>233</sup> In July 1899 the Public Works Committee condemned the establishment as a prison but there was no alternative. In the meantime the best efforts were made 'to keep the place habitable, clean and healthy'.<sup>234</sup>

Recidivism continued to be a common feature of the Biloela population. In his annual report for 1902 the Governor S F Pollack noted that: 'the general run of prisoners merely consider Biloela a retreat to which they may periodically retire for cleansing and repairs. They represent a class who have grown indifferent to their whereabouts, the great majority of them neither wanting work nor the responsibility of providing for their own maintenance.' Many were admitted 'on the undefined, but very elastic, charge of having no visible or sufficient means of support'. These were street undesirables, for whom Biloela was a dumping ground; from 'the man with £5 5s in his pocket to the man, carried in on a stretcher, covered with sores, and the vermin dropping off him'.<sup>235</sup>

In December 1906 as Long Bay neared completion the last male prisoner entered Biloela, to be discharged the same month and from 1907 the prison housed only women.<sup>236</sup> Some changes in the use of the accommodation were made after the men had gone, with various of the men's wards and the dining hall in the main quadrangle being converted into workrooms.<sup>237</sup> Despite its shortcomings, every effort was still being made 'to bring home to the class of prisoners received the necessity on their part of making strong endeavours to lead a new life, and thus become happier and better women'.<sup>238</sup>

On 14 January 1909 Biloela Gaol closed when the new prison for women opened at Little Bay. After seventy years of occupation for penal and institutional purposes 'that melancholy medley of stone and wooden buildings on the heights of Cockatoo Island' was vacant.<sup>239</sup>



## 2.2. Chronology

December 1835	Governor Bourke instructed to reduce the penal establishment at Moreton Bay and to report on the 'moral effect' of banishment to Norfolk Island.
November 1837	Bourke reports that penal establishment at Moreton Bay has been considerably reduced and that the system of management at Norfolk Island produced 'no real reformation of heart'
1837	Bill to substitute hard labour for transportation to a place of secondary punishment introduced into the Legislative Council but deferred due to appointment of Molesworth Committee
1838	Bill reintroduced into Legislative Council and encounters considerable opposition
June 1838	Act passed enabling secondary offenders 'of good conduct' sentenced by the Colonial courts to transportation to Norfolk Island or Moreton Bay to earn a conditional remission of parts of their sentences, by working in irons on the roads or on other public works
1838	Molesworth Committee recommends discontinuance of transportation to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 'as soon as practicable' and much stricter regulation of the rules for reducing sentences by good conduct. Norfolk Island to be used for experiment in penal reform under Captain Maconochie
February 1839	Initial contingent of sixty commuted prisoners from Norfolk Island sent to Cockatoo Island under military escort. Temporary accommodation used; tents, prison boxes and portable houses from Goat Island
May 1839	167 prisoners on Cockatoo Island
1840	Transportation to New South Wales suspended
1840	Work in progress on Cockatoo Island for permanent barracks, cook house, mess shed and hospital, siloes, tanks, workshops and wharf
March 1841	Whole of the buildings required for 300 prisoners completed
December 1841	Gipps receives despatch from home government expressing disapproval of storage of grain in government siloes on Cockatoo Island. Existing supplies to be sold.
1841	Confirmation received from the British government that New South Wales is no longer to be a penal establishment. Van Diemen's Land, its associated islands and Norfolk Island to remain as places of transportation. Norfolk Island to be used for prisoners newly arrived from Britain
1841	Prisoners convicted in New South Wales of transportable offences to be accommodated on Cockatoo Island. Offenders who require 'close confinement' to be sent to Van Diemen's Land.
1841	Lieutenant Governor Franklin refuses to take more prisoners in Van Diemen's Land. NSW Legislative Council refuses to pass the necessary legislation to detain doubly convicted prisoners in NSW
September 1841	<i>An Act to authorize the Governor of New South Wales to detain at hard labour any Male Offender under a second sentence, or order of Transportation passed by Legislative Council.</i>

1 October 1841	Cockatoo Island gazetted as a place for the reception of male offenders under sentence of transportation. Charles Ormsby appointed as Superintendent with John Rawson as Assistant Superintendent
1841-1844	Second phase of building on Cockatoo Island including military guard house and barracks, cell block and permanent houses for Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent.
1842	342 prisoners on the island
1844	Penal experiment on Norfolk Island abandoned. Doubly convicted prisoners on Cockatoo Island under sentence of transportation sent to Norfolk Island.
October 1845	Address from Legislative Council to British government requesting that dry dock be constructed in Sydney by convict labour.
1845	209 prisoners on the island
November 1845	Governor Gipps gives general instruction for prisoners to be engaged in 'clearing and preparing the island' for dry dock
1846	138 prisoners on the island
December 1846	Governor Fitz Roy gives instructions about preparations for construction of dry dock
1847	85 prisoners on the island. No prisoners left who can be trusted to serve as overseers or constables
May 1847	Admiralty approves of proposal to construct dry dock but not prepared to recommend that it be paid for by the British Treasury
June 1847	Governor Fitz Roy places before Legislative Council a report and estimate for the construction of a dry dock at Cockatoo Island
September 1847	Select Committee of the Legislative Council reports favourably on proposal for dry dock
October 1847	Colonial Secretary instructs the Commanding Royal Engineer to proceed with dry dock
October 1847	Instructions dispatched for convict establishment in New South Wales to be reduced. Prisoners who cannot be assigned or given tickets of leave to be sent to Van Diemen's Land
November 1847	Cockatoo Island gazetted as a place where male offenders under sentence of transportation shall be detained and be liable to hard labour
Late 1847-1850	Plan for dry dock developed
1848	Insufficient accommodation in Van Diemen's Land. Norfolk Island to be used for convicts still serving original sentences and 'requiring strict coercion'. Secondary offenders and other convicts sentenced to punishment, deprived of tickets-of-leave or returned from private service, to be placed on Cockatoo Island
1848	General break up of convict establishment. Cockatoo Island becomes a colonial gaol and expense transferred to Colonial Treasury from 1 April
1848	Establishment on Cockatoo Island increased: Foreman of Works, two overseers and a clerk/Clerk of Petty Sessions appointed. Cockatoo Island appointed a place at which Courts of Petty session are held

September 1848	First charge of 500 lbs for excavation of dry dock set and witnessed by Colonial Secretary and other dignitaries.
November 1848	Admiralty to make contribution to cost of dry dock, on condition that it could accommodate a large frigate or steamer and that Royal Navy ships should have preference for its use, when necessary. Admiralty sends plans for enlarged dock. Legislative Council Select Committee recommends that proposal should be 'immediately embraced'
1849	Classification of convicts on Cockatoo Island
1849	Enquiry into charges brought against Superintendent Ormsby. Ormsby severely reprimanded
End 1849	Officer placed in charge of military guard
1850	Military guard reduced as part of general reduction of British forces
1850	Two more overseers appointed
Late 1850	Plans sent to England to enable tenders to be called for supply of iron caisson and pumps for dock
1851	Task work introduced and task work clerk appointed
1851	Island overcrowded. New mess shed constructed and original converted into barracks
July 1852	Select Committee appointed to inquire into progress made in construction of dock, to report on means by which the work could be hastened, to inquire into working of penal system adopted at Cockatoo Island and to report whether any improvements can be introduced to secure its greater efficiency
October 1852	Death from suffocation of three men emptying grain silos
November 1852	Assistant Engineer appointed for work on dry dock
February 1853	Arrival of machinery and caisson for dock with five men employed in its construction in England; two working engineers; two riveters and boilermakers; and a blacksmith
1853	Police barracks built
1854	Two more overseers appointed
5 June 1854	Governor Charles Fitz Roy lays first stone of sill of dock and names it "The Fitz Roy Dock"
30 September-8 October 1857	Dry dock used for first time by colonial steam dredge "Hercules"
1-5 December 1857	HMS <i>Herald</i> , under command of Captain H M Denham overhauled in Fitz Roy Dock
1857-1858	Inquiry into Cockatoo Island
April 1858	Military withdrawn and police guard increased
1858-1865	Fitzroy dock extended
c. 1858-1859	Engine house and six bays of the workshops completed.

1 June 1858	New regulations make it mandatory for prisoners to work entire period of probation before being eligible for tickets-of-leave, resulting in dual system operating among prisoners at Cockatoo Island
May 1859	Peninsular & Oriental Company's steamer "Benares", first commercial user, in dry dock
1 August 1859	Captain G K Mann appointed Superintendent of the prison as well as Engineer of the dock
August 1859-1860	Superintendent's house enlarged. Captain Mann and family move to live on the island
1860-1861	Prisoners protest about dual system in operation on the island and refuse to work
1861	Select Committee into public prisons chaired by Henry Parkes
1861-1864	Extension to the workshops constructed
1862	Military guard returns and police force reduced
1863	School for prisoners established
1864	Military withdrawn and police force increased

1866	Industrial Schools Act and Reformatory Act establish means for dealing with destitute and unmanageable children
1867	Nautical School Ship <i>Vernon</i> established as industrial school for boys, moored at Farm Cove. Industrial school and reformatory for girls established in old military barracks at Newcastle
October 1869	Cockatoo Island penal establishment closed. Dock continues in operation but position of Civil Engineer abolished
1871-1874	NSS <i>Vernon</i> moored off Cockatoo Island. Boys work in the gardens and plant trees on island
May 1871	Arrangements in progress to fit up buildings on Cockatoo Island for use as industrial school and reformatory for girls. Name of island changed to Biloela
May-June 1871	Girls arrive from Newcastle
1871-1873	Industrial school and reformatory badly managed
November 1873	Parliamentary Committee on Public Charities visits the island Superintendent George Lucas resigns
March 1875	Mrs Selina Walker takes charge of the institution: order and morale restored
1877	NSS <i>Vernon</i> moved back to mooring off Cockatoo Island. Land base developed on the island
1879	Girls' reformatory moves to Watson's Bay
1880	Buildings formerly used by reformatory added to female industrial school
1882-1889	Construction of the Sutherland Dock
January 1882	Work in progress on new dock. Fence built around the school separating it from the dock site with loss of sewing room, office, two stores, laundry, drying ground and play ground. Re-use of some old buildings in former lumber yard
1886	Industrial school moves to former Roman Catholic Orphanage at Parramatta. Most of younger girls transferred to protection of the State Children's Relief Board to be boarded out
1887	Younger boys from NSS <i>Vernon</i> taken into care of State Children's Relief Board to be boarded out
January 1888	Biloela gaol for men and women opened in buildings formerly used by girls' industrial school and reformatory
June 1888	Former Biloela Industrial School proclaimed as site for public gaol
January 1891	Small area including former task work clerk's quarters added to gaol site

October 1893	Former military barracks and guard house and small area of land on the north side of the Deputy Governor's quarters added to gaol site
8 November 1893	NSS <i>Sobraon</i> replaces the <i>Vernon</i>
1898	Former Water Police Magistrate's house [Biloela House] becomes part of gaol. Work undertaken in grounds. Gardening and landscaping around gaol
December 1906	Last male prisoner entered and discharged from Biloela gaol
1907	Prison used only for women
14 January 1909	Biloela gaol closed and women moved to Little Bay
July 1911	NSS <i>Sobraon</i> ceases to operate. Boys transferred to Brush Farm, Eastwood

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Alan Atkinson & Marian Aveling (eds): *Australians 1838*, Volume 2 of *Australians: a historical library* (1987) Chapter 7 'People confined' pp 273-277 and *The Australian Encyclopaedia* (1958) Volume 3, Convicts and Transportation
- <sup>2</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Transportation, together with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index. Ordered to be printed 3 August 1838. *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Crime & Punishment, Transportation 3* (1968)
- <sup>3</sup> A G L Shaw: *Convicts and the Colonies. A Study of Penal Transportation from Great Britain and Ireland to Australia and other parts of the British Empire* (1966, paperback ed. 1977) p 273
- <sup>4</sup> Bourke to Glenelg despatch dated 5 November 1837, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XIX pp 150-155
- <sup>5</sup> Gipps to Glenelg despatch dated 26 January 1839, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XIX pp 774-780
- <sup>6</sup> 2 Vic. No. 1 'An Act for the Conditional remission of Sentences of Convict transported to Norfolk Island and Moreton Bay and to enforce the conditions thereof' *The Public General Statutes of New South Wales From 1 Victoriae to 10 Victoriae inclusive. (1838-1846)*. Government Printer Sydney, 1861.
- <sup>7</sup> Simon Davies: *The Islands of Sydney Harbour* (1984) pp 6-14
- <sup>8</sup> Gipps to Glenelg, despatch dated 8 July 1839, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XX pp 217-218
- <sup>9</sup> Russell to Gipps despatch dated 6 July 1840, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XX pp 700-701
- <sup>10</sup> Report from the Select Committee on Transportation, together with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, and Index. Ordered to be printed 3 August 1838. *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Crime & Punishment, Transportation 3* (1968)
- <sup>11</sup> *Sydney Gazette* 23 May 1839 p 2b-c
- <sup>12</sup> Gipps to Glenelg, despatch dated 8 July 1839, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XX pp 217-218
- <sup>13</sup> Letter 39/1491 dated 31 Jan'y 1839, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1839, 4/2451.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>14</sup> Letter No. 39/9365 and estimate, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1839, 4/2451.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>15</sup> Enclosure to Governor Gipps Despatch dated 8 July 1839, Despatches received from New South Wales, CO 201/286 ff 257-260 (PRO Reel 319)
- <sup>16</sup> *Sydney Gazette* 23 February 1839 p 2d
- <sup>17</sup> *Sydney Gazette* 9 May 1839 p 2e
- <sup>18</sup> Enclosure to Governor Gipps Despatch dated 8 July 1839, Despatches received from New South Wales, CO 201/286 ff 257-260 (PRO Reel 319)
- <sup>19</sup> Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st October 1839 and 31st March 1840 inclusive' dated 7 August 1840, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1840, 4/2490.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>20</sup> Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1840 inclusive' dated 24 November 1840, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1840, 4/2490.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>21</sup> Letter No. 41/5745 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st October 1840 and 31st March 1841 inclusive' dated 15 June 1841, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1841, 4/2529.4 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>22</sup> Letter No. 41/10763 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1841 inclusive' dated 10 December 1841, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1841, 4/2529.4 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>23</sup> 'Plans Sections Elevations of Buildings on Cockatoo Island' AO Plan No. 2008 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>24</sup> James Semple Kerr: *Cockatoo Island. Penal and institutional remains. An analysis of documentary and physical evidence and an assessment of the cultural significance of the penal and institutional remains above the escarpment.* (1984) pp 21-23
- <sup>25</sup> J S Kerr: *Cockatoo Island. Penal and institutional remains.* (1984) p 23
- <sup>26</sup> *Sydney Gazette* 23 February 1839 p 2d
- <sup>27</sup> *Sydney Gazette* 23 May 1839 p 2b-c
- <sup>28</sup> 'Preservation of grain', *Sydney Gazette* 9 May 1839 p 2e
- <sup>29</sup> Gipps to Russell despatch dated 30 November 1840, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXI pp 90-91
- <sup>30</sup> Silos. Observations upon the Storing and preservation of Grain in under-ground Granaries, chiefly compiled from a Report by Monsieur le Baron Terneaux, to the Society, at Paris, for the encouragement of Arts and Industry, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1841 pp 121-127 (incl. plates)
- <sup>31</sup> Gipps to Russell despatch dated 30 November 1840, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXI pp 90-91
- <sup>32</sup> *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1841 pp 77 & 113, No. 34 Wednesday 29 December 1841
- <sup>33</sup> G Raby: 'The Construction and Abandonment of Public Grain Silos in New South Wales, 1839-1841: a Footnote to British Colonial Policy' *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* Vol. 68 Pt. 4, 1983, pp 325-334
- <sup>34</sup> Letter No. 41/10763 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1841 inclusive' dated 10 December 1841, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1841, 4/2529.4 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>35</sup> Letter No. 42/3808 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1 October 1841 and 31st March 1842 inclusive' dated 21 May 1842, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1842, 4/2571.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>36</sup> Papers connected with complaints against Superintendent of Cockatoo Island Mr Ormsby, Letter No. 53/7776 From G K Mann 3 September 1853 with letter from Mannion 2 September 1853 in Papers connected with the enquiry of 1849 Cockatoo Island, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles 4/1161 (State Records NSW) and Letter of September 1854 Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island, Superintendent & Visiting Magistrate 1851-1854, 4/6516 (Reel 606) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>37</sup> Russell to Gipps despatch dated 6 July 1840, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XX pp 700-701

- <sup>38</sup> Gipps to Russell despatch dated 2 September 1841, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXI pp 500-501
- <sup>39</sup> James Semple Kerr: *Design for convicts. An account of design for convict establishments in the Australian Colonies during the transportation era.* (1984) p 76 Fig. 114 Plans by George Barney dated 1 September 1841 in CO 201/33 fols. 11 & 12 (PRO)
- <sup>40</sup> Gipps to Russell despatch dated 13 October 1841, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXI pp 541-543
- <sup>41</sup> 5 Vic. No. VIII 'An Act to authorize the Governor of New South Wales to detain at hard labour any Male Offender under a second sentence, or order of Transportation' *The Public General Statutes of New South Wales From 1 Victoriae to 10 Victoriae inclusive. (1838-1846).* Government Printer Sydney, 1861. pp 1149-1151
- <sup>42</sup> Gipps to Russell despatch dated 13 October 1841, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXI pp 541-543
- <sup>43</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazette* 1 October 1841, p1327
- <sup>44</sup> See Returns of the Colony for 1840 & 1841 for details of Ormsby's appointments and salary on Norfolk Island (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>45</sup> Colonial Secretary to Ormsby 19 October 1841, Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island 4/6414 (Reel 605) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>46</sup> Letter No. 42/8582 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1842 inclusive' dated 12 November 1842, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1842, 4/2571.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>47</sup> Letter No. 42/3808 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1 October 1841 and 31st March 1842 inclusive' dated 21 May 1842, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1842, 4/2571.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>48</sup> Letter dated 8 August 1842, Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island 4/6414 (Reel 605) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>49</sup> Letter No. 43/3885 Half yearly progress report of works and repairs, carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st October 1842 and 31st March 1843 inclusive dated 18 May 1843, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1843, 4/2609.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>50</sup> Letter No. 43/8479 Half yearly progress report of works and repairs, carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1843 inclusive dated 16 November 1843, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1843, 4/2609.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>51</sup> J S Kerr: *Cockatoo Island. Penal and institutional remains.* (1984) pp 16-17 & figs.
- <sup>52</sup> Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Cockatoo Island 1843, 4/2600.3 (SRNSW)
- <sup>53</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1856 (Mitchell Library) & later returns
- <sup>54</sup> Letter No. 41/10763 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1841 inclusive' dated 10 December 1841, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1841, 4/2529.4 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>55</sup> Letter No. 43/3885 Half yearly progress report of works and repairs, carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st October 1842 and 31st March 1843 inclusive dated 18 May 1843, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1843, 4/2609.1 and Letter No. 42/8582 Half yearly report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1842 inclusive' dated 12 November 1842, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1842, 4/2571.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>56</sup> Letter No. 43/8407 of 17 November 1843, with Letter No. 43/3885 Half yearly progress report of works and repairs, carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st October 1842 and 31st March 1843 inclusive dated 18 May 1843, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1843, 4/2609.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>57</sup> Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island 4/6414 (Reel 605) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>58</sup> Letters 7 April & 21 May 1853, Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island 1851-1854, 4/6516 (Reel 606) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>59</sup> J S Kerr: *Cockatoo Island. Penal and institutional remains.* (1984) pp 34-35 & Fig. 35
- <sup>60</sup> Letter No. 44/9092 Half yearly progress report of works and repairs, carried on in the Engineer Department at new South Wales between the 1st April and 30th September 1844 inclusive dated 4 December 1844, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1844, 4/2647.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>61</sup> J S Kerr: *Cockatoo Island. Penal and institutional remains.* (1984) pp 34-35 & Fig. 35
- <sup>62</sup> Papers connected with the enquiry of 1849 Cockatoo Island, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles 4/1161 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>63</sup> Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island 4/6414 (Reel 605) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>64</sup> Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Cockatoo Island 1843, 4/2600.3 (SRNSW)
- <sup>65</sup> Letter No. 45/4557 Half yearly progress report of works and repairs carried on in the Engineer Department at New South Wales between the 1st October 1844 and 30th March 1845 inclusive, dated 20 June 1845, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1845, 4/2688.3 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>66</sup> Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island 4/6414 (Reel 605) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>67</sup> Letter No. 42/8458 dated 11 November 1842, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Colonial Engineer 1842, 4/2571.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>68</sup> 6 Vic. No. XIV 'An Act to continue for a limited time an Act passed in the Fifth Year of Her Majesty's Reign intituled "An Act to authorize the Governor of New South Wales to detain at hard labour any Male Offender under a second sentence, or order of Transportation" and 7 Vic. No. XXII 'An Act to continue an Act intituled "An Act to authorize the Governor of New South Wales to detain at hard labour any Male Offender under a second sentence, or order of Transportation", *The Public General Statutes of New South Wales From 1 Victoriae to 10 Victoriae inclusive. (1838-1846).* Government Printer Sydney, 1861
- <sup>69</sup> Letter from Visiting Magistrate 1 March 1844, Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Cockatoo Island 1844, 4/2638.5 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>70</sup> NSW Returns of the Colony for 1845-1847 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>71</sup> Colonial Secretary correspondence received from Cockatoo Island 1847, 4/2757.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>72</sup> Fitz Roy to Earl Grey despatch dated 21 April 1847, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXV pp 512-514
- <sup>73</sup> Gipps to Stanley despatch dated 1 January 1843, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXII pp 455-458
- <sup>74</sup> Gipps to Stanley despatch dated 28 November 1844, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXIV pp 83-87
- <sup>75</sup> Fitz Roy to Earl Grey despatch dated 5 April 1848, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXVI pp 326-333



<sup>76</sup> Fitz Roy to Earl Grey despatch dated 5 April 1848, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXVI pp 326-333

<sup>77</sup> Mitchell Letter No. 28/10246 dated 23 December 1828 & Letter No. 31/9292 dated 12 November 1831 in Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Proposed dockyard at Goat Island 1828-1832, 2/8017.5 (State Records NSW)

<sup>78</sup> Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings 1845 p 181

<sup>79</sup> Gipps to Stanley despatch dated 12 November 1845, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXIV p 611

<sup>80</sup> Rt Hon W E Gladstone to Fitz Roy despatch dated 10 June 1846, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXV pp 88-89

<sup>81</sup> 30 June 1847 Petition from certain inhabitants of Sydney, Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings 1847 p 93

<sup>82</sup> (Dry Dock; Cockatoo Island.) *Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1847 Vol. 1, pp 409-414

<sup>83</sup> Dry Dock; Cockatoo Island. Report from the Select Committee on the proposed formation of a dry dock at Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, and Plans. *Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1847 Vol. 1, p 393ff

<sup>84</sup> Dry Dock on Cockatoo Island. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1849 Vol. 1 p 641 ff, No. 1 Colonial Secretary to Commanding Royal Engineer 29 October 1847

<sup>85</sup> NSW Returns of the Colony for 1848 pp 340-341 quoting Government notice of 10 November 1847 341 (Mitchell Library)

<sup>86</sup> Dry Dock; Cockatoo Island. Report from the Select Committee on the proposed formation of a dry dock at Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, and Plans. *Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1847 Vol. 1, p 393ff Evidence of G K Mann

<sup>87</sup> Emery Balint: 'The inventive mind of Gother Kerr Mann' *Heritage Australia* Winter 1991 pp 12-17

<sup>88</sup> Gipps to Stanley despatch dated 12 November 1845, *Historical Records of Australia* (Ser. 1) Vol. XXIV p 611

<sup>89</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock, with Minutes of Evidence. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1849 Vol. 2 pp 497-507

<sup>90</sup> L Stephen (ed.): *Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. XIV (1888) Entry for Sir William Thomas Denison pp 355-357

<sup>91</sup> J G Coad: *Historic Architecture of the Royal Navy*, London 1983, p 39

<sup>92</sup> Capt H James: 'Paper III. Description of the Steam Basin, Docks, and Factory, and other works recently executed in Portsmouth Dockyard' *Papers on subjects connected with the duties of the Corps of Royal Engineers. Contributed by officers of the Royal Engineers and the Hon. East India Company's Engineers*. New Series Vol. III (1853) pp 77-102

<sup>93</sup> His Excellency Sir William T Denison: 'XIII On Docks - Dry, Wet, and Floating.' *Papers and Proceedings of The Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land* Vol. 1 Part III pp 198-209, 1851 & Vol 1 Pt II p 170 (reference to paper being delivered)

<sup>94</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock, with Minutes of Evidence. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1849 Vol. 2 pp 497-507

<sup>95</sup> Correspondence between Civil Engineer and Colonial Secretary in Dry Dock. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1852 Vol. 1 p 1078

<sup>96</sup> (Dry Dock; Cockatoo Island.) *Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1847 Vol. 1, pp 409-414 'Estimated time – prison labour' & plan with Report from the Select Committee *Votes & Proceedings of the Legislative Council* 1847 Vol. 1, p 393ff

<sup>97</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 7 September 1848 p 2c 'The Dry Dock'

<sup>98</sup> Emery Balint: 'The inventive mind of Gother Kerr Mann' *Heritage Australia* Winter 1991 p 14

<sup>99</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock, with Minutes of Evidence. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1849 Vol. 2 pp 500-501 & 505

<sup>100</sup> Dry Dock. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1851 (1st Session) Vol. 1 pp 547-548 & plan

<sup>101</sup> Dry Dock. *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1851 (1st Session) Vol. 1 pp 671-672

<sup>102</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock and Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1852 Vol. 1 pp 1091-1157

<sup>103</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock and Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1852 Vol. 1 p 1100

<sup>104</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock and Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1852 Vol. 1 p 1094

<sup>105</sup> Dry Dock and Cockatoo Island. Governor's Message No. 31 dated 15 August 1854, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1854 Vol. 1 p 1067

<sup>106</sup> NSW Returns of the Colony 1852 & 1853 (Mitchell Library)

<sup>107</sup> Fitz Roy Dock, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1854 Vol. 1 pp 1063-1065

<sup>108</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 July 1856 p 5a

<sup>109</sup> Fitz Roy Dry Dock, Cockatoo Island. (Undocking of H.M.S. "Herald") *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1857 Vol. II p 387

<sup>110</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 7 December 1857 p 4a 'The Fitz Roy Dry Dock'

<sup>111</sup> Appendix B List of vessels docked in the Fitz Roy Dock, Report from the Select Committee on the Fitz Roy Dry Dock; together with the proceedings of the Committee, and Minutes of Evidence. *Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings* 1859-1860 Vol. 4 pp 1057-1081

<sup>112</sup> Capt H James: 'Paper III Description of the Steam Basin, Docks, and Factory, and other works recently executed in Portsmouth Dockyard', *Papers on subjects connected with the duties of the Corps of Royal Engineers. Contributed by members of the Royal and East India Company's Engineers, and edited by a Committee of Royal Engineers*. New Series Vol. III, 1853, London pp 77-102

<sup>113</sup> W A Cahill evidence in Report to the Select Committee on the Public Prisons in Sydney and Cumberland; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence (comprising statements of prisoners), and Appendix, *Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings* 1861 Vol 1, p 220

<sup>114</sup> [View of Cockatoo Island from Birchgrove area,] SPF/817. The photograph was donated by Major Thomas Wingate who was in Sydney between 1858 and 1869. The dock, which was first used in 1857, is in use but the 1859-1860 additions to the Superintendent's house have not yet been made. (Mitchell Library)

<sup>115</sup> Fitz Roy Dry Dock. (Report from Engineer-in-Chief.), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1865-1866, Vol. 13 p 312 Return shewing expenditure on the Fitz Roy Dry Dock Buildings and Machinery, since its commencement, in 1847, to the 30<sup>th</sup> April 1865.

<sup>116</sup> 'HMS "Galatea" in dock Cockatoo Island', SPF/814 and GPO 1-51688 (Mitchell Library)

<sup>117</sup> Copies of correspondence sent from Cockatoo Island, 1 May 1859 - 30 December 1861, 4/6517, Reel 606 (State Records NSW)

- <sup>118</sup> William Derrincourt: *Old Convict Days* (First published in 1899) Penguin facsimile edition 1975, p 279-280
- <sup>119</sup> Colonial Secretary correspondence received, Correspondence from Colonial Engineer 1848, 4/2802.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>120</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1848 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>121</sup> Letter from Surgeon O'Brien dated 17 September 1849 & Colonial Secretary's approval Letter No. 49/9088, Government Medical Adviser to Colonial Secretary, Copies of correspondence and reports 1849, 2/676 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>122</sup> Note dated 12 January 1849 with Letter No. 49/396 from Lieut-Colonel Gordon dated 8 January 1849, Colonial Secretary correspondence received, Correspondence from Colonial Engineer 1849, 4/2802.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>123</sup> Letter No. 49/3645 of 17 April 1849 from Visiting Magistrate, Colonial Secretary correspondence received from Colonial Architect (1), 1849, 4/2840 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>124</sup> [By an Old Hand]: 'Reminiscences of Cockatoo Island. (Continued)', *The Freeman's Journal* 19 May 1877 pp 17-18
- <sup>125</sup> A Design for Free Overseers Quarters Cockatoo Island, To accompany letter 9th May 1850 Transmitting estimate from G K Mann, Add 203 (Dixon Library)
- <sup>126</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1851 to 1853 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>127</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1851 to 1853 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>128</sup> Plan of island showing buildings Laid before the Board 23rd October 1857 together with 'Return of Buildings on Cockatoo Island', Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Cockatoo Island Report of inquiries into management 1856-1858, 4/723 (State Records NSW) & Plan with 'Report from the Select Committee on the Public Prisons in Sydney and Cumberland', *Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings* 1861, Vol 1
- <sup>129</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1853 & 1854 (Mitchell Library) & Copies of correspondence received from Cockatoo Island 1851-1854, 4/6516 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>130</sup> Plan of island showing buildings Laid before the Board 23rd October 1857 together with 'Return of Buildings on Cockatoo Island', Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Cockatoo Island Report of inquiries into management 1856-1858, 4/723 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>131</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1852 & 1853 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>132</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1850 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>133</sup> Evidence of McLerie in Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock and Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1852 Vol. 1 p 1107
- <sup>134</sup> Cockatoo Island Penal Establishment, Daily reports on state of establishment 1 January - 19 October 1858, 4/6512 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>135</sup> NSW Returns of the Colony 1858 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>136</sup> NSW Returns of the Colony 1858 to 1866 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>137</sup> New South Wales Blue Book for the years 1866 to 1869, Public Service Lists (State Records NSW)
- <sup>138</sup> There were initially two constables in 1850 who did not have houses but later in the year the number had increased to five who were provided with houses, see NSW Returns of the Colony 1850 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>139</sup> Letter No. 53/4892 from Civil Engineer 31 May 1853 refers to the 'new Police Barracks' where the prisoners were at work, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Papers connected with the enquiry of 1849 Cockatoo Island, 4/1161 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>140</sup> Letter to his brother and sister from a constable at Cockatoo Island dated 8 October 1856, Sydney NSW, ML DOC 2784 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>141</sup> Colonial Secretary, Correspondence received from Cockatoo Island 1848, 4/2794.4 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>142</sup> New South Wales Returns of the Colony 1851 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>143</sup> Cockatoo Island, Reports of Visiting Magistrate 1848-1853, 4/1149.3 (Reel 608) (State Records NSW)
- <sup>144</sup> Evidence of Charles Ormsby, Report from the Select Committee on the Dry Dock and Cockatoo Island, with Minutes of Evidence, *Legislative Council Votes & Proceedings* 1852 Vol. 1 p 1135
- <sup>145</sup> Government Medical Adviser to Colonial Secretary, Copies of correspondence and reports 1849-1851, 2/676 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>146</sup> Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Papers connected with the enquiry of 1849 Cockatoo Island, 4/1161 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>147</sup> 'Plan of Cockatoo Island showing The island from a survey taken thereon in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty five and likewise the various improvements in buildings and otherwise completed thereon since that period up to the present year 1857', Z M3 811.15/COCKATOO ISLAND 1857/1 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>148</sup> Fitzroy Dock, Cockatoo. (Report of Civil Engineer.) *Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings* 1858 Vol. 3 pp 1229-1231
- <sup>149</sup> Technical drawings by G K Mann and P N Russell, Drawings relating to Cockatoo Island and Fitzroy Dry Dock, PXD 784/2 (Mitchell Library)
- <sup>150</sup> William Derrincourt: *Old Convict Days* (First published in 1899) Penguin facsimile edition 1975, p 289
- <sup>151</sup> Fitz Roy Dry Dock. (Report from Engineer-in-Chief.), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1865-1866, Vol. 13 pp 309-310
- <sup>152</sup> William Derrincourt: *Old Convict Days* (First published in 1899) Penguin facsimile edition 1975, p 279-280
- <sup>153</sup> Fitz Roy Dry Dock. (Report from Engineer-in-Chief.), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1865-1866, Vol. 13 p 310
- <sup>154</sup> Derrincourt reported that he did work for P N Russell for the waterworks at Newcastle, see William Derrincourt: *Old Convict Days* (First published in 1899) Penguin facsimile edition 1975, p 289
- <sup>155</sup> The Rev John Milner & Oswald W Brierly: *The Cruise of H.M.S. Galatea, Captain H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., in 1867-1868* (London, 1869) pp 378-379
- <sup>156</sup> Task Work Regulations (for Cockatoo Island), X64 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>157</sup> Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Papers connected with the enquiry of 1849 Cockatoo Island, 4/1161 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>158</sup> Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Papers connected with the enquiry of 1849 Cockatoo Island, 4/1161 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>159</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Public Prisons in Sydney and Cumberland; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence (comprising statements of prisoners), and Appendix, *Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings* 1861 Vol 1 Evidence of Henry Clarke p 167 & W H Cahill p 132

- <sup>160</sup> Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Cockatoo Island 1860-1864, 4/747.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>161</sup> Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Cockatoo Island 1860-1864, 4/747.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>162</sup> Report from the Select Committee on the Public Prisons in Sydney and Cumberland; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence (comprising statements of prisoners), and Appendix, *Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings* 1861 Vol 1 pp 6-7
- <sup>163</sup> Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, Gaol reports 1864-1865, 4/749.3 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>164</sup> Penal Establishment Cockatoo Island, Daily Register of Men attending the school for prisoners 23 June 1863-6 October 1869, 4/6520 (State records NSW)
- <sup>165</sup> John Ramsland: *Children of the back lanes. Destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986, p 148
- <sup>166</sup> Brian Dickey: 'The Establishment of Industrial Schools and Reformatories in New South Wales, 1850-1875', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* Vol. 54 Pt. 2, 1968, pp 135-151
- <sup>167</sup> John Ramsland: *Children of the back lanes. Destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986, p 148
- <sup>168</sup> Inspector of Public Charities Reports 1868-1871, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, 4/810.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>169</sup> Cockatoo Island - Industrial School, *Sydney Morning Herald* 6 May 1871 p 6f
- <sup>170</sup> The 1882 survey of the island shows Building 9 surrounded by an iron fence. Permanent Survey Cockatoo Island 1882 by John W Deering Crown Plan P134.574 & Field Book 2069 (Lands Department)
- <sup>171</sup> Public Charities. Second Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the working and management of the public charities of the Colony, *Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings* 1873-1874 Vol. 6 pp 81-82
- <sup>172</sup> Public Charities. Second Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the working and management of the public charities of the Colony, *Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings* 1873-1874 Vol. 6 p 142 Evidence of Mr Lucas
- <sup>173</sup> School Files, Biloela Industrial School, 5/14925.3 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>174</sup> The Industrial School Girls, *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 May 1871 p 4f
- <sup>175</sup> Public Charities. Second Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the working and management of the public charities of the Colony, *Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings* 1873-1874 Vol. 6
- <sup>176</sup> 'Biloela', *Sydney Morning Herald* 20 December 1876 p 5d-e
- <sup>177</sup> Public Charities (Report from Inspector of), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1876-1877 Vol. 27 Pt. 1
- <sup>178</sup> Public Charities (Report from Inspector of), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1876-1877 Vol. 27 Pt. 1
- <sup>179</sup> Public Charities (Report of Inspector of), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1879-1880 Vol. 30 Pt 2 pp 1017-1045
- <sup>180</sup> 'Biloela', *Sydney Morning Herald* 20 December 1876 p 5d-e
- <sup>181</sup> Public Charities (Report from Inspector of), *Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings* 1877-1878 Vol. 2 pp 646-647
- <sup>182</sup> Prisons (Report for 1879), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1881 Vol. 31 p 818
- <sup>183</sup> Construction of Boys Reformatory at Rookwood 1884-91, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, 4/901.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>184</sup> Public Charities. (Report of Inspector of), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1882 Vol. 33 Pt 2 pp 125-170
- <sup>185</sup> Public Charities (Fifth Annual Report of Inspector of), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1881 Vol. 32 Pt. 2A p 155
- <sup>186</sup> Construction of Boys Reformatory at Rookwood 1884-91, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, 4/901.1 (State Records NSW). The laundry is shown in this location in the 1887 plan, Cockatoo Island. (Reports on sanitary condition of.), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1887-1888 Vol. 43 Pt. 4A pp 477-4 88 & plan
- <sup>187</sup> Construction of Boys Reformatory at Rookwood 1884-91, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, 4/901.1 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>188</sup> Public Charities. (Report of Inspector of.) *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1883-1884 Vol. 36 Pt. 3 pp 1301-1410
- <sup>189</sup> Prisons. (Report for 1887), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1887-1888 Vol. 43 pt. 3 pp 11-14
- <sup>190</sup> Public Charities. (Report of Inspector of.), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1887-1888 Vol. 43 Pt. 4A pp 393-454
- <sup>191</sup> D I McDonald: 'Henry Parkes and the Sydney Nautical School', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* Vol. 52 Pt. 3, 1966, pp 212-227
- <sup>192</sup> Cuthbert's account - "Vernon" 1867, Colonial Secretary Special Bundles, 4/761.2 (State Records NSW)
- <sup>193</sup> Nautical School-Ship "Vernon." (Report for year ending 30 June 1872), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1872 Vol. 21 pp 427-432
- <sup>194</sup> Nautical School-Ship "Vernon." (Report for 1869 and half of 1870), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1870-1871 Vol. 19 Pt. 1 pp 1093-1099
- <sup>195</sup> Public Charities (Report from Inspector of), *Legislative Assembly Votes & Proceedings* 1877-1878 Vol. 2 pp 646-647
- <sup>196</sup> Public Charities (Report from Inspector of), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1876-1877 Vol. 27 Pt. 1
- <sup>197</sup> Nautical School-Ship "Vernon." (Report for year ending 30 June 1872), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1872 Vol. 21 pp 427-432
- <sup>198</sup> Nautical School Ship "Vernon." (Report for year ended 30 June 1873), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1873-1874 Vol. 23 Pt. 1 pp 805-810
- <sup>199</sup> Nautical School Ship "Vernon." (Report for year ended 30 June, 1874.), *Journal of the Legislative Council* 1874 Vol. 24 pp 187-193
- <sup>200</sup> Public Charities. Second Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into and report upon the working and management of the public charities of the Colony, *Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings* 1873-1874 Vol. 6 pp 86-89
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