

## COLONIAL EDUCATION: PROGRESSION FROM COTTAGE INDUSTRY ROOTS

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*This paper considers the establishment of schooling and education in the British penal colony of Van Diemen's Land from 1803 to 1825. Van Diemen's Land was settled by the British in 1803 as a penal colony, and was re-named Tasmania in 1853. It is the island state of the Commonwealth of Australia. Education was initiated by the British Lieutenant Governors in Van Diemen's Land as a means of transforming the violent community of colonial opportunists, entrepreneurs, convicts and soldiers. The paper takes a contextual and socio-legal perspective of the case of James Thomson v George Carr Clark, heard in the Supreme Court of Van Diemen's Land, Term 1, 1825.<sup>1</sup> This case reveals that the settlers held a belief in the importance of education and affirms the personal and moral standards the Van Diemen's Land community required of teachers. The way the British educational experience was adapted to fit the needs of the penal colony in its first twenty years provides a fascinating insight into the origins of education in Australia. Interestingly, in the fullness of time, in 1868, Tasmania's Education Act was enacted, and Tasmania became the first Australian colony to have compulsory, state-funded education.*

### I THE FIRST EUROPEAN CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA

New South Wales was the first Australian settlement made by the British and it took place in 1788. Van Diemen's Land was the second Australian colony to be settled and it occurred in 1803. Van Diemen's Land was not independent of New South Wales until 1825. Consequently, the development of education in Van Diemen's land is appropriately viewed alongside that of New South Wales.

The First Fleet of 1,030 British migrants to New South Wales in 1788 had 17 convicts' children and 19 Marines' children. Thus the first non-Aboriginal children requiring schools in Australia were the children of convicts as well as those of free settlers.<sup>2</sup> Not to be overlooked is the fact that some children of 10 to 18 years were

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<sup>1</sup> Archives Office of Tasmania, File Box SC101 – A282/6.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie J Blake, *Pioneer Schools of Australia* (Rigby, 1977) 9.

themselves convicts and spent approximately 6 months with hardened criminals on the way out from England.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, a clientele for education and schools was clearly in existence from the time of the sailing of the First Fleet.

The importance of education in a penal colony was clearly evident to William Wilberforce, who wrote to Viscount Castlereagh on 9 November 1805 stating that:

if the education of the youth of the colony were attended to, all the rest of the moral evils would begin to abate; without this they will increase and multiply.<sup>4</sup>

## II BRITISH GOVERNMENT POLICY ON EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

The British government can be seen to have acknowledged the importance of education in the specific instructions given by Lord Grenville, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to first New South Wales Governor Philip, on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1789, that:

a particular spot in or as near as each town as possible to be set apart for the building of a church of 400 acres adjacent thereto allotted for the maintenance of a minister and 200 for a school master.<sup>5</sup>

Similar instructions were given to the Lieutenant Governors who settled Van Diemen's Land as a British penal colony.

In the south of Van Diemen's Land, Lieutenant Bowen arrived at Risdon Cove on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1803 from New South Wales with 49 people, including convicts. Lieutenant Colonel Collins arrived at Sullivan's Cove on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1804 with 2 ships, *The Ocean* and *HMS Calcutta* with 260 people, including 178 convicts. Lieutenant Colonel Collins took over the southern settlement from Lieutenant Bowen. In the north of Van Diemen's Land, Lieutenant Colonel Patterson arrived at Port Dalrymple with 181 persons, 74 being convicts, on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1804.<sup>6</sup>

## III THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE PENAL COLONY

From the commencement of the British penal colony of Van Diemen's Land, schooling was essentially left to the Lieutenant Governor and the Lieutenant Governor initially left it to the church. With one of the aims of the penal colony being rehabilitation of offenders, and the Christian church being the institution

<sup>3</sup> Albert G Austin, *The Australian School* (Longmans, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, *Historical Records of Australia (HRA)*, vol 5, 727.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Lord Grenville to Governor Philip, 22 August 1789, in *HRA*, above n 4, vol XXX, 127.

<sup>6</sup> In 1812 the north and south commandants of Van Diemen's Land became one, located in the south in Hobart Town.

society had endowed with the role of making people better, it probably seemed logical for the Lieutenant Governor to leave responsibility for education to the church.

Contextual evidence persuasively indicates that the Church of England was the established church in the colony of Van Diemen's Land, and indeed, Australia. For example, the only representative of the Christian church to arrive in Sydney with the First Fleet—the Reverend Mr Richard Johnson—and the first representative of the Christian church to set foot in Van Diemen's Land—the Reverend Robert Knopwood—were both ordained clergymen of the Church of England. The Reverend Mr Knopwood's official designation was Chaplain to the Settlement of Van Diemen's Land.<sup>7</sup>

Both the Reverend Mr Knopwood and the Reverend Mr Johnson provided the Christian response at the landing ceremonies in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales respectively and both conducted religious education in the colonies; thus religious education was one of the first types of education with the church being the first formal educator.

The Church of England also assumed the role of educator through operating a Sunday School, where literacy education was undertaken through reading the *Bible* and *Book of Common Prayer*. The Christian church's aim to make people better was consistent with a penal colony's aim to rehabilitate, as well as to punish criminals.

Certainly, belief in a higher power was of importance to the early Van Diemen's Land settlers. The infant colony was concerned more with survival than education. For example, when Lieutenant Governor Collins arrived in Hobart Town in 1804 he had only been supplied with provisions for twelve months, with the promise that these would be renewed from England until the colony became self-supporting. But this promise was not kept: supplies were not renewed.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, by 1807 the colony was facing starvation.

#### IV BUSH SURVIVAL AND PRIMARY PRODUCTION

Thus, the first question that had to be addressed by the settlers was how to physically survive in a foreign land. The settlers had no real knowledge of the physical environment of Van Diemen's Land, the island's land, soil and climate being new to them.

During those early years, bush survival skills were needed. And it was the Reverend Mr Knopwood, holder of a Master of Arts degree from Cambridge University, and

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<sup>7</sup> Bigge's Appendix, 1816-1821, 184, Mitchell Library, A2130.

<sup>8</sup> John W Beattie, *Glimpses of the Lives and Times of the Early Tasmanian Governors*, (Davies Brothers Limited, 1904) 9.

the colony's chaplain, who taught these. He had brought with him some seeds which became the first introduced crops on the island. The Reverend Mr Knopwood also knew how to catch English game. The Van Diemen's Land Aboriginal people—known as the Palawa people—knew how to catch Van Diemen's Land game.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the English and Palawa methods were adopted by the settlement for hunting game such as wallaby and birds, collecting oysters, and catching fish. This was how the Van Diemen's Land colonists managed to survive during the years when the British government neglected to send essential supplies to sustain the increasing population of convicts, administration and free settlers.

So the first education in Van Diemen's Land was bush survival and primary production. Without those bush survival techniques being taught by the Reverend Mr Knopwood, and the Palawa people, it is likely that the embryonic Van Diemen's Land settlement would have died.

## V THE IMPACT OF VAN DIEMEN'S LAND'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The primary motivation for this initial education, then, was the necessity of life sustenance. This is much more basic than in England, where it has been said that from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, humanitarian concern for the poor motivated education as a private charity, with industrialization in the 18<sup>th</sup> century pushing the need for education of the children of the labouring poor.<sup>10</sup>

As the settlers grew to understand the physical environment of Van Diemen's Land, the island's natural wealth became apparent to them. For example, the Lieutenant Governor made land grants to free settlers as well as emancipated convicts. The bush was forested with trees whose timber was wanted by the world for building; there were whales to be hunted and killed for their oil, seals to be killed for their skins, and crops such as wheat and corn began to flourish in the virgin soil. These products could be exported. However, to achieve maximum material gain, the settlers required numeracy and literacy skills for the marketing and mercantile tasks associated with exporting.

The then-prevailing Church of England principles of sobriety and virtue remained paramount, the settlers off-setting their awakening materialism with the necessity of hard work. Thus the overall aim which rests snugly at this juncture of the colony's development, is that the Van Diemen's Land children would be taught Christianity and encouraged in industrious habits. This would result in the colony's male children growing up to be honest and capable working men and the females becoming good wives and mothers.

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<sup>9</sup> The hunting skills of the Van Diemen's Land Aboriginal people—the Palawa people—are recorded by convict artists.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Sutherland, *Elementary Education in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Historical Association, 1971) 4.

## VI THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM

A critical factor, which emerged from the settlers' awakening to the natural wealth of Van Diemen's Land, was a competitive aspect. It encouraged each individual to strive to do better than others. It fuelled the thinking that achieving superiority would benefit the individual in his or her attainments in the colony and thereby enhance that individual's personal advantage. Acquiring land through grants from the Lieutenant Governor, achieving monopoly in merchandising and attaining good reputation in the colony, became common aims of the ambitious settlers.

Thus a competitive mode of individualism was introduced merely by the context of Van Diemen's Land. Rather than being encouraged to be a member of a particular group or class, Van Diemen's Land settlers, through access to, and acquisition of, natural resources' wealth, particularly land, became increasingly individual and opportunistic. Thus, the context of Van Diemen's Land strongly influenced settlers to want to succeed as individuals and aim to endeavour to achieve more than others.

## VII THE INFLUENCE OF THE POPULAR PRESS

In Van Diemen's Land the development of the popular press was a strong incentive to become literate.

The first Van Diemen's Land newspaper was published in 1810 and from then, the colonial press functioned as an official bulletin of the colony's administrative decisions, as well as the communicator of the colony's domestic news. Reports of the administration's disciplinary decisions such as public whippings and hangings of convicts and the auction of goods of bankrupt settlers were published in the local newspaper. Thus, the skill of literacy was necessary in order for settlers to partake of both the public entertainment of punishment and the windfall sales of bankrupts.

Being a small, island context, local events were the daily nourishment of the community, a panacea from the humdrum rituals of hard work in the new-to-British settlement. News from overseas reached the colony by sea, long after the reported events had occurred: thus, while interesting, much of its compelling attraction was lost. Besides, daily life events in the island community increasingly gained more relevance in the lives of the settlers than events from overseas. Consequently, being able to read opened a welcome door to a new vista.

## VIII VAN DIEMEN'S LAND ORPHANS AND CHILDREN OF THE POOR

The population in Van Diemen's Land developed in two major clusters: in the island's south around Hobart Town and in the north around Port Dalrymple.

Intermittently, the non-Aboriginal population of the colony was counted: this was called a Muster. In the Hobart Town Muster of 1804 there were 433 settlers in the

settlement with 39 women and 36 children.<sup>11</sup> In the Port Dalrymple Muster of 1809 there were 52 children.<sup>12</sup>

The imbalance of women in the population continued, with the ratio of three men to each woman. This resulted in the births of many children whose fathers disowned them.<sup>13</sup> The use of the term 'orphan children' thus came into use.

The orphan children constituted a significant element of the Van Diemen's Land population. Orphans included those children who were born in jail in Van Diemen's Land. Their mothers were allowed to keep the child until three years of age; the mother and child were then separated and the child was designated an orphan. Female orphans were considered to be particularly vulnerable because of the temptation of prostitution.

Other children who could be considered orphans were those who had either a single mother or children from a couple who could not afford to take care of the child, or a father who could not or would not support the child.

The plight of the colony's orphans and children of the poor prompted Lieutenant Governor Collins' first major administrative step to provide education in Van Diemen's Land. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1806 he informed Lord Castlereagh that he had bought the 100 hundred acres and house belonging to Captain W. Sladden at Sandy Bay to establish the colony's first school. Captain Sladden of the Royal Marines was returning to England and Lieutenant Governor Collins paid £800 for the property. As well as a house, there was a barn, sheep pen and other farm buildings. Ten acres of the property were under cultivation, and, at the time, leased to Lieutenant Johnson at £60 per annum. Lieutenant Governor Collins had bought the property not for himself but for the colony, in his role as administrator.

In doing so, Lieutenant Governor Collins followed a precedent from New South Wales. In 1798, the first Sydney school—a fee-paying school—had opened. It was planned by the Reverend Mr Richard Johnson and built at a cost of £67. A primitive building, this school had an enrolment of 150 children. After it was burnt down the children were taught in the Court House which they had to vacate for Court sessions.<sup>14</sup> Only the children of parents who could afford to pay sent their children to school.

New South Wales also set a precedent for the purchase of a building for use as a school. For example, in a Despatch of 9<sup>th</sup> September 1800 the New South Wales Lieutenant Governor King informed the Duke of Portland of the necessity to attend

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<sup>11</sup> Clifford Reeves, *A History of Tasmanian Education: State Primary Education* (Melbourne University Press, 1935) 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid 2.

<sup>13</sup> Albert G Austin, *Australian Education 1788-1900* (Pitman Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 1972) 4.

<sup>14</sup> Blake, above n 2, 11.

to the needs of orphaned children in Sydney. Accordingly, Lieutenant Governor King had bought Captain Kent's house in Sydney and proposed to fund the building of a school from donations and fees from fines, quit rent, shipping taxes, import duties on spirits, licence fees and landing fees from vessels.<sup>15</sup>

Of that proposal, the Duke of Portland replies to New South Wales Lieutenant Governor King on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1801 that he:

highly approve(s) of the measures you have taken...for the formation of an institution for the support and education of those children who are left without any resource...but care should be taken to strictly confine this institution to children of this description, and to oblige all those to maintain their own families who have the means of doing so.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Lieutenant Governor Collins envisaged the maintenance of the Van Diemen's Land school would be from a similar fund. Being a port city, Hobart Town had a means similar to that of Sydney New South Wales of generating finance.

#### IX EDUCATION AS A COTTAGE INDUSTRY

In Van Diemen's Land, the fundamental problem encountered by Lieutenant Governor Collins in bringing the Sandy Bay school project to fruition, however, was that Britain did not provide teachers for the school. Consequently, the Lieutenant Governor had two options: either to ignore the colony's need for education or to use the resources he had. Lieutenant Governor Collins preferred the latter option. Thus, anyone in the colony who was literate—convict, Marine, minister, parent—was a potential teacher.

Literacy education, then, became a cottage industry, the skills of literacy being passed from one generation to another.

It could be said that true democratization of education was borne out of the penal colony context.

#### X BRITAIN'S ATTITUDE TO EDUCATION FOR THE PENAL COLONY

It can be inferred that it was the British government's intention from the outset that the settlers themselves, would be teachers of the colonial children.

For example, in a letter to Henry Dundas, Principal Secretary of State for Home Affairs, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1794, William Wilberforce writes:

In my last letter I mentioned to you that I had been informed a sufficient number of tolerably qualified instructors for the children, both of the convicts and the natives,

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<sup>15</sup> *HRA*. above n 4, vol 2, 532.

<sup>16</sup> *HRA*. above n 4, vol 3, 101.

might be found on the spot, but it occurred to me that it would be highly desirable to send over some person to act as a general superintendent of all schools.<sup>17</sup>

Further confirmation that settlers were expected to be teachers is found in an extract from the *Proceedings of the Society for the Propagation of the Bible 1794-1795*.<sup>18</sup> It states that “proper persons could be found in the colony to teach”, the Society would grant 10/0/0 *pa* each for up to 4 teachers.

Perhaps it was a remnant of the attitude that it was dangerous to provide education to the poor that may have induced the British government’s lack of support for education in Van Diemen’s Land. For example, *Whitbread’s Bill* for establishing a plan for the education of the poor in England was defeated there in August 1807. The attitude of one Englishman was revealed during debate on this Bill and may have had some influence on the British government’s policy towards the education of the poor people in Van Diemen’s Land:

Giving education to the labouring classes of the poor (it) would in effect be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their ranks in society had destined them.<sup>19</sup>

Lack of direction from the British government for the education of the people in the colony can be seen continuing in 1809. For example, Lord Castlereagh, in the Letter appointing Colonel Lachlan Macquarie Governor of New South Wales on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1809, writes:

The great objects of attention are to improve the morals of the colonists, to encourage marriage, to provide for education...Upon these points I shall leave you to act at your discretion.

This letter can be interpreted in two very different ways: first, it can be seen as giving the New South Wales Governor the independence essential to settle a new colony; second, it can be seen as Britain’s abrogation of a duty to provide funding and teachers for the education of British subjects in both New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Historical Records of New South Wales (HRNSW)*, vol 2, 245-6.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* 283.

<sup>19</sup> Davies Giddy in David C Griffiths (ed), *Documents on the Establishment of Education in New South Wales* (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 1957) 4.

<sup>20</sup> The Van Diemen’s Land Lieutenant Governor was subject to the New South Wales Governor until 1825.

## XI MR THOMAS FITZGERALD TO THE RESCUE

Whatever the intention of the British government, Lieutenant Governor Collins in Van Diemen's Land sought the assistance of a convict man, Thomas Fitzgerald, who had been a teacher in England. He had been transported as punishment for a period of seven years and had sailed to Van Diemen's Land on the *HMS Calcutta* with Lieutenant Governor Collins in 1804. Mr Thomas Fitzgerald, therefore, became Van Diemen's Land's first official teacher in 1807, while simultaneously fulfilling the role of Clerk to the Bench of Magistrates.<sup>21</sup>

Details about this first school are unknown because there were no Van Diemen's Land newspapers until 8<sup>th</sup> January 1810. Lieutenant Governor Collins died suddenly in 1810. On the night of his death, Mr Edward Lord and Dr Hood inexplicably destroyed all of the documents relating to his Administration.<sup>22</sup>

Mr Fitzgerald did not receive any official payment from the Administration until 1812, when it appears he received the sum of £3/15/0 at 3-monthly intervals, from the Police Fund for his work as Clerk to the Bench of Magistrates.<sup>23</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> August 1816, the Reverend Mr Robert Knopwood, Chaplain to the Settlement of Van Diemen's Land conducted the service of marriage for Thomas Fitzgerald and Mary Agnes Martin.<sup>24</sup> Both the bride and groom were 37 years of age. Sometime after this marriage, Mrs Fitzgerald began conducting classes for girls while her husband conducted classes for boys.

After the death of Lieutenant Governor Collins in 1810 there were interregnums of administrators until 1813: Mr Edward Lord occupied the role of administrator in Hobart Town from March to July 1810 and Captain Murray was Administrator from 1810 to 1812. In 1812, the north and south commandants were fused, with Hobart Town becoming the site of the Government House for the one Lieutenant Governor.

During the interregnums, there appears to have been little development in the colony's education. The *Sydney Gazette* of 10<sup>th</sup> November 1810 advised that the New South Wales Governor was pleased to appoint Mr Thomas Macqueen to the role of schoolmaster at Port Dalrymple at a salary of £25/0/0 *per annum*. This would surely have been devastating news for Mr Fitzgerald who was not given any salary until 1812, and then it was for being Clerk to the Bench of Magistrates.

<sup>21</sup> Jane Noel, a woman from Sydney, is said to have conducted the first private school in Hobart Town, sometime before 1807, in a hut in a lane off the lower end of Collins Street, Hobart Town, but the present authors are still searching for evidence of this proposition

<sup>22</sup> Reeves, above n 11, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Autograph of Thomas Fitzgerald for receipt of salary as Clerk to the Bench of Magistrates, Hobart Town, Wentworth Papers, 30 June 1813, Mitchell Library, New South Wales.

<sup>24</sup> Bigge's Appendix 1816-1821, Mitchell Library, 184.

## XII LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR DAVEY

Colonel Davey fulfilled the role of Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1813 to 1817.

During his administration, education in Van Diemen's Land continued to be conducted by the church—as Sunday School—or by private teachers.

According to a recommendation by New South Wales Governor Macquarie to Lord Bathurst dated 28<sup>th</sup> April 1814,<sup>25</sup> another teacher was required for Port Dalrymple.

The remarkable legacy in education from Lieutenant Governor Davey came with his Proclamation of 1816. This Proclamation came in response to the increasingly troubled relations between the settlers and the Palawa people. The Lieutenant Governor, in an effort to restore harmony, published a poster consisting of four lines of illustrations. The visual poster offered a new dimension in educational technique.

The top illustration shows a white man and a black man with their arms linked about each others' shoulders, each holding a dog; a black child and a white child are holding hands and a white woman is holding a black baby and a black woman is holding a white baby.

The next illustration from the top consists of three adult black people and a black child, following their tribal elder who is shaking hands with the Lieutenant Governor, who is standing in a line with 2 Marines in uniform and a white man in top hat and tails.

The third illustration from the top depicts a black man throwing a spear through a white man, a black man being hanged by a Marine above the body of the white man, the action taking place in front of the Lieutenant Governor and another Marine.

The bottom illustration portrays a white man shooting a black man, the white man being hanged by a Marine above the body of the black man, the action taking place in front of the Lieutenant Governor and another Marine.

This poster was visual education for both the Palawa people and the settlers. It sent a clear message to all that the English law had been adopted by the English administration in Van Diemen's Land. It was an attempt to educate both the white settlers and the Palawa people of the aspirations of the English government regarding race relations in Van Diemen's Land.<sup>26</sup> The significant message was that the Lieutenant Governor wanted friendly relations to exist between the settlers and the Palawa people. The grave timbre in the message was that it signified that the

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<sup>25</sup> HRA. above n 4, vol 8, 154.

<sup>26</sup> The poster was repeated by Lieutenant Governor Arthur during 1828 and 1830.

Law of England was now in place in Van Diemen's Land and settlers and Palawa people would be treated in the same way according to the Law of England.

The fact that the Proclamation was in sign language, rather than written language, is a comment upon the lack of literacy of the Van Diemen's Land settlers, and the need to communicate with them as much as the need to communicate with the Palawa people.

The poster experiment in education in 1816 by Lieutenant Governor Davey supports the proposition that progress in education was only possible when the Lieutenant Governor in Van Diemen's Land demonstrated leadership. It is a clear indication of the Lieutenant Governor's role in initiating development in education. Even though the population of Van Diemen's Land may have wanted education and schooling for their children, unless they had a local administrator to put their desires into effect, there was no progress.

### XIII LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR COLONEL SORELL

Upon taking up his appointment in Hobart Town in 1817, Lieutenant Governor Sorell acted with speed to improve the overall status of education in the colony, as evidenced by the correspondence between Lieutenant Governor Sorell and New South Wales Governor Macquarie. Importantly, New South Wales Governor Macquarie granted each of Lieutenant Governor Sorell's requests. For example:

- On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1817, Lieutenant Governor Sorell requested payment for Thomas Fitzgerald from the Colonial Fund. New South Wales Governor Macquarie subsequently gave Mr Fitzgerald a salary of £25/-/-.
- On 13<sup>th</sup> October 1817, Lieutenant Governor Sorell wrote to New South Wales Governor Macquarie asking for supplies of Bibles, Prayer Books and spelling books for the Van Diemen's Land schools because these were in short supply. It is evident from this request that the major instruction texts were the Bible and Church of England Book of Common Prayer, and spelling was a curriculum priority.
- On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1818, Lieutenant Governor Sorell wrote to New South Wales Governor Macquarie requesting a salary be paid to Mrs Fitzgerald for her work as a teacher.<sup>27</sup> Mrs Fitzgerald was subsequently awarded a salary of £15/-/- from the Police Fund<sup>28</sup> by New South Wales Governor Macquarie.

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<sup>27</sup> T. Fitzgerald receives a salary with Mrs Fitzgerald, November 18<sup>th</sup> 1818 in Col. Sorell's Despatches, Mitchell Library.

<sup>28</sup> Reeves, above n 11, 7.

It is interesting to note in passing that Mrs Fitzgerald's salary was considerably less than Mr Fitzgerald's and she was paid from the Police Fund while her husband was paid from the Colonial Fund. This difference begs the question: was education for girls seen as being a police or social control measure or was it just that there was surplus money in the Police Fund?

- On 10<sup>th</sup> August 1818 Lieutenant Governor Sorell wrote to GG Macquarie regarding the plight of the poorer children and the convict children in Hobart Town. The Lieutenant Governor considered present schools insufficient and the teachers were unable to teach the children in the colony.
- On 24<sup>th</sup> September 1818 New South Wales Governor Macquarie agreed to help Sorell with schools but hoped that the two schools already in Van Diemen's Land - Thomas Fitzgerald's in Hobart and Thomas Macqueen's in Launceston - would be sufficient – and could be improved without too much government expense, because government was short of funds.<sup>29</sup>

In reply, New South Wales Governor Macquarie included a letter from the Reverend Mr Cowper – Assistant New South Wales chaplain to the Reverend Mr Samuel Marsden - detailing means of affording suitable education to children of the poor . The tenor of this letter from the Reverend Mr Cowper was that the present facilities could be reorganized on different principles.

New South Wales Governor Macquarie had sought the advice of the Reverend Mr Cowper as a response to Lieutenant Governor Sorell's letter. This is interesting because it reveals that the New South Wales Governor was relying on the clerics of the Church of England for advice about education. Thus the Church of England clearly had the role of being a significant determinant in educational development in the colonies.

In his letter to New South Wales Governor Macquarie dated 8<sup>th</sup> September 1818, the Reverend Mr Cowper firstly points out that he did not know the clientele of the Van Diemen's Land charity schools. This is a particularly salient point because it indicates that Mr Cowper understood the need for education to be specific to the clientele: it reveals an enlightened attitude to education.

Reverend Mr Cowper bases his response on the Sydney experience – but of course Van Diemen's Land was different, being less cleared, having more violent convicts and being a small island.

The Reverend Mr Cowper states the ideal qualities of a teacher as being to have learning, morality and piety and to be freed from all other duties. Thus teaching was seen as being an all-consuming occupation with teachers necessarily 'devoting their time and talents to the children committed to their trust.'

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid 8.

The Reverend Mr Cowper's recommendation was that more attendance and diligent discipline were required instead of more schools.

#### XIV THE RISE OF EDUCATION AS A MERCHANTABLE PRODUCT

With the settlers displaying increasing desire for education, together with settlers becoming more affluent, education became a merchantable product. Thus, purveyors of education materialised. For example, an advertisement in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1818 shows the beginning of education as a commodity:

A young man who has a few leisure hours in the evening, wishes to devote his time to the instruction of eight men in writing and arithmetic. Terms moderate. Apply to the printer for the address.

Importantly, the subjects offered are the language of commerce and the clientele sought are male.

Another advertisement inserted in the *Hobart Town Gazette* on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1818, widens both the market and the product:

Michael Donnelly, Bathurst Street, begs leave to inform the inhabitants of Hobart Town and its vicinity that he has opened a school, where the youth of both sexes will be diligently and carefully instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic.

This advertisement offers education to both male and female clientele and includes the subject of reading.

Notably, in the space of two editions of the *Hobart Town Gazette*, education had not only taken on the complexion of a product, being offered for sale, but also, teachers had moved into the realm of purveyors of a product.

By 1820, Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald had become purveyors of the product of education, with their school in Hobart Town having an enrolment of 35 boys and 24 girls. Boys were taught arithmetic, reading and writing, while girls were taught reading, sewing and needlework.<sup>30</sup> Thus there was a difference in the curriculum offered to boys and girls. It could be that the main reason for boys being educated was to undertake commerce in the colony or perhaps as preparation for further education in England. On the other hand, girls were clearly being prepared to fulfil roles as wives and mothers.

It is also of interest to note that by 1821, Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald had acquired a farm in the north of the island on the road to George Town, nine miles from Launceston. It was at the Fitzgerald's farm that New South Wales Governor Macquarie stayed

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<sup>30</sup> Beattie, above n 8, 33.

and rested during his second tour of Van Diemen's Land in 1821.<sup>31</sup> It seems reasonable to infer that Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald, in common with so many of the settlers, had benefited from the bounty of Van Diemen's Land grants of land as well as from their teaching business.

#### XV BRITISH CURIOSITY ABOUT EDUCATION IN VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

By 1820, approximately 2,500 convicts had been transported to Van Diemen's Land and the British government demonstrated increasing curiosity about the state of the penal colonies of Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales. Hence that government directed Commissioner J T Bigge to enquire into several areas of development, including education in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales. The Commissioner did so by questioning many witnesses about schools and teachers.

Commissioner Bigge conducted his enquiry in Hobart Town from February 21<sup>st</sup> 1820 to May 28<sup>th</sup> 1821, with the chief witnesses for education being the Reverend Mr Knopwood in the south and the Reverend Mr Youl, recently-appointed Assistant Chaplain to the Settlement, in the north.

The Reverend Mr Knopwood gave evidence that the schools in the south were under his supervision. He visited the schools and he provided the Lieutenant Governor with a monthly report. There were 4 schools in Hobart Town; parents paid 1/- to 1/6 weekly and most teachers received salaries from the Colonial Fund as well as the fees paid by parents. Thus there was direct user pays scheme in operation.

Convicts applied to the Reverend Mr Knopwood if they wanted their children to get a place in the school and could not afford to pay: he subsequently gave them access to free education. Thus the colony's chaplain made the decision for convicts' children to receive free education.

In the north, according to Reverend Mr Youl's evidence, there were two schoolmasters: Thomas Macqueen who received a salary of £25/-/- as well as parents' fees, and William Browne, an ex-convict, reputed to conduct a good school.

According to the witnesses, throughout the colony, from north, south and country areas, the parents wanted to have their children taught. Thus the benefits of education were highly prized by both the administration and the people.

Importantly, both protestant and Roman Catholic children were said to be educated together without any objections from parents.

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<sup>31</sup> New South Wales Governor Macquarie, *Journal of a Tour 1821*, 14 May 1821, Mitchell Library, A784; 60, 61, 74.

There were several private schools operating with fee-paying students. For example, Mrs Jones had operated a private girls' school for 12 months. Mrs Jones had then become governess to the children of Deputy Judge Advocate and a prosperous merchant, Mr Kemp. Thus, it can be inferred that those with money preferred to have their children educated privately, away from the children of convicts and indeed, perhaps, by teachers who did not have a convict background.

School materials were beginning to be published in Van Diemen's Land by 1821. However, the cost would have been prohibitive except for the wealthy settlers. For example, a small reading primer for infants is said to have been published in the colony of Van Diemen's Land selling at 2/0 per copy in 1821 and a spelling book intended to be used in the colony cost 4/- per copy in Hobart Town in 1821.<sup>32</sup>

#### XVI THE BELL AND LANCASTER METHODS OF TEACHING

The two prevailing models of English education in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were that of Joseph Lancaster of the British and Foreign School Society and that of Andrew Bell founder of the Church of England's National Society: the aims of both could be said to teach children cheaply and efficiently by using talented older children - or monitors - to teach younger children.<sup>33</sup>

The British government formally revealed its preference for Dr Bell's method in England in 1811, when a meeting of Anglican bishops created the National Society for the Education of the Poor in Accordance with the Principles of the Established Church.

That preference was also demonstrated for the Australian colonies. Lord Bathurst informed New South Wales Governor Macquarie on 13 May 1820 that two schoolmasters were to be sent to colonies at £60/0/0 *per annum* each, to introduce Dr Bell's plan in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, and further, that Mr Reddall from the Central National School London, would take the Bell plan to Sydney and then other schools.<sup>34</sup> This marked the formal adoption of Dr Bell's system for the Australian colonies.

The British Government showed its interest in the colony's state of education by sending out Mr Peter Archer Mulgrave as first superintendent of Van Diemen's Land schools which were receiving government aid.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Reeves, above n 11, 15.

<sup>33</sup> Pam Silver and Harold Silver, *The Education of the Poor: The History of a National School 1824 – 1874*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) 9.

<sup>34</sup> Lord Bathurst to New South Wales' Governor Macquarie, 13 May 1820, *HRA*, vol X, 304.

<sup>35</sup> Reeves, above n 11, 13.

Dr Bell's use of the rote method of learning and recitation of lessons in unison<sup>36</sup> can be seen as appropriate for a colony in its infancy of European settlement: it capitalised upon the need for cooperative endeavour, in particular, to understand and manipulate the geographical features of an unknown physical environment.

The English influence of the Bell teaching methodology continued well through the 1800's and the 1900's. For example, Bishop E H Burgmann of the Canberra-Goulburn diocese Church of England in Australia, writing of his school days in the early 1900's at Koppin Yarrat School, remembered drill on the art of writing, reading, arithmetic; learning long lists of rivers, capes and bays by heart, the names and dates of kings and queens of England from 1066 and battles mainly against the French, which fostered the belief that the French were the enemy.<sup>37</sup>

Whatever its defects may have been, however, it is important to remember its benefits in the early years of its implementation in the Australian colonies. For example, children from Christian beliefs outside the Church of England were encouraged to attend their own church. Thus, attendance at the Church of England was not required if parents were from another denomination, according to extracts from the Reports of the Select Parliamentary Committee on the Education of the Lower Classes (The Brougham Committee), of 1816.<sup>38</sup> Thus it could be claimed that the Bell methodology of education actually fostered religious tolerance in Van Diemen's Land.

The memo of New South Wales' Governor Macquarie to Lord Bathurst dated 16<sup>th</sup> March 1821 was a request for provisions to get Dr Bell's system of education underway in the colonies: 100 Bibles, 100 testaments, 1000 small slates, 2000 slate pencils, 50 dozen black lead pencils, 1000 complete sets of books, including the cards used in the system, 1000 stereotyped cards of monosyllables, 100 cards of written system, 100 of figures, 200 prayer books, 48 Bell's instructions to be given to the masters and mistresses, books of rewards & encouragements, a supply of papers and quills.<sup>39</sup> Thus the same tools that were used for education under the Bell system in England were to be used in the Australian colonies.

## XVII THE OUTCOME OF THE BIGGE ENQUIRY

From 1823, after receiving Commissioner Bigge's Report, the British government shouldered increased responsibility for education in Van Diemen's Land.

For example, it accepted Commissioner Bigge's recommendation that Dr Bell's national system of instruction be extended throughout Van Diemen's Land and

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<sup>36</sup> Sutherland, above n 10, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Ernest H Burgman, *The Education of an Australian*, (Angus and Robertson, 1944) 6.

<sup>38</sup> Griffiths (ed), above n 19, relying on James E G De Montmorency, *State Intervention in English Education* (Cambridge University Press, 1902) 219-229.

<sup>39</sup> HRA, above n 4, vol 10, 441.

subsequently appointed Mr Thomas Reddall to instruct colonial teachers in its methodology.<sup>40</sup>

The British government finally seemed to understand that education in the penal colonies was not a spontaneous happening. Thus, Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies, employed Archdeacon Thomas Hobbes Scott, who had accompanied Commissioner Bigge to Australia as his secretary, at a salary of £2,000/- pa<sup>41</sup> to develop a plan for a system of education in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Archdeacon Scott submitted the final plan in March 1824.<sup>42</sup>

Essentially Archdeacon Scott's plan was that education would be financed by a substantial grant of land to the Church of England. The Church of England would receive 1/10<sup>th</sup> of all land in the colony and use the income from this land to provide religious and educational facilities.<sup>43</sup>

A Board of Trustees would administer the scheme, with elementary schools being established to take the place of poor schools, using teachers who understood the national system. A larger establishment would follow the elementary schools to provide instruction in agriculture, trade or apprenticed out.<sup>44</sup> In due course, there would be central schools patterned on the British Academies and eventually universities.<sup>45</sup>

Archdeacon Scott's plan, therefore, was based on the understanding that the physical tasks of developing the colony were a priority. Thus, agricultural studies, learning to make the land productive, trade skills for construction and essential services such as water, and apprenticeships for the organization of the labour force, were of fundamental importance. Underpinning Archdeacon Scott's plan, then, was the philosophy that education for the colony needed a pragmatic as distinct from an idealistic purpose.

In a Despatch of 1<sup>st</sup> January 1825 to the New South Wales Governor Thomas Brisbane,<sup>46</sup> the British government conveyed its intention to establish Archdeacon Scott's scheme in that colony.

Lord Bathurst, of his own volition, increased the Church of England's grant of land from 1/10<sup>th</sup> to 1/7<sup>th</sup>, a unilateral action which did little to endear Archdeacon Scott's plan to the settlers. In particular, emancipated convicts in New South Wales, who in

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<sup>40</sup> John T Bigge, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales* (1823) 75.

<sup>41</sup> Clifford Turney, *Pioneers in Australian Education* (Sydney University Press, 1969) vol 1, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Governor's Despatches (ML) Vol v (1824) 709-60.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 712-14.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 741.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid 742.

<sup>46</sup> *HRA*, above n 4, vol XI, 434.

the 1820's comprised the largest section of free society, had gained influential roles in the colony; they resented 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the colony's land going to the Church of England.

In Van Diemen's Land, emancipists and free settlers alike, also had acquired land through grants and optimistically hoped for more. As well, changes were beginning to occur in the colony's religious composition, with Roman Catholics, Methodists and Presbyterians increasing in the colony. Nevertheless, in Van Diemen's Land the successor to Colonel Sorell, Lieutenant Governor Arthur, managed to keep the local press in check. Thus the voices of resentment were stifled in Van Diemen's Land under the autocratic regime of Lieutenant Governor Arthur. Be that as it may, the criticism Archdeacon received from the emancipists and free settlers in New South Wales was probably a major reason for Archdeacon Scott's resignation in 1829.<sup>47</sup>

The Van Diemen's Land census of 1825 revealed there were 2,444 non-Aboriginal children under the age of fifteen years in Van Diemen's Land, 394 of these being convict children and 2,050 being free children.<sup>48</sup> Of the free children, only 312 were attending schools maintained by public funds and only 130 free children attended private schools or had governesses.<sup>49</sup> It is unclear whether the convict children were attending school, but of the total number of children, only 2002 were receiving education. This was the situation in 1825.

#### XVIII THE CASE OF *THOMSON V CLARK*, VAN DIEMEN'S LAND SUPREME COURT, MARCH 1825

Sutherland (1971) notes that giving the teacher a place in society's social structure was as important in controlling the effect the school had on children as any external regulations about teaching methods or curriculum content.<sup>50</sup> That notion of "giving the teacher a place in society's social structure" is clearly revealed in the case of *Thomson v Clark*, March 1825.<sup>51</sup> By 1825 the Van Diemen's Land settlers had formed a definite view about the moral attributes and fitness of an adult who would undertake the role of a teacher.

The facts of the case are that James Thomson had established a successful school for young men in Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land. According to Mr Thomson, on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1824, George Carr Clark, a Hobart Town merchant, had a conversation with John Montagu, in a public place in Hobart Town. During the conversation, Mr Clark told Mr Montagu, in the presence of others, that Mr Thomson had left his country in disgrace. Further, Mr Clark said that Mr Thomson had concealed himself in the coal-hole of the Brig *Urania* to journey to Van

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<sup>47</sup> Turney, above n 41, 23.

<sup>48</sup> Reeves, above n 11, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Sutherland, above n 10, 22.

<sup>51</sup> Box SC 101 A282/6, State Archives Office, Tasmania.

Diemen's Land and was now constantly intoxicated and unable to pay his debts. Mr Clark advised Mr Montagu to inform his uncle, the newly arrived Lieutenant Governor Arthur, of this.

The impact of this public conversation on Mr Thomson was enormous and immediate. Thereafter, people of standing in Hobart Town ignored him, several children had been withdrawn from his school and Mr Thomson's school business was suffering severe economic hardship.

What could Mr Thomson do about this? He engaged solicitor Thomas Young, who commenced an action of trespass on the case and claimed two thousand pounds in damages from Mr Clark.

In his Affidavit attached to the Summons,<sup>52</sup> Mr Thomson, states he was a 'good, true, honest, just and faithful servant of Great Britain' currently a subject of HM colony of Van Diemen's Land, who had always 'behaved and conducted' himself appropriately. He was 'always respected, esteemed and accepted by and amongst all his neighbours and other good and worthy subjects of Van Diemen's Land.'

Mr Clark ignored the first summons, but did not ignore the second. If he had, his default would have been recorded and the Plaintiff, James Thomson would have been at liberty to proceed to trial *ex parte*,<sup>53</sup> that is, in the absence of the Defendant. After receiving the second summons, Mr Clark formally denied the allegations.<sup>54</sup>

At trial, James Thomson was non-suited<sup>55</sup>.

The term *nonsuit* indicates<sup>56</sup> a case was abandoned at trial, with Judgment being given against the Plaintiff. In other words, the Defendant submitted that the Plaintiff had insufficient evidence to ground the complaint and the Court agreed.

The result of this case is a comment about the substantial influence wielded by the Hobart Town merchants, of which George Clark was a member. By 1825, the power of the merchants had increased to the extent that it enveloped the wider aspects of the colony's society. People believed, apparently without question, comments made by members of the merchant class. They also acted upon the comment and as James Thomson's loss of his school business showed, once the confidence of the small Van Diemen's Land community was lost, it was not regained. Above all, however, the case shows that parents were sensitive to the reputation and good character of the teachers of children. Thus, by 1825, teachers had achieved not only a place in Van Diemen's Land's society, but also status.

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<sup>52</sup> Box SC 101 A282/6, Document 4, State Archives Office, Tasmania.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Box SC 101 A282/6, Document 2, State Archives Office, Tasmania.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Percy G Osborn, *A Concise Law Dictionary* (Sweet and Maxwell, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, 1964) 223.

## XIX CONCLUSION

The establishment of schooling and education in Van Diemen's Land from 1803 to 1825 can be said to have progressed along a unique route. The colony's population of free settlers saw education as the key to material gain. The convicts who had been deported from their country of birth saw education as the means of gaining power and personal progress. The Lieutenant Governors who were confronted with the task of overseeing and administering a diverse group of human beings in a foreign, unknown and uncultivated environment, were the first to comprehend the opportunities presented by Van Diemen's Land. Essentially transportation was a fresh start.

The British government can be seen as being initially either fearful of the changes which would result from education for all, or unable to comprehend the value of education. They were locked into a self-protective mode of no change. But the very fact of transportation to Van Diemen's Land resulted in the British government's self-protection being infiltrated and destroyed by the very people they had banished.

For the convicts and settlers, education became the guiding star on their road to success. Thus, if the British government's aim in transportation were rehabilitation of the offender, it can be said to have succeeded.

Despite Britain's lack of leadership and initial neglect in providing schools and teachers, the impetus for education in the Van Diemen's Land community itself resulted in a schooling which was relevant to the needs of the people. It began with the Reverend Mr Knopwood and the Palawa people teaching bush life and survival skills to the settlers. It continued when Lieutenant Governor Collins persuaded literate convicts to teach literacy skills to the island's children. It entered another phase when entrepreneurs set up private schools and began to market education. It culminated with the British government's acknowledgment of its responsibility to provide education for children in the penal colony and its decision to establish a British system of education in Van Diemen's Land and provide trained teachers.

Let it not be forgotten, however, that the first Van Diemen's Land settlers themselves acted collaboratively with their pooled intellectual capabilities and knowledge bank to fill the void of education which the British government chose to ignore.

Department of Business Law

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