

'Here ends, I trust forever, my acquaintance with Port Arthur': the archaeology of William Smith O'Brien's cottage

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The archaeology of the complex story of the cottage provided to the privileged Irish political prisoner William Smith O'Brien at Port Arthur penal station, Tasmania, in 1850, provides an example of how careful fabric investigation can inform more authentic conservation and visitor interpretation. The evidence of change at the cottage reflects aspects of O'Brien's Port Arthur experience but also wider changes at Port Arthur since his occupation. It also provides useful insight into the need to manage potential conflicts between heritage values and tourism pressures to ensure the cultural significance of such critically important heritage places is properly maintained.

PROLOGUE

In the 1880s, the townspeople of Carnarvon, living amongst the subdivided former penal station of Port Arthur¹, began to transform their environment to accommodate tourism. The townsfolk set about clearing away 'unsightly' penal structures, enhancing icons such as the guard tower and the church, adapting former officer residences into hotels and guest houses as well as attempting to convert the model prison into guest accommodation. The latter effort was thwarted when the structure burned down in a bush fire. Throughout the following 120 years, Port Arthur has been shaped inexorably by the pressure of tourism (Weidenhofer 1981; Young 1996). As a response to the demands of tourism, and a belief by the State of Tasmania and the Commonwealth Government that tourism could serve to enhance the development of the island, the Port Arthur Conservation and Development Project (PACDP) was initiated in 1979.² By the time the project closed in 1986, some nine million dollars had been expended primarily to conserve the site and improve the quality of the visitor experience.

It is not widely known that the PACDP was funded under the *Urban and Regional Development (Financial Assistance) Act 1974* and that essential scientific expertise was not added to the staff of the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service until the project was in its second year.³ Archaeological investigations were undertaken initially by Frank Bolt, the Historic Sites Planning Officer of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and then by Suzanne Orr, Angela McGowan and Brian Prince. The team of McGowan and Prince excavated at Lithend (McGowan 1985) and at Garden Point. The latter was a caravan-park development on the site of the convict gardens adjacent to Port Arthur while the former was the renovation of a historic building to accommodate park-ranger staff. Orr undertook excavations primarily around cottages that were scheduled for conservation works.

Archaeology was an integral part of the PACDP, but was to operate in both a proactive and a reactive mode. Archaeological investigation of areas and structures occurred prior to works to both minimise the potential loss of information prior to disturbance and to provide information upon which conservation decisions could be based. So priority was given to the development of standardised, consistent procedures for archaeological investigation and recording and to the establishment of a role for archaeology in conservation planning and decision making. The archaeological process was set out in the Port Arthur *Archaeological Procedures Manual* (Davies and Buckley 1987). There were numerous big and small archaeological projects conducted by the PACDP. The several such projects connected with Smith O'Brien's

Cottage—with the advantage of the considerable resources of the Project for archaeological and other research, before and since, compared over a number of years with resources available elsewhere in Australia—have provided a unique opportunity to explore a more privileged and rare type of convict: the political prisoner.

Most other convicts did not have their own separate place of confinement nor were they able to leave a written record of their time at Port Arthur. Also, all of the principal convict accommodation places at Port Arthur are now either archaeological sites or ruins. The richness of PACDP information on Smith O'Brien's place of confinement, combined with his own records, and other available contextual information on the man and Port Arthur, makes it possible to delve deeper here than with most of the other unfortunate inhabitants of this site and other convict settlements.

There is no doubt that archaeological thought radically changed the concept of how the site was to be dealt with relative to tourism pressure. That change was most noticeable in the removal of tourism infrastructure from the site's core as it threatened both important fabric and visitor appreciation of the place's heritage values. This was accomplished through the PACDP conservation-management planning process and the recognition that the post-convict period of Carnarvon⁴ had a valid place within the presentation of the significance of the site to tourists (National Parks & Wildlife Service 1985; Egloff 1986).

At the close of the PACDP in 1988, site management was transferred from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to an authority that was required to increase the revenue-raising activities of the site. This brought about plans for a multi-tiered car park and visitor centre within the core of the historic site. The centre was designed to facilitate a *son et lumiere* presentation and quality food catering at the historic site. Following the 1996 tragedy when 32 people lost their lives and 19 were wounded within or near the historic site at the hands of a gun-man, the Federal government 'fast tracked' funds to replace the 'Broad Arrow Cafe' which had been the centre of the tragedy. Immediately the Board of management commenced work on the visitors' facility. Public and professional concern, as well as opposition, was belatedly thwarted by an amendment to the management plan that allowed for the development (Egloff and Newby 2000). A parliamentary inquiry into both the tragedy and the management of Port Arthur recommended that the majority of the members of the board of the management authority be dismissed (Doyle 1997; Egloff & Newby 2000).

The second major influence, that of recognising and planning for the importance of the Carnarvon period in the

shaping of the historic site, has yet to be fully realised. Today, Port Arthur is presented to the public as a series of convict task-specific areas, such as 'administration' and 'work'. In this kind of 'penal-centric' presentation, the Carnarvon period is given only cursory attention. In 1995 the focus on the penal significance of Port Arthur increased as it is the centre point of the Federal Government's development of a nomination to the World Heritage list of a series of places representing the theme of forced migration (Pearson & Marshall 1995).

The subject of this paper, the archaeology of William Smith O'Brien, was selected as an example of how the history of Port Arthur and Carnarvon can be viewed from the vantage point of a single place, one that has been linked throughout most of its history with the foremost Irish patriot of the nineteenth century. By reading the fabric of the 'Exile's Cottage' the narrative unfolds from the convict period to the township of Carnarvon, then to the era of the Scenery Preservation Board and finally to the recent management by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Port Arthur Management Authority. The cottage of William Smith O'Brien embodies considerable emotional strength and can be seen to reflect the modern Irish quest for social justice. For the Irish of today, it symbolises the unremitting struggle against the tyranny of the British Crown.

YOUNG IRELAND AND O'BRIEN

Much has been written about Port Arthur (Brand 1978; Weidenhofer 1981) and we know a great deal about William Smith O'Brien (Davis 1988; Davis et al. 1995; Keneally 1998; see Figure 1), but there never has been a detailed study of the convict landscape within which O'Brien lived—albeit for only three months in the late winter and early spring of 1850. His circumstances as a convict were somewhat unique in that he was housed in a structure, now known as Smith O'Brien's cottage, and was continuously guarded. He would have had a view over a substantial part of Port Arthur from the vantage point of his verandah.

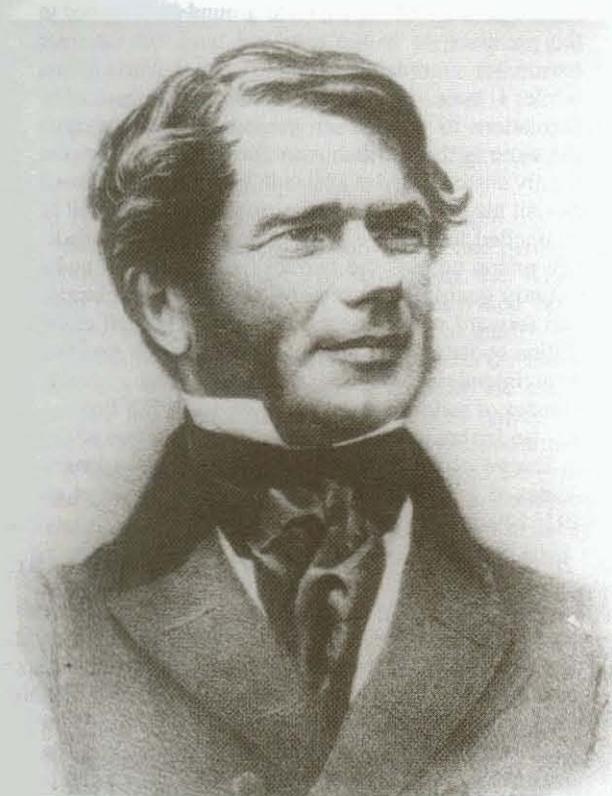


Figure 1 Portrait of William Smith O'Brien (National Library of Ireland, in Keneally 1998 between pp. 140&141).

Beyond any question of doubt, William Smith O'Brien was considered to be a leading political figure in the nineteenth century. Yet outside of Ireland, he is virtually unknown today. Historical sources (see Touhill 1981 for the most comprehensive collection) provide accounts of O'Brien and his exiled compatriots who became enmeshed in either advocating, or directly participating in, the poorly executed revolution of 1848. The uprising took on a force of its own and before it could be adequately planned, attempts were made to raise a revolutionary force in the Ballingarry district. A conflict between police and the insurgents occurred on 29 July 1848 (Figure 2). O'Brien was tried for treason and found guilty.⁵ The British Ministry caused this sentence to be softened and he was to live as a gentleman and hopefully fade away (Touhill 1981: xi).

O'Brien was sentenced to transportation, a sentence that has come to characterise the English penal system of the nineteenth century. O'Brien argued unsuccessfully that the penalty for treason was either death or pardon. He hoped for the latter. Transportation was for either seven or 14 years and commonly began with two or three years of assignment to a probation station. The transported criminal was then free to seek employment until being granted a ticket-of-leave. Upon completing the term of their sentence, they were free to reside anywhere in the world except the British Isles (Touhill 1981: 30). Generally speaking, transported criminals were not initially imprisoned, as this would have meant that they were being punished twice: once with transportation and the second time with imprisonment. By 1840, most of the transported criminals were roaming loose in the colonies, at times with no more than one overseer controlling 90 or so men distributed over the length of a road-works. It became apparent to the law-abiding citizens that the system had its benefits in the supply of bound labour, but it certainly had a down-side, particularly the lack of control over the convicts.

EXILE

After an uneventful 16 000 mile journey on the *Swift*, O'Brien arrived in Hobart on 28 October 1849 about 100 days after leaving the shores of Ireland. He was not regarded by the press of the colony as a criminal but as an individual who had 'erred in judgement' (Touhill 1981: 34). Governor Denison had received orders to offer the Irish political prisoners tickets-of-leave, or special paroles, and hopefully they would be consigned to perpetual obscurity. The terms of the parole required the prisoners to give their oath that they would do the following: not leave the district to which they had been assigned; report any change of residence to the Police magistrate; report to the magistrate once a month; not to be out of residence after ten o'clock at night; and, not enter a theatre or billiard room. Each prisoner was to be domiciled in a separate district of Van Diemen's Land.

O'Brien stated that:

Having fully resolved to bind myself by no engagement whatever—a resolution not hastily formed but the result of long deliberation I replied without hesitation that I could not make any pledge that I would not attempt to escape. (Touhill 1981: 36)

Governor Denison believed that the State Prisoners were in essence convicts and should be treated as such. O'Brien did not disembark at Hobart, but was off-loaded directly from the *Swift* to a steamer that took him the short distance north along the coast, past the entry to Port Arthur, to Darlington Probation Station on Maria Island. Upon passing the heads that flanked the entry to Port Arthur, O'Brien described them as:

...rendered remarkable not only by their bold and lofty appearance but also by their columnar formation



Figure 2 The affray at Widow McCormack's house on Boulagh Common, 29 July 1848 (London Illustrated Times in Keneally 1998 between pp. 268&269).

which is as regular as if were constructed by the hand of art...[and that the forests were of] interminable continuity...[and invoked an] intense sentiment of loneliness... (Touhill 1981: 46)

He was to spend the night on the steamer and be picked up the next morning by, as events unfolded, the unfortunate Superintendent Latham who was given personal responsibility by Governor Denison for O'Brien's safekeeping. The state prisoner was not to be treated as a convict and coerced into work or indeed wear convict kit but was to be treated as an officer in terms of allowances and rations and to be regularly afforded the opportunity for exercise.

Throughout his exile, O'Brien wrote to England raising people's attention to the condition of his incarceration. The colonial press considered the actions of the government unjustified. O'Brien continued to foster a sympathetic audience as other factors were at play in the minds of the public. Officialdom wanted to exert sufficient pressure for O'Brien to seek a ticket-of-leave, and in pursuit of this goal his rations were increased hoping that he would be induced to see the attractiveness and comfort of freedom. The Tasmanian anti-transportation movement was gaining momentum and focused upon the Van Diemen's Land government of the day, in the form of Governor Denison. Following an aborted and perhaps betrayed attempt to escape—O'Brien was aware of plans to reassign him to Port Arthur—on 21 August 1850, O'Brien left Maria Island by cutter for the Port Arthur Convict Station.

THE EXILE AND HIS COTTAGE

O'Brien considered his accommodation at Port Arthur to be better than that at Maria Island. A report in the *Hobart Town Courier* refers to his dwelling as a stable (Touhill 1981: 84). O'Brien never referred to his new abode as a former stable and took great pains to describe in detail the positive features of the place, but to also remark upon the increased security measures. The government said that it would forget the attempted escape, hinting that they would prefer that he accepted a ticket-of-leave.

When compared with the condition of the convicted convict, O'Brien wrote:

...considering my previous habits, I should perhaps think otherwise if I were actually treated as such... (Davis et al. 1995: 151)

On August 24 he described his situation in more detail:

The station of Port Arthur is situated upon a lough or arm of the sea at the bottom of a bay which intervenes between Cape Pillar and Cape Roul. Its appearance is very picturesque as seen from the water. It is surrounded on every side by wooded hills and looks more like a pretty village placed in a romantic position than an abode of misery and crime. The prison which has been allotted to me consists of two small rooms in a very cheerful position (if a prospect can be considered cheerful which overlook a great goal) and I acknowledge with candor that the arrangements appear to have been made with a view to secure my health and to provide for me reasonable portion of the comforts of life. A garden and an exercise ground are attached to the premises so in the respect I have not the same reason for complaint which existed at Maria Island while I was in solitary confinement there. The regulations to which I am subject appear to be much the same as those which were framed by Dr. Hampton for my custody at Maria Island. No one will be allowed to visit me except the officers on duty so that I shall be compelled to undergo approaching complete solitude. My prison adjoins the barracks and I am now under military guard, the sentry constantly paces backwards and forward within the garden walls. The staff of the station consists of a Superintendent, a Senior Assistant Superintendent (Mr Irwin, an Irishman) with a sizeable number of subordinate officers—a doctor (Dr Brock—also an Irishman), a clergy (Mr Garlick) and an officer in charge of the troops Major Smiley (an Irishman). Annexed is a sketch of the premises. (Davis et al. 195: 149–150; Figure 3)

On 26 August 1850, as a post-script to correspondence, O'Brien wrote:

I have spent part of this day in putting up your little sketch on the whitewashed walls of my prison. The arrangements for my custody here appear to have been made with a view to secure my health and...provide for me a reasonable portion of the comforts of life. The apartments are good—a spacious exercise ground is annexed to them and I believe that all the necessary articles of furniture will be provided. (Brand n.d. from S. O'Brien MS 444: 2715)

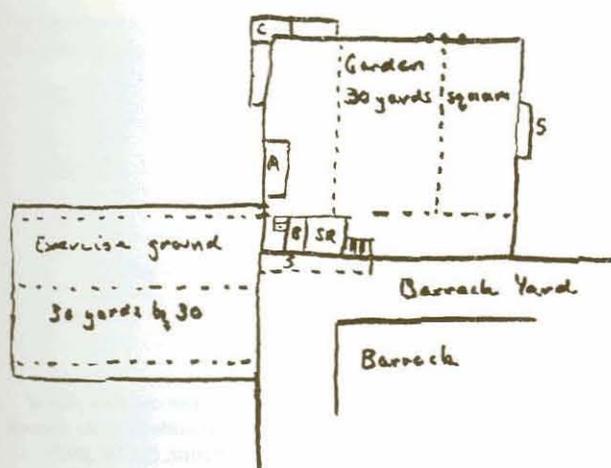


Figure 3 Tracing of O'Brien's first rough sketch of his residence, with additional information from a second sketch, by Ian Brand. Not to scale. (Brand n.d. from O'Brien Papers MS 449 p 23, 24 Aug 1950 and MS 444 p 2747, 12 Oct 1850)

This was followed a week later by these words:

...have here abundant opportunity to exercise. I work for two or three hours every day in a garden which has been placed at my disposal. My rooms too are as cheerful as a Prison can be... (Brand n.d. from S. O'Brien MS 444: 2719)

and on October 12 with:

My apartments are cheerful and airy. Their position is elevated and healthy. I have a bookcase and cupboard and four tables, a washing stand, four chairs with very hard seats being such as are used in kitchens in Ireland. I have an adequate supply of earthenware. I sleep on an iron bedstead 2 feet 7 inches wide. My blankets are not long enough to cover my feet but...rugs which I have been supplied I endeavour to make up for their deficiency in length. I have access at all hours when not locked up to a garden about thirty yards square and I am permitted to walk in a piece of ground about 50 yards long and 30 wide which has been railed in for the purpose for one hour in the forenoon... Two powerful lamps throw light round my dwelling at night. (Brand n.d. from O'Brien MS 444: 2747)

At Port Arthur, the acting superintendent and the doctor who initially visited O'Brien, held only short and perfunctory conversations. He received no visit from the Anglican Chaplain of the settlement. His day was divided between reading and writing and three to four hours of gardening. By early October he was actively seeking advice on the notion of his accepting a ticket-of-leave. O'Brien had the ear of a sympathetic local press with the government fairing badly, particularly Denison who wanted the colony to continue as a place of transportation while the citizens wanted the practice to cease. O'Brien's fellow conspirators, family and supporters in Ireland and Van Diemen's Land, all urged him to accept a ticket-of-leave. Correspondence from England indicated that the government would not change its stand and grant a pardon. Inexorably O'Brien was being forced to accept that he would either lead a life of solitary and close confinement, perhaps experiencing further illness or give his parole. To Lucy his wife, O'Brien wrote:

Until now I have never felt myself thoroughly beaten by English power—beaten in the Hs. Commons—beaten in the field—beaten in the Courts of Law—beaten before the Lords—beaten in my attempt to escape—beaten in my system of passive resistance

which I had proposed to myself to apply to continuing in prison rather than accepting the wretched description of liberty or rather of imprisonment offered by the Govt.—as an equivalent for my parole. Though I exposed myself last year to the risk of premature death by refusing to emancipate myself from solitary confinement according to the terms of Government. I have not had sufficient strength of will or obstinacy of character to resist the united solicitations of nearly all my dearest friends as well as with those of my wife... May God grant this submission my own opinions...may be attended with a blessing. (Touhill 1981: 91)

On 9 November, O'Brien requested a ticket-of-leave and received the same on the 12th. He was then 'unlocked', immediately visited by the Catholic Chaplain and was allowed to walk around Port Arthur. Shortly after, on 17 November, O'Brien wrote:

On Thursday I made an excursion to Mount Arthur on which there is a telegraph now no longer used. It is a hill about 1500 feet in height which overlooks a large extent of territory. The whole of Tasman's Peninsula appears from this spot to be covered with forest. I could not discover any glades or meadows. There is something very gloomy in a view which presents nothing that indicated the presence of man or the fertility of nature and I could not look at the mountain chains which bound the horizon without a feeling of heart sickness in contrasting the emotions with which I viewed the scene with those which I have often experienced in contemplating the Galtees, the Wicklow Hills, the Kerry Mountains or Other Highland distances in my native land. During this portion of my stay at Port Arthur I have spent nearly all of my time with the Revd Mr Livermore the R.C. Clergyman, a most estimable man, who did not one hour after my prison doors were unlocked in coming to offer me the hospitality of his house. I also made acquaintance with the Protestant Clergyman (the Revd Mr Garlick) who expressed the deepest regret that he had been prevented from visiting me during my imprisonment and appeared very anxious to convince me that he would gladly have availed himself of the opportunity of cultivating acquaintance with me and of administering to me such consolation as he could offer... (Touhill 1981: 94)

One of the features of Port Arthur which most excited my surprise is the circumstances that but a very small extent of land probably not more than 1000 acres has been cleared and brought into cultivation. Considering that the labours of a number of convicts varying from 400 to 1400 has been at the disposal of government for many years on the locality it is wonderful that so little useful work has been executed. It is true the forest is extremely dense, and if the labour which would be required for its clearance were estimated in money value the return which might be expected from its cultivation would not repay the expenses, but this objective scarcely applies in a place in which convict labor could not otherwise be profitably employed. All that I have seen at Port Arthur has convinced me that Maria Island is much better suited for a penal settlement than Port Arthur... (Touhill 1981: 94)

Here ends, I trust forever, my acquaintance with Port Arthur—a spot which has probably witnessed more of human suffering than almost any spot of equal size on the face of the globe during the period of its occupation as a Penal Station. (Davis 1995: 184–185)

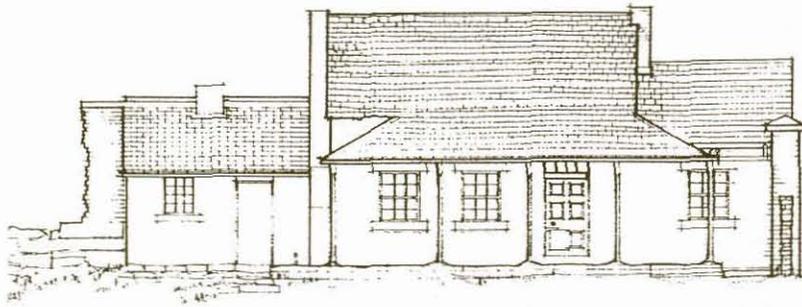


Figure 4 Front elevation and floor plan of the cottage at commencement of the research program. (David Wixted, PACDP 1983)

This was now a 'win-win' situation: Denison had forced O'Brien to accept a ticket-of-leave and O'Brien, following the urging of his followers, had regained his political profile as a leader of resolute strength (Touhill 1981: 95). On 18 November 1850 he left Port Arthur by long-boat to the terminus of the hand-pushed convict railway that provided transportation to the Hobart side of the Peninsula. He then travelled by steamer, stopping at the Cascades probation Station, Impression Bay and the Salt Water River Coal Mines, to a reception by a few hundred supporters at the Hobart wharves.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EXILE'S COTTAGE

Compared with the sketch drawings made in 1850 by William Smith O'Brien, the Exile's cottage as it now stands is considerably different (Figure 4). It is more than 50 percent larger with obvious changes to the room arrangements. In other words, there have been major changes and additions over the years. Our understanding of the structural evolution of O'Brien's cottage has emerged from historical records and archaeological research. Before restoration work commenced on the structure, archival research, fabric investigation and recording were undertaken and also, where significant fabric intervention was a necessary part of stabilisation and repair or restoration, this investigation and recording continued during the conservation works.

Ian Brand undertook the considerable archival research required for PACDP over several years and prior to most of the works beginning (Brand n.d., 1975, 1978). In his extensive trawling through historical documents on behalf of the overall Project, and working to a strict timetable, he had to make various strategic decisions in an effort to produce useful information across the available documentary sources. One of his decisions was significant in our understanding of O'Brien's Cottage. Brand chose to search only certain contemporary newspapers, making a reasonable, risk-management decision that most of the relevant news would be

in those he did. However, he did not search the *Hobart Town Courier* (HTC). Nor did he see Touhill's 1981 work on O'Brien as this was published after he had concluded his research into matters related to O'Brien's Cottage. Brand (n.d.), however, inferred from the historical documents that the structure was built as a small military hospital.

Therefore, when the PACDP came to undertake archaeological investigation and a recording of O'Brien's Cottage in 1983–1984 to understand the place, to provide information for conservation decisions, and record information that might otherwise be lost, hidden or unavailable in the future, the archaeologists were unaware of this vital historical information provided by the HTC. In a component of the 1983 Port Arthur Summer Archaeological Program, volunteer teams guided by Consultant Archaeologists Graham Wilson and Pat Allen, under the direction of Richard Morrison, PACDP Archaeologist, conducted structural and archaeological investigations of the cottage. The intense focus on O'Brien that occurred from the beginning of 1983 brought to light Touhill's work, moreover, the clues in the physical evidence and their interpretation had already been noted by Graham Wilson before the stables reference was located in Touhill.

Not surprisingly there was little artefactual evidence discovered during this 1983 work that related to O'Brien's three-month occupation of the cottage. However, this present paper only reports on the archaeological discoveries as they relate to the structure and general use of the site, not on O'Brien's, or any other occupants', daily life.

The *London Times* editors were noted by Touhill (1981: *in passim*) as continually ridiculing the Irish State Prisoners and their fate, and in this context, reported that O'Brien, an MP for 17 years, a man of some eminence, education and wealth, was to be housed in a converted stables. The important, confirmatory physical evidence of O'Brien's ignominious and considerably reduced circumstances, as related with scorn and delight by the British press, was uncovered in the building's

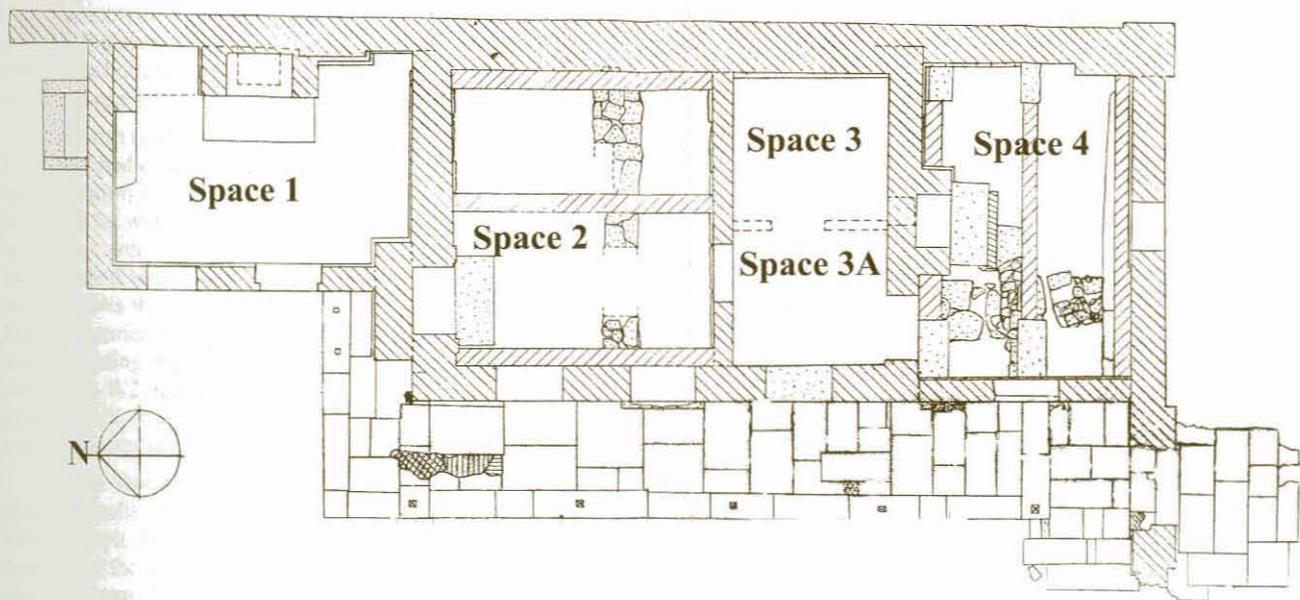


Figure 5 PACDP excavation plan of the sub-floor level of the cottage showing evidence of major demolished features including the former stables internal wall base in S2 and O'Brien's privy base in S4, the placement of the structure against a pre-existing wall to the east, the post-O'Brien erection of a skillion-roofed addition to the north (S1), and the complexity of the additions to the south as represented by S4. (Graham Wilson and David Starley, PACDP 1983)

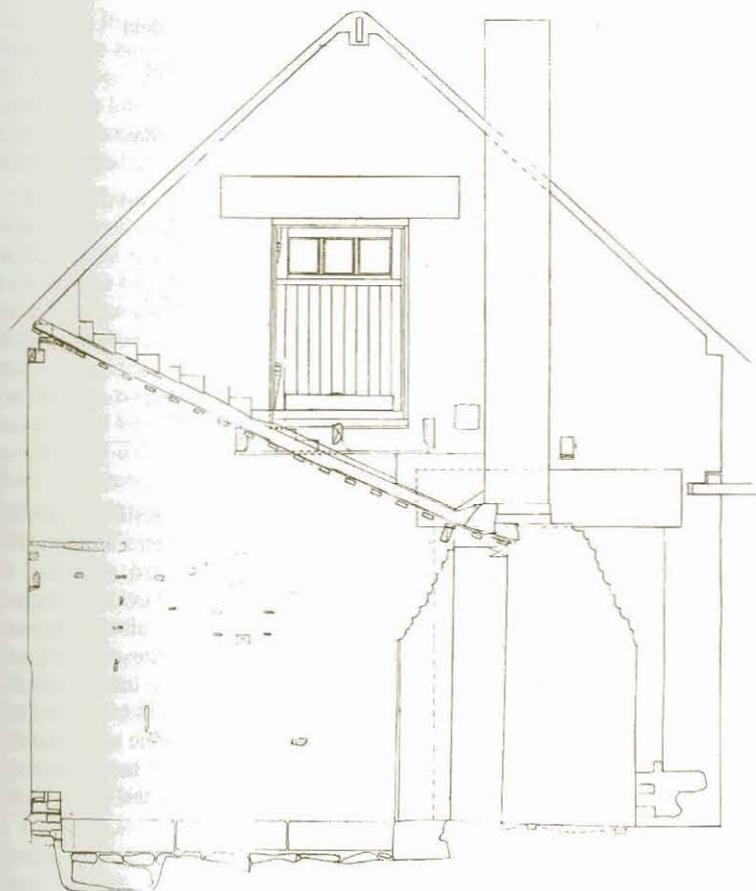


Figure 6 Profile of the northern exterior wall of the cottage which shows the placement of the fireplace within what was once the stable door, as well as the loft door in the gable. The post-O'Brien skillion-roofed addition is also shown. (Graham Wilson and David Starley, PACDP 1983)

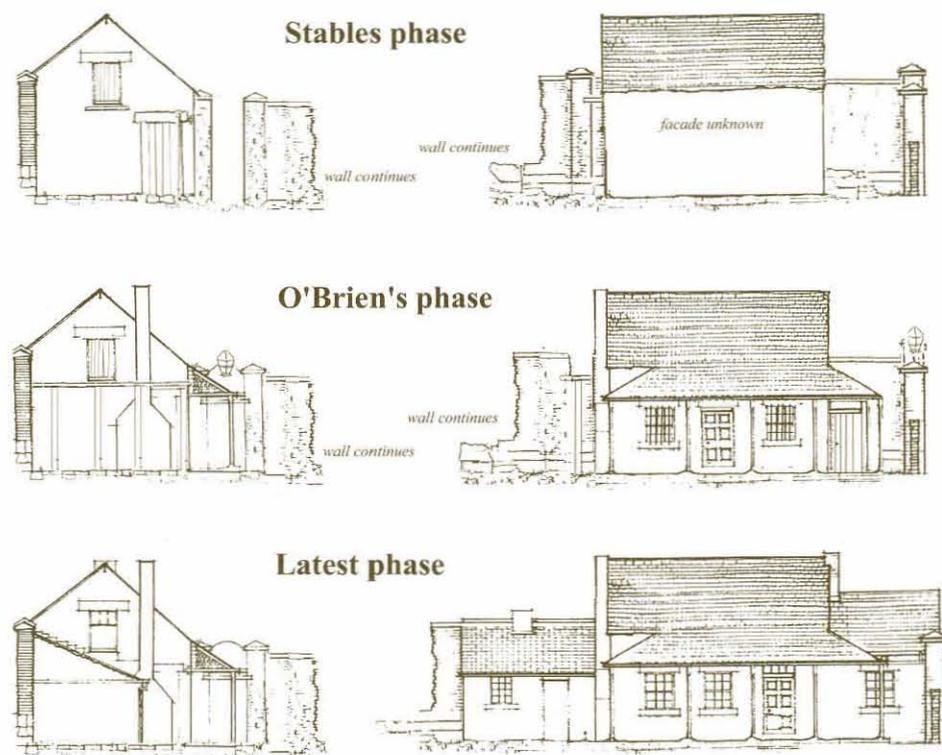


Figure 7 Hypothetical reconstruction of the first phase of the structure as a stables, followed by the presumed configuration of the cottage during the occupancy of William Smith O'Brien and the structure as it existed in 1983 after its use by the Youth Hostel Association. (Brian Egloff and Richard Morrison 2000)

Table 1. Phases marking modifications and additions to the stables and then cottage (refer also to Table 1 notes)

1.	Yard Walls	1838/9–1845
2.	Stables	1845–1850
3.	William Smith O'Brien's Cottage	1850 Aug–Nov
4.	Remainder of the Convict Era	1851–1877
	• Overseer Morley and wife	1860
	• Military Hospital but rarely used	1861–1863
	• Unidentified officials (after military leaves)	1863–1877
5.	Post-Convict to YHA Occupancy	1877–1950
	• Privately owned and rented-out, changing owners and tenants a number of times	1877–1940
	• Acquired by Crown for historical purposes	1940
6.	YHA Occupancy	1950–1970
7.	PACDP Building and subfloor archaeological investigation and recording	1983–1984
8.	PACDP Conservation works including stabilisation and restoration to the c.1863 form	1984–1986

fabric during the PACDP archaeological work of 1983–1984 (Figures 5 and 6). This enabled a significant and newly recognised political implication of the building's structural and occupational history to be presented to the site's many visitors. Site interpretation could then identify the visible fabric features relating to the building as stables and then the subsequent changes made to convert the stables to a cottage for the eminent Irish exile.

Evidence from the 1983 Summer Program was modified in the light of many subsequent discoveries both historical and archaeological. This evidence, primarily related to the structure's development, was collated (Morrison 1985) and it allowed for the identification of six principal phases in the building's structural history (Wilson [1983a, 1983b] had identified twelve).

Phase 1: Yard Walls, 1838/1839–1845

After 1836 and before 1843, possibly in 1838 or 1839, large rectangular yards defined by stone and brick walls were created on the hill south of Settlement Road (now Champ

Street), including one yard related to the residence provided for the Commissariat Officer, T. J. Lempriere. It was against and incorporating the red-brick, east-yard wall that the original structure was built. Archaeological evidence suggests that the south-yard wall, which was later also incorporated into the structure, was constructed after the east-yard wall. Yard wall foundations, found to the south, in line with the east wall, might be explained as the former extent of this east wall possibly truncated, as well as the return to the west, when the Reservoir was constructed in 1844, so that the roads in this area could still be accommodated between the Reservoir and the yard boundary.

Phase 2: Stables, 1845–1850

The stables appear to have been built in 1845 and to facilitate their construction, a brick pier of the east boundary wall was dismantled and replaced by what was the north wall of the stables and is now the north wall of S2. The yard wall became the bottom half of the stables east wall. The building seems to

have been constructed as a two-stall stables and tack room with a loft above. The original dividing wall between the two rooms was built upon a wall base discovered archaeologically in S2 and running east-west.

The north room was about 14 feet by seven feet (4.3m by 2.1m) and had external access from a very broad door (double normal width) in the north wall at the current position of the fireplace. Its walls were plastered and initially whitewashed, later they were light beige. The ceiling was merely the whitewashed underside of the loft floor. A contemporaneous sketch shows that there was no fenestration in the north wall. The arrangements for windows and even doorways in the west wall, including the south room, are not known. The current window at W2 appears to have been inserted into an already existing wall so it was not present at this phase. However, it could have replaced some earlier window.

Several features suggest a function for this room: the plastered walls, the long peg rack on the east wall, the rack's location next to the (presumed) only door, and the likely function of the other room in a building known to be a 'stable and tack room'. The south room was about 14 feet by 12 feet (4.3m by 3.7m) and seems to have been accessed only through the other room via a doorway, probably opposite to, and the same size as, the external doorway. Its walls were brick with the ceiling finished as in the tack room. The only window definitely known to have been present was a small window in the south wall (present but partially concealed by the chimney breast of the fireplace in S4), which is now the south wall of S3A.

There are two holes cut through the double flooring of the loft at the north-east and south-east corners of this south room. This would suggest that the room was designed for two stalls running east-west with the horses being fed at the east wall with fodder from the loft being delivered through the holes. These fodder holes may have acted as internal access to the loft. No surviving stable at Port Arthur has a formal internal access to the loft and this stable is no exception. External loft access was through the current entrance (D6) in the north wall, which then had an entry platform.

A urine drain would have been necessary in the stabling room and some evidence for such a drain was found beneath the floor of S3 in the form of a north-south linear depression at the western edge of the presumed stalls. Another feature, of currently uncertain origin found to the south of the original south room (beneath S4), may relate to the collection of the urine in an underground stone-lined tank rather than allowing it to flow into the reservoir nearby. This may not be the correct interpretation but whatever the purpose of the wall found, it certainly post-dates the south-yard wall and pre-dates the next phase of construction. The building may have been left unpainted outside but it seems probable that it was whitewashed in this and the next phase.

Lempriere, promoted to Assistant Commissary General in 1844 (Boyer n.d.), left Port Arthur in 1848 but had lived in the Commissariat Officer's Quarters lower down the hill from the subject building, towards Settlement Road (National Parks & Wildlife Service and the Education Department of Tasmania 1987: Profile 28). He moved from here to a new house, the building now referred to as the Junior Medical Officer's Residence when it was completed in 1847-1848, shortly before he left Port Arthur (Kirby 1988: 9). Given that the yard in which the stables sits seems to have been related to this Commissariat Officer's Quarters and the later newspaper report (Touhill 1981:84) refers to this building as being Lempriere's former stables, it is probable that these were Lempriere's stables.

Phase 3: William Smith O'Brien's Cottage, 1850

From at least March 1850, the stables were being converted to

a dwelling for O'Brien and were presumably ready by 22 August of that year when he arrived at Port Arthur. He remained until 18 November. The building was two-roomed but the rooms were different to those in the Stables phase, because the internal wall was moved to the south and so produced a much larger north room. Also, a fireplace (FP2) was installed in the north room, the sitting room (use ascribed after O'Brien's journal entry 24 November 1850 sketch), blocking the doorway in the north wall. The former doorway that had been the only external access was in the position of a current window (W3) and was from the current S2 or north room. The south window was in the position of the current D3 and provided, along with the small high stable window in the south room, the bedroom with light. The new windows were barred. The current door (D2), between S2 and S3/3A (the south room), was presumably the access between the internal spaces.

The interior colour scheme seems to have been such that the south room was white and this was painted on to newly plastered walls and ceilings. The north room, also newly plastered, was finished in a 'pale cream green'. The exterior was white-washed, windows and doors being shellacked. A verandah was added on the west side, returning to the east at the end. A privy was built beneath the verandah as part of the return.

To allow for greater surveillance of O'Brien, a sentry's (raised) walkway was constructed along the length of the east elevation (exterior) and against the north wall and physical evidence of this was found in a series of blocked joist holes along the east external wall of the cottage. Additionally, evidence of two former manholes was found in the loft floor. They would appear to have served no purpose for access and may have been used as points of observation whilst O'Brien was inside the cottage. Prior to the present ceilings being installed each hole would have provided visual access to both of the ground floor rooms.

Two yards were created for O'Brien's use: a garden, 30 yards (27m) square, in front or west of the cottage, and an exercise ground, 50 yards by 30 yards (46m by 27m), to the south. A shed south-west of the cottage and a number of 'stations' for sentries were also established. The gateway through the south wall to the then exercise yard may have been installed at this time. None of these items were investigated archaeologically, although foundations are apparent south-west of the cottage, possibly physical evidence of the shed which has been referred to historically.

Phase 4: Remainder of the Convict Era, 1851-1877

Many changes occurred to the building in this period and they include: the addition of a room at the north end (S1) and at the south end (S4); necessary alterations in the walkway because of the construction of S1; the privy being removed to allow for S4; the door at the current location of W3 being replaced by a window; and a door being inserted at D3 where formerly there had been only a window. The window bars were removed during these works. The ceiling of S4 at this time appears to have been lower than it is now as a result of a different roof form, the shape of which is uncertain. The exterior, with the exception of S1, which was whitewashed, was limewashed a Manilla colour with joinery in Deep Brunswick Green. These changes occurred between 1850 and 1854 when the building appears to have been an Officer's Quarters. A bread oven seems to have been built against the northern wall of S1 possibly between December 1862 and March 1863. The raising of the southern gable and ceiling of S4 seems to have occurred between March and August 1863. In 1983, this was the external configuration of the building except for the eastern walkway.



Figure 8 The cottage during the process of archaeological investigation in 1983. (Brian Egloff PACDP)

Phase 5: Post-convict Era (prior to Youth Hostel of Australia Occupancy), 1877–1950

During this period the walkway was removed from the northern elevation of S2 and related joist holes in the north wall of S2 were probably plugged at this time too. The walkway was replaced by an external ladder. These alterations probably occurred between 1880 and 1895. A board-and-lattice partition was constructed to create S3A (before 1916), the external stairs to D6 were moved inside between 1909 and 1947 and vertical timber cladding was installed against the east wall of S3A some time not too long after March 1916.

Phase 6: Youth Hostel of Australia Occupancy, 1950–1970

The building was shingled and repaired in 1950 to prepare it for its new use as a youth hostel. Minor repairs and additions occurred during the following years. Cladding was added to the walls and ceilings of S2, S3A and S4. A water tank was added to the south-east corner of the cottage. The bread oven seems to have been removed at this time as well. A major structural member (a timber cross-tie) in the loft appears to have been cut in these years to allow for easier use of the space as a dormitory.

Following the archaeological investigations of the cottage, and using the information this provided, conservation decisions were made to restore the structure, externally and internally, to the period it arrived at its current, maximum structural form, that is, to the end of the convict era. This meant that no convict-era fabric, such as the northern and southern rooms added after O'Brien's brief occupation, would have to be removed.

SUMMARY

Although William Smith O'Brien was at Port Arthur for only three months, it was his incarceration at that well known 'place of misery' and his well publicised struggle with the British government and Tasmania's Governor Denison, that confirmed and greatly enhanced his international image as a

stalwart Irish political leader. It could be said that at Port Arthur his image as an unsuccessful revolutionary was transformed into that of an Irish national hero.

Archaeology provided a relatively clear appreciation of the structural development of the place, including essential details of paint colours or surface treatments, and the form of the place for the chosen restoration period. It also provided important information on how the building was prepared for his confinement there and how it actually looked, confirming and complimenting O'Brien's own record of the place. All of this supported accurate interpretation for the public and the maintenance of authenticity and integrity through more informed management of the place's cultural significance.

The appearance, ambience and vista of the cottage of William Smith O'Brien have markedly changed through the years. The work described here provides a guide by which the structural evolution of the place can be demonstrated in three phases, making the cottage an ideal venue to present the complexities of both Port Arthur and Carnarvon to the visiting public. The stables speak for the time when Port Arthur was controlled by the military with the brief occupation by William Smith O'Brien pointing towards the evolution of the place into a civil-operated establishment. Here the transformation of Van Diemen's Land from a penal island into a 'free society' can be illustrated by the struggle between O'Brien and Governor Denison. The extensive modifications of the place during the Carnarvon period are visually striking and representative of the transformation of the penal structures and landscapes into a Tasmanian township.

With respect to the vista and ambience, they too have changed. Over the 150 years since O'Brien was confined here, most of the structures he could have seen or been aware of have gone, although some are in ruins or have been radically modified. New structures, primarily added in the Carnarvon era, also dot the landscape. This landscape is now managed mainly as parkland, not as productive gardens of the convict era or the later orchards of Carnarvon. Whilst some intrusive tourism-related features of Port Arthur were removed by the PACDP in the 1980s, subsequent management of the place has

not consistently continued to manage to protect the site's heritage values against the potential negative impacts of visitor-related facilities.

The motel continues to dominate the site from the west and the new visitor centre challenges the appreciation of the place's heritage values. We should be grateful for the past decision that caused the Youth Hostel to move from Smith O'Brien's Cottage to its present location many years ago, as this has allowed us to properly investigate and, hopefully, present the Cottage's stories more fully than otherwise. However, nowadays we should be more consciously considering conflicts between tourism and heritage and resolving these with positive decisions that allow heritage values to remain uncompromised by tourism impacts, yet still ensuring adequate visitor facilities. If visitors to Port Arthur are to connect with the past, they must be assisted not only by carefully researched and presented interpretation but also by the careful management of the potential conflicts between heritage value and tourism.

NOTES TO TABLE 1

1. Yard Walls: Large rectangular yards with stone and brick walls created on Settlement Hill, including Commissariat Officer Lempriere's yard above his residence.
2. Stables: On the fabric and documentary evidence this would appear to have been a two-roomed stables with two stalls in N space, a tack room in S space, and loft above, built on boundary wall separating Lempriere's yard from the Military Barracks. Fabric evidence included: Wall base integral to original building was found beneath later floor, indicating first structure had two rooms and a bricked up wide door in the N wall of this structure and matching door between two rooms. N room, presumed stall room, had plastered walls that initially were whitewashed. S room, presumed tack room, had unplastered brick. Ceilings on underside of attic/loft floor were whitewashed. The only window definitely known to have been present was a small window in the S wall of S room. Fodder was delivered from the attic/loft into the N room through two holes in the loft floor along the E wall. This floor has double boarding to presumably reduce dust below. External attic/loft access was through the N gable door still extant, with evidence of a platform beneath it. Evidence for a urine drain, an essential requirement for stables, was found beneath the floor of N room in the form of a N-S linear depression at the W edge of the presumed stalls. An underground stone-lined tank, which may relate to the collection of the urine to keep it away from the reservoir nearby, was found to the S of the original S room (beneath S4). Documentary evidence: *Hobart Town Courier* 16 March 1850 stated that O'Brien was to be accommodated in the 'stable attached to the former residence of the Assistant Commissary General Lempriere.'
3. William Smith O'Brien's Cottage: Here again evidence for the form is both fabric and documentary. Fabric evidence: Two-roomed building, but N room was enlarged to S within the stables form. Also a fireplace was installed in the N room, in previous door in N wall. With the loss of the only external access, a new external doorway was created into this N room in the W wall in the position of a current window (W3) and a barred window was placed on either side of this door. The S window was in the position of the current D3 and provided, along with the small high stable window in the S room, the bedroom with light. The current door (D2), between S2 and S3/3A (the S room), was presumably the access between the internal spaces. The S room was white painted on newly plastered walls and ceilings. The N room, also newly plastered, was finished in a 'pale cream green'. The exterior was white-washed, windows and doors being shellacked. A verandah was added on the W side, returning to the E at the end. A privy was built beneath the verandah as part of the return. To allow for greater surveillance of O'Brien, a sentry's (raised) walkway was constructed along the length of the E elevation (exterior) and against the N wall. Physical evidence of this was found in a series of blocked joist holes along the east external wall of the cottage. Additionally, evidence of two former surveillance manholes was found in the loft/attic floor providing visual access to both of the ground floor rooms. A shed SW of the cottage and 'stations' for sentries were established. The gateway through the S wall to the then exercise yard may have been installed at this time. None of these items were investigated archaeologically, although foundations are apparent SW of the cottage, possibly physical evidence of the shed which has been referred to historically. Documentary evidence: O'Brien's Journal is the primary source for the number of rooms, their function and dimensions, the privy, most of the arrangements for his surveillance, and the disposition of the different elements in his surroundings including his exercise yard and garden, and their dimensions.
4. Remainder of the Convict Era: Fabric and documentary evidence indicates many changes occurred to the building in this period and they included the addition of a room at the N end (S1) and at the S end (S4), necessary alterations in the walkway because of the construction of S1, the privy being removed to allow for S4, the door at the current location of W3 was replaced by a window, and a door was inserted at D3 where formerly had been a window. The window bars were removed during these works. The ceiling of S4 at this time appears to have been lower than it is now as a result of a different roof form, the shape of which is uncertain. The exterior, with the exception of S1, which was whitewashed, was limewashed a Manilla colour with joinery in Deep Brunswick Green. These changes occurred between 1850 and 1854 when the building appears to have been Officer's Quarters. A bread oven appears to have been built against the N wall of S1 possibly between December 1862 and March 1863. The raising of the S gable and ceiling of S4 seems to have occurred between March and August 1863. In 1983 this was the external configuration of the building except for the E walkway.
5. Post-Convict to YHA Occupancy: Fabric and documentary evidence indicates - The walkway was removed from the N elevation of S2, and related joist holes in the N wall of S2 were then probably plugged. The walkway was replaced by an external ladder, probably occurring 1880-1895. A board and lattice partition was constructed to create S3A (before 1916), the external stairs to D6 were moved inside between 1909 and 1947, and vertical timber cladding was installed against east wall of S3A some time not too long after March 1916.
6. New use as a youth hostel: Minor repairs and additions occurred during the next years. Cladding was added to the walls and ceilings of S2, S3A and S4. A water tank was added to the SE corner of the cottage. The bread oven seems to have been removed at this time. A major structural member (a timber cross-tie) in the loft appears to have been cut in these years to allow for easier use of the space as a dormitory.
7. PACDP Building and subfloor archaeological investigation and recording.
8. PACDP Conservation works including stabilisation and restoration to the c.1863 form.

OTHER NOTES

1. Port Arthur is considered to be one of the icons of Australia's penal heritage and is viewed as being worthy of World Heritage status. It operated as a place of Imperial secondary remand from 1830 to 1877. During this time it underwent successive changes from a timbering outpost, to a centre of industrial production that was transformed into a modern penal institution and then during its decline following the cessation of transportation to Tasmania in 1853, and after the receipt of Norfolk Island convicts between 1854 and 1856 (Weidenhofer 1981: 111) it more or less served a social-welfare role in housing infirm ex-convicts.
2. This was not a particularly novel idea given that a Parliamentary inquiry revealed that the gate-takings from the historic site were being used at that time to build the local road network rather than to improve the historic site (Young 1996).
3. The Tasmanian public service initially limited the number of PACDP employees to thirteen.
4. In 1877 the few remaining prisoners were transferred to other establishments and the penal settlement of Port Arthur was closed. The settlement was surveyed into individual lots and sold. Some structures were salvaged for building materials, others became residences, while bush fires and neglect ruined the large institutional buildings including the church, penitentiary, hospital, asylum and separate prison. Like all former penal settlements on the Tasman Peninsula, Port Arthur was renamed. From 1877 to 1925, Port Arthur was known as Carnarvon, a township which housed workers for local timber and rural enterprises as well as served as a tourist destination with former penal officers' residences being adapted to serve as hotels and guest houses. The 'make-do' ingenuity and enterprise manifested in the transformation of the penal landscape into a rural township is often overshadowed by the romance of the convict past.
5. Much of the burden of the failure of the uprising fell upon O'Brien who both overestimated the willingness of the English government to accede to Irish demands for self-government and the commitment of his fellow countrymen to pursue revolutionary means to that end. The English press ridiculed O'Brien, describing the rising as nothing more than a soap bubble, championed by an addle-brained fool who led the 'skirmish in Widow McCormack's cabbage patch' (Touhill 1981: 12). But on the other hand the English press took the matter seriously enough to seek the death penalty for the leaders of the insurrection.

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