

The cloud of unknowing: Towards an international comparative analysis of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ceramics

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This paper offers a model for the international comparative analysis of industrial-era ceramics and demonstrates how this type of analysis might increase our understanding of the Australasian archaeological record. Examples are drawn from past comparative research in Scotland, Wales and Virginia in order to demonstrate the potential of this approach. Other issues addressed in the course of this wide-ranging discussion are the relationship between British and Australasian historical archaeology, the importance of the British Empire to the Australasian archaeological record, the potential role of white granite in Australasian pottery assemblages and the problems of using American analytical models uncritically without considering the specific needs of Australasian contexts.

INTRODUCTION

'Do not think that because I call it a "darkness" or a "cloud" it is the sort of cloud you see in the sky, or the kind of darkness you know at home when the light is out. That kind of darkness or cloud you can picture in your mind's eye in the height of summer, just as in the depth of a winter's night you can picture a clear and shining light. I do not mean this at all. By "darkness" I mean a lack of "knowing"—just as anything that you do not know or may have forgotten may be said to be "dark" to you, for you cannot see it with your inward eye. For this reason it is called a "cloud", not of the sky, of course, but "of unknowing"...' (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, Anon., c.1370)

This paper examines how the large-scale comparative analysis of nineteenth-century pottery assemblages from the United Kingdom and Australia might be able to contribute to our understanding of the past in both countries. As the Australian part of this research is still ongoing, the actual examples used to demonstrate the approach will involve British and American assemblages. These examples will engage in a comparative discussion of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ceramics from six sites associated with the rural poor in south-west Wales, the Outer Hebrides, and Central Virginia. Particular attention will be paid to the teawares—the cups and saucers. The goal of these comparisons is to discuss how the presence of the teawares and other vessels at each site was informed by, and indeed helped to form, the interactions between different national, regional, and cultural identities in certain marginalised rural communities in Britain and the United States. A discussion on the implications of this type of research for historical archaeology in Australia and New Zealand follows thereafter.

This paper is also designed as a demonstration of how one or two of the more recent developments in British historical archaeology, particularly as regards the application of theory and interpretation to the British archaeological record, might be able to contribute to historical archaeology in Australia. This sort of comparative study can only help to part the cloud of unknowing that currently veils much of the relationship between the British and Australian archaeological records. A sub-theme in this regard is that in both Britain and Australia, archaeologists have perhaps occasionally relied too heavily on American theoretical and methodological models which are often less appropriate to the unique challenges faced by British and Australian historical archaeology.

Before beginning the discussion proper, a couple of quick notes on terminology are necessary. Rather than the traditional British term 'post-medieval archaeology', this paper uses the term 'historical archaeology' to describe the theory-informed archaeology of the more recent British past. This terminology is used by a no-means insignificant minority in the UK, and at least three British universities (Bristol, Queens [Belfast], and York) now offer post-graduate degrees in 'historical' rather than 'post-medieval' archaeology (see also Tarlow 1999). Thus, while describing archaeology of a more or less the same—or at least overlapping—period, the term 'historical archaeology' can have a particular theoretical subtext in Britain not present in its use in Australasia or North America. Secondly, much has been made in the North American literature of 'creolisation', the combination, adoption and fusion of different socio-cultural practices by specific groups (e.g. Dawdy 2000; Ferguson 1992: xli–xlii; Orser 2002). This paper instead uses the term 'syncretisation'. 'Creolisation' has specific colonial and racial connotations, particularly as refers to Black American and French, Spanish and Portuguese colonial contexts, and efforts to use the term to discuss socio-cultural fusion in a broader setting are both misleading and unhelpful. 'Syncretisation', however, while often used in theological contexts (though see Loewen 1995: 95–96, 104–105, 127–128 for a non-archaeological colonial American application), refers more broadly—in the Chambers dictionary definition—to a 'reconciliation or attempt to reconcile different beliefs' without carrying the specific subtexts of 'creolisation'. As such it is a far better term for an international comparative historical archaeology.

THE SITES

The paper proper will now begin by providing some background on the sites and regions included. This discussion will revolve around six pottery assemblages: two each from Wales, the Outer Hebrides and Virginia (Figures 1 and 2). The two Welsh sites were excavated in the mid-1980s (Mytum 1988) and are Llystyn Mill and Pwll Mill, located in the Clydach valley in north Pembrokeshire, about halfway between Fishguard and Cardigan, next to the small town of Newport (Figure 1). The Llystyn Mill site consists of a main cottage, an adjacent, smaller (almost certainly earlier) cottage, and two further structures associated with a water-driven fulling mill (Mytum 1988: 36). The Llystyn Mill main cottage consists of a *ty singl*, or 'single house', a type characterised by two floors, with the rooms on both floors arranged in a row. A rear lean-to, most likely a dairy, is also typical of the *ty singl* (D. Jenkins 1971: 92).

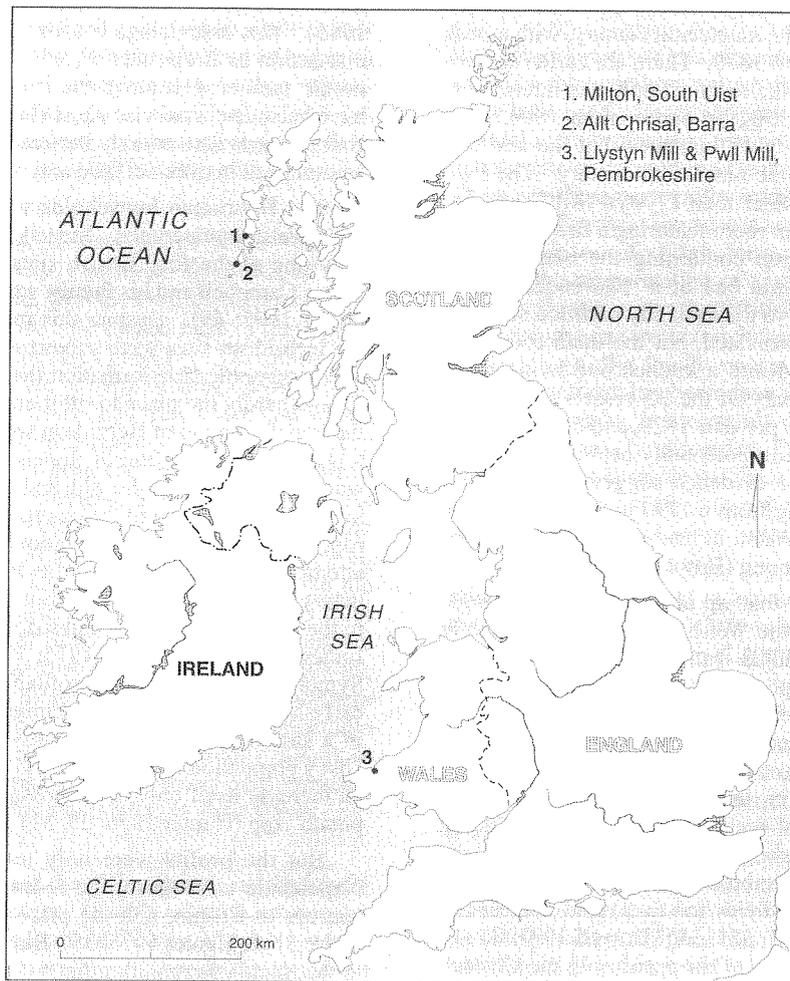


Figure 1. Map of the United Kingdom showing site locations.



Figure 2. Map of the eastern USA showing site locations.

The majority of the 118 Llystyn Mill vessels date from the middle and second half of the nineteenth century, with a peak of occupation from c.1850 to 1870. There are earlier materials, and these appear to be the result of previous intermittent occupation of the site, starting no earlier than 1800. The absence of certain pottery types indicates that the site was abandoned near the end of the nineteenth century. The Pwll Mill cottage was much smaller than Llystyn Mill, and consisted of two sections: a main room featuring a fireplace at the far end, and a later addition containing the bedroom, an arrangement known as *ty dau ben* or a 'two-ended house' (J. G. Jenkins 1976: 123). No traces of any partition survived by the time the site was excavated, but the main room was almost certainly subdivided into a kitchen and living room section and a parlour section. Of the 90 vessels of the Pwll Mill assemblage, about 40% pre-date 1820, and 28% post-date 1820, with the remaining third potentially belonging to either period. The totality of the evidence suggests intermittent occupation of the site dating from c.1790 to c.1850. A more in-depth analysis of four Welsh assemblages, including the two in this paper, is forthcoming (Brooks in press).

It is important to stress that we are not looking at single households over time with the Welsh assemblages, but rather several intermittent households from a single socio-cultural group—the itinerant rural poor cottagers of Wales. Briefly, the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of tremendous demographic and social change in rural Wales—as they indeed were for Great Britain as a whole. For example, following a rapid rise in rural population through to the 1820s and 1830s, a series of socioeconomic factors including collapses in agricultural market prices, disastrous harvests, the closing of every bank in Pembrokeshire and the lure of the expanding South Wales coalfields led to a rapid decrease in that population (Davies 1993: 351, 355; Howell 1993: 83–4). Indeed, the population in some of the parishes in the Clydach valley area more than halved between 1831 and 1851 (Lewis 1972: 301), and David Williams (1955: 188–9) has described the people of southwest Wales as living in 'a state of semi-starvation and spiritual malaise' during this period.

Wales was hardly unique within Great Britain in facing upheaval during this period. What really marks out Wales from the rest of Britain and the United Kingdom is that migration from rural Wales was largely internal to the Welsh industrial coalfields rather than the external overseas migration that marks out Ireland, Scotland, and even England. Emigration did take place, but at its peak, only 3 Welsh per 10 000 left for North America annually. This compares to 12 English, 20 Scots, and 77 Irish per 10 000. Indeed, by the 1890s, the hunger for labour in the coalfields led to Wales becoming a country of net immigration (G. Williams 1991: 178–180).

Moving on to Scotland, the Hebridean sites from the islands of South Uist and Barra (Figure 1) are both fairly typical Hebridean blackhouses, with the exception that while the traditional blackhouse combines living space and a livestock byre in a single building (Walker & McGregor 1996: 3), the Barra byre is adjacent to the house (Brannigan & Foster 1995: 93). The South Uist site is located in the Milton township, a village of dispersed blackhouses about halfway along the eastern coast of the island, and perhaps more famous as the birthplace of Flora MacDonald, romantic heroine of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion (Anon. 1997; Symonds 1999). Virtually all of the 156 vessels in the Milton assemblage indicate a peak occupation dating from c.1780 to c.1830 at the very latest—the terminal date fitting in very neatly with the clearances of South Uist in the 1830s and 1840s. Thirteen modern vessels dating no earlier than 1890 were also recovered from the site, but as these are unrelated to the main site occupation, they were excluded from further comparative analysis. The second Hebridean assemblage comes from a more isolated farm on

the southern coast of the island of Barra (Brannigan & Foster 1995). This assemblage is something of an exception in this discussion as it consists of only 33 vessels. The socioeconomic factors relating to the small size of this assemblage have been discussed elsewhere (Brooks 2000: 115–126). The Barra vessels date entirely between 1780 to 1830, with a deposition peak between c.1800 and c.1820.

The Hebridean households were far less transient than their Welsh counterparts. Indeed, the Barra household is the only one of the four British sites to which a name, that of James Campbell and his family, can be attached (Brannigan & Foster 1995: 69). Despite this more permanent occupation, the Hebridean sites were subject to a far more intense social and geographic transformation than their Welsh counterparts. This is hardly the place to offer an in-depth deconstruction of the transformation of Hebridean society, but a brief survey follows. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Island life was transformed by the old traditional landlords who were increasingly drawn into the emerging capitalist culture of metropolitan Britain, and who rationalised their holdings in an attempt to maximise their profits from traditional Island products, particularly kelp, an alkaline byproduct of seaweed used in the production of glass and soap (Devine 1994: 32–5, 47–8; Ennew 1980: 22; Hunter 1976: 11, 16; MacInnes 1988: 72; Symonds 1999: 111). So profitable was the kelp crop in the early-nineteenth century that emigration was virtually banned in a successful attempt to supply additional labour—South Uist's population increased by 211% between 1755 and 1831, an increase itself only made possible by the expansion of the potato crop (Hunter 1976: 25, 31).

But the profits were only temporary. The end of the Napoleonic wars meant the re-introduction of foreign alkali sources to Britain, and the price of kelp collapsed (Devine 1994: 51–2; Hunter 1976: 35). But kelping was now so central to the island communities that it could not be abandoned without causing the entire economic structure of the islands to follow the kelp price into oblivion. Except for sheep and wool, other Hebridean products such as cattle and fish had also become economically unviable (Devine 1994: 51–2; Smout 1969: 327). The landlords, the McNeills of Barra and Clanranald of South Uist, did their best to cope with an impossible situation, but in the 1830s, wholesale evacuations of the island populations began (Hunter 1976: 39–40). By the end of the decade, both families—now bankrupt—had sold their ancestral land, and most of the remaining now-destitute population was cleared in the 1840s (Devine 1994: 67; McNeil 1995: 187).

This leaves only the sites in the United States, both of which are located in central Virginia (Figure 2), and both of which are in some way associated with Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States. The first of these is the poor white artisans' house known as the Stewart/Watkins site, located at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello plantation, just outside Charlottesville. The site consists of a central structure with stone foundations and a later addition (Heath 1991). This site was originally dated through documentary sources rather than through the pottery, something aided by Jefferson's habit of making voluminous notes on just about everything (e.g. Jefferson 1987). The house was built in 1800, and occupied until c.1810. The Stewart family occupied the house until late 1808 or 1809, and were followed by the Watkins family who occupied the house for a year (Heath 1991). In keeping with these dates, the 126 vessels date from the end of eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. The Quarter Site is located at Thomas Jefferson's less well-known Poplar Forest plantation, located just outside Lynchburg, Virginia. This site consists of a slave quarter complex involving three small structures, of which at least two were definitely dwellings (Heath 1999). Ploughing and erosion at the site have made it difficult to assign specific vessels to specific households, so the 131 vessels from

this site by necessity must be considered as representative of a small slave community rather than of individual slave households. This site was dated through a combination of ceramics and the documentary record. The beginning date of c.1790 was suggested by the ceramics, while the terminal date of 1812 was necessitated by a major plantation reorganisation dating from that year which would have involved building a fence through the centre of structure 1.

Obviously the socio-cultural background of the American sites and assemblages is vastly different from that of their British counterparts. Indeed, with the Quarter site, this analysis examines people who not only owned little in the way of property, but who were themselves property. Two points that should be stressed about the American sites. First of all, despite the division between slave and free, Black and White, late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Virginia was very much a syncretic society, where the various communities influenced each other's worldview (Sobel 1989: 233). As Sobel's book title has it, Virginia was a 'world they made together'. Naturally, not all sites will be influenced by all aspects of this syncretic society to the same degree, but at the same time, it would be foolish to divide Virginian sites from this period into 'White' and 'Black', and then never compare them. The second point is to stress the extent to which the enslaved communities of Virginia were themselves consumers who could make active choices in acquisition. Considerable effort has been expended in American archaeology to look at the issue of hand-me-downs, whereby owners and overseers discard old goods, particularly ceramics, to their slaves (e.g. Brooks 1994; Gruber 1991).

Yet while discards and hand-me-downs undoubtedly occurred in many slave contexts, Heath's research has conclusively shown that slaves in Bedford County, Virginia—where Poplar Forest is located—were buying goods directly from local Merchants. The account books of merchant John Hook record purchases for the accounts of sixteen slaves from twelve different plantations at his New London (Bedford County) store between 1771 and 1776. Accounts for a further 35 or 36 slaves survive for Hook's Franklin County shop for the period from 1800 to 1808 (Heath 1997: 6). The totality of the archaeological and documentary evidence clearly demonstrates that the Quarter Site inhabitants—despite their enslaved status—were able to participate in the local cash economy (Heath 1997; 1999: 50). They were active, not passive, participants in the creation of Virginia's syncretic society.

ANALYSIS

With these brief site descriptions out of the way, discussion will now focus on how pottery form distributions have previously been used in historical archaeology to examine issues of cultural identity amongst marginalised communities by using an example relevant to the Quarter and Stewart/Watkins sites. There are three reasons for introducing this North American example. Firstly, it introduces some of the themes relevant to the comparison of vessels forms that feature in this paper as regards the interpretation of material culture. Secondly, this paper will later argue that British and Australasian historical archaeology can rely too heavily on American data and methodology. But finally, on a purely practical level, more of this type of work has been done in North America than in the UK and Australia; it is certainly not being argued that American work should be discarded. Finally, in the next section of this paper, this example will be returned to in order to demonstrate how large-scale international comparisons can often recontextualise conclusions in surprising new ways.

A quick methodological note: all counts in this paper are minimum vessel counts rather than fragment counts. It has been conclusively and definitively proven that the latter hopelessly distort any statistical comparisons (e.g. Brooks 2000: 75), and they should never be used in historical archaeology ceramics analysis where they can be avoided.

In any case, the example of the interaction of cultural identity and pottery form distributions that will be used to introduce these themes is the concept of the African culinary grammar. More specifically, Ferguson, amongst others, has theorised that the high percentage of bowls that feature in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century African-American pottery assemblages is caused by the prominence of stews in the African diet, and that this preference for a more liquid, stew-based diet transposed itself to the New World (Ferguson 1992: 106–7). In comparison, pottery assemblages from the same period generated by free white Americans typically feature relatively larger proportions of plates and teawares over bowls.

This dichotomy is indeed present between the form distributions at the Quarter site and the Stewart/Watkins site. Chart 1 shows the plate, bowl and teaware distributions at these two sites, expressed as a percentage of the tableware assemblage (in both cases the tablewares are the overwhelming majority of the assemblage). When dealing with a multitude of forms, it often proves more productive to use ratios

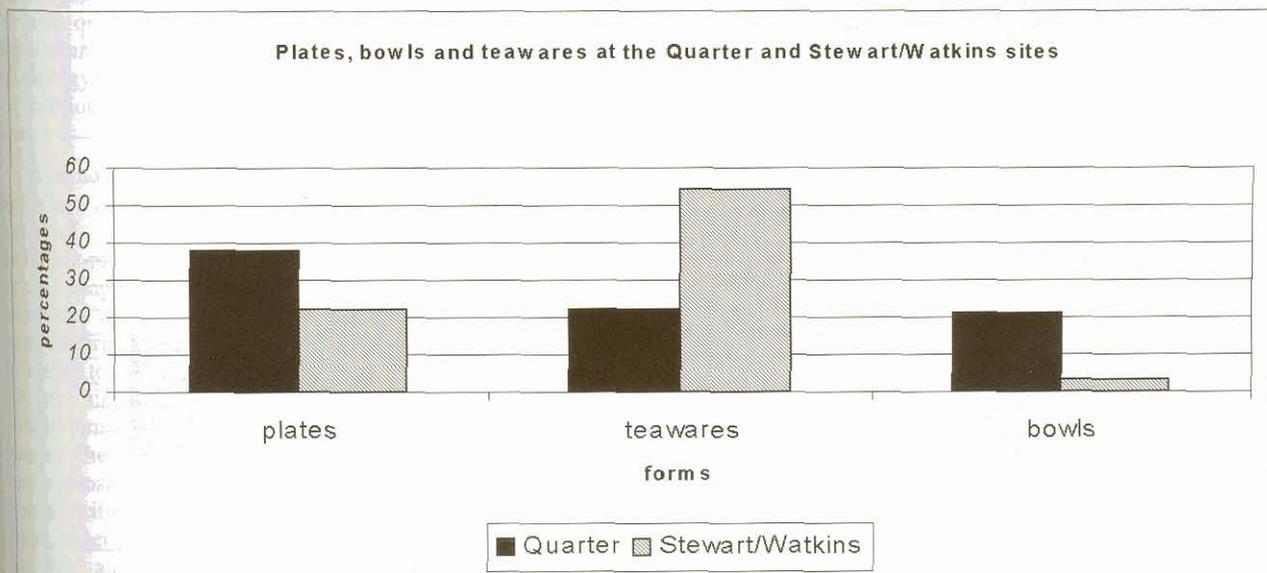


Chart 1: Plate, bowl and teaware distributions at the Quarter and Stewart/Watkins sites.

rather than straight percentages for comparative purposes. At the Quarter site, there are nearly two plates to every bowl, while at the Stewart/Watkins site there are seven plates to every bowl. With a slightly different comparison, at the Quarter site there are nearly three plates and bowls combined to every teaware. At the Stewart/Watkins site, however, there are almost two teawares to every plate and bowl combined. In sum, bowls are a much more significant part of the Quarter site assemblage, while teawares are a much more significant part of the Stewart/Watkins assemblage.

At the risk of greatly oversimplifying the range of interpretive approaches in American archaeology for the sake of brevity, a hypothetical North American interpretation of this data might be along the following lines: the higher proportion of bowls at the Quarter site indicates the continued relevance of the African culinary grammar in Piedmont Virginia at the turn of the eighteenth century, while the higher number of teawares at the Stewart/Watkins site show that concepts of refinement and the order and ritual of the Georgian Worldview spread even to the white rural poor of Virginia. Even if the concept of the African culinary grammar were to be rejected—and this is by no means a universally held perspective in the United States—one might well still describe the differences

between the two sites' assemblages in terms of the rejection by the slaves of the European worldview, particularly as embodied by the culturally-loaded teawares.

Having presented this data, it is now possible to explore just why teawares are culturally loaded, before offering some specific examples from Wales and Scotland of why this is important in British assemblages, with a particular view towards examining the interaction between regional and metropolitan ideologies in what might be anachronistically termed the 'Celtic Fringe'. The status connotations of teawares have been the subject of study by archaeologists and historians on both sides of the Atlantic. Weatherill and Richards have both discussed how, in the eighteenth century, the drinking of tea was seen as a highly sociable activity, associated with leisure. While no doubt upper-class in origin, 'by the mid-eighteenth century to drink tea was an expected part of the behaviour of people of middle rank' (Weatherill 1996: 157–9; Richards 1999). Shackel (1993: 107–9, 112–4) has provided an archaeological example demonstrating the same perspective in eighteenth-century North America. Here the teawares were originally synonymous with social elites, and represented a 'conspicuous display' of leisure time. Shackel's research demonstrated that in colonial rural Maryland, by

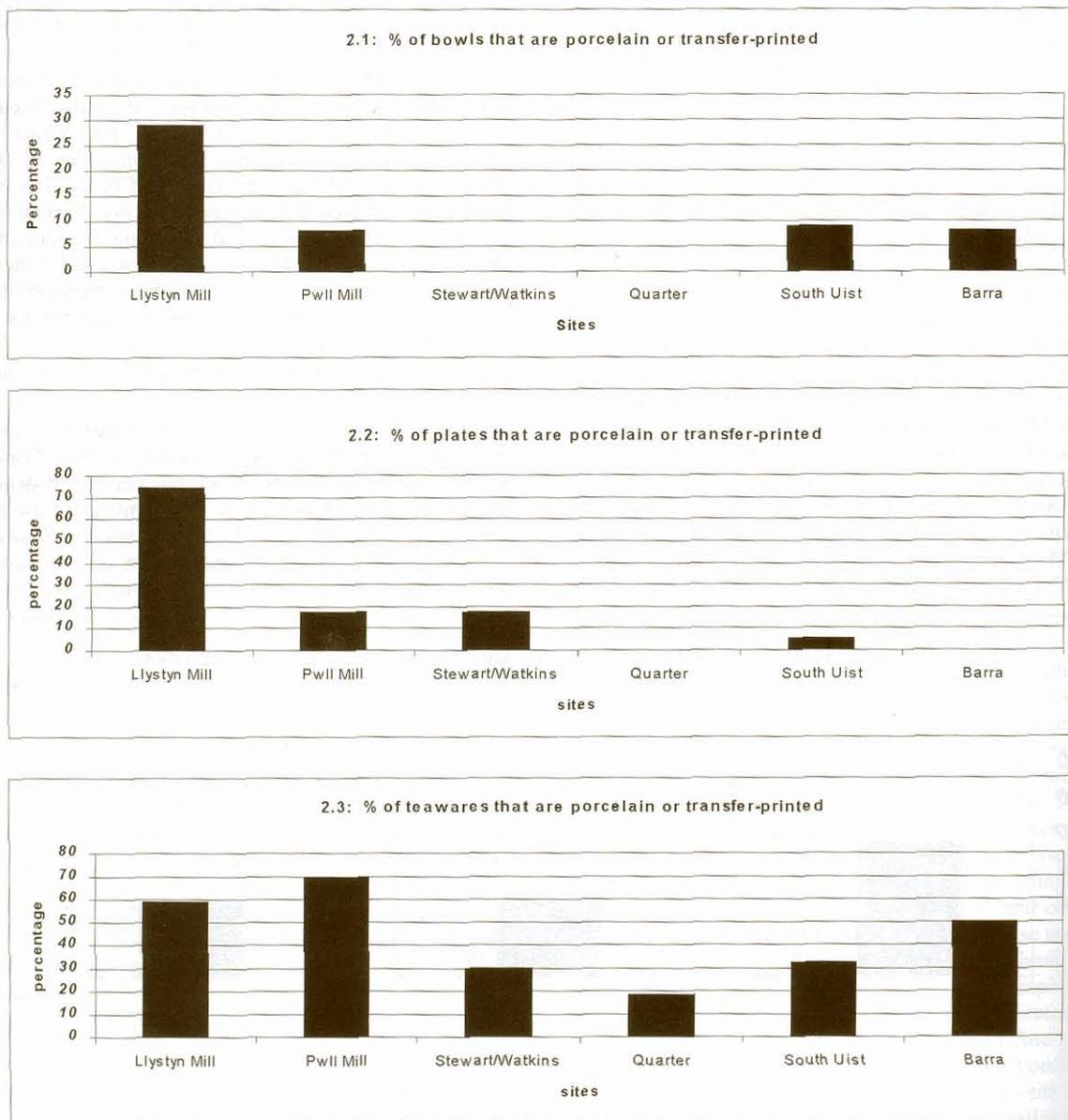


Chart 2: Transfer-printed and porcelain plates, bowls and teawares at the six sites, including Bowls (Chart 2.1), Plates (Chart 2.2) and Teawares (Chart 2.3).

1770, different economic groups in society owned sets of cups in proportion to their wealth. The poorest group owned no teawares at all.

While the details (such as distributions and prices) changed, the observation that tea-drinking had status connotations remains true for the later-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The significant change from the earlier-eighteenth century is that those connotations had been diluted by the decreased cost and increased availability of teawares. A material-culture type originally associated with a conscious, conspicuous display of wealth and status, and available solely to the rich, became a type that could have been used and/or displayed by individuals from all social strata while nonetheless still retaining certain inherent high-status associations.

A comparison of the percentage of bowls, plates and teawares from each site which consist of the two most expensive pottery types from this period (porcelain and transfer-printed earthenwares) is particularly revealing (Chart 2). The broad assumption that porcelain and transfer prints are the most expensive types is based on Miller's (1980; 1991) research on ceramic costs, which will be returned to later in this paper. With the notable exception of Llystyn Mill, the expensive teawares at each site are always more common than expensive plates or bowls, in fact almost always at least twice as common. The Slave Quarter at Poplar Forest has the lowest percentage of expensive teawares, at slightly under 20%, but since at the same site there are no expensive plates and bowls at all, the significance of the data still holds. As far as the exception, Llystyn Mill, is concerned, this is the only site with significant occupation post-dating 1830, and the relevant households were able to take advantage of the fact that the relative cost of the expensive pottery types fell over the nineteenth century, thus making these wares more accessible to the lower strata of society as the century wore on. Of particular importance here is a shift in trans-Atlantic pottery tastes (discussed in more detail later in this paper) in the 1840s that probably contributed to a fall in the price of transfer-printed wares.

Therefore up until about 1840, while the precise amounts shift according to context, rural poor households on both sides of the Atlantic are acquiring teawares in more expensive types than they are for other common pottery types, and irrespective of the specific degree to which this is consumer- and/or producer-led, it reinforces the importance of the status connotations of these forms. The wider ideological impact of the teawares, however, very much shifts depending on which side of the Atlantic the site is located. For Britain, the presence of teawares on rural poor sites in the marginalised Outer Hebrides and Welsh Wales is part of the interaction between the ideology of the emerging British metropolitan identity and the traditional, regional socio-cultural behaviour of these areas.

To demonstrate the extent to which these interacting worldviews could influence material culture requires a brief digression. In separate—though related—research, this author has previously discussed how Staffordshire potters included images that were informed by the emerging British identity that was forged in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (Brooks 1997; 1999). To briefly summarise, the attempt to forge the four components of the United Kingdom into a single ideological entity was both reflected in and partially formed by certain images used on transfer-printed vessels. The majority of the relevant patterns celebrate a bucolic, prosperous rural Britain, or martial achievements from the British past and present. And this was specifically British, rather than English. Scenes and images from Scotland, Wales and even Ireland were all important elements of this iconography. Yet at the same time that this ideology of Britain was being created, romanticised images from the

Celtic Fringe, particularly Scotland also appear on transfer prints. These images symbolise the extent to which certain images of Celtic Britain had been romanticised and rendered safe through appropriation by the elite—something which is perhaps best symbolised by George IV's notorious visit to Edinburgh in 1822, or pictures of Queen Victoria's German husband wearing a kilt. In essence, the combined symbology of all of these vessels suggests that the United Kingdom is no longer a land of four very different peoples, but rather a single entity. Of course, the co-existence of patterns representing both merged and separate identities demonstrates how the tensions between the two were never fully resolved—though here there is a danger that modern British politics perhaps colours our view of an ideology that enjoyed considerable success in its day. Thus these transfer-printed patterns served as subconscious propaganda promulgating the ideology of the new British identity—a topic discussed in some details by Colley (1996)—both at home and abroad.

However, while in an ideal world it would be possible to excavate a Scottish or Welsh site and find nothing but transfer prints with Scottish and Welsh scenes, not all subconscious propaganda is so overt—the real world is rarely so tidy. This discussion of patterns has so far focused on production; what happened away from the pottery factory in the everyday lives of the Welsh and Hebridean poor is another matter entirely. In the case of teawares, there is little doubt that these pottery forms had little relevance to the traditional stew-based diet of the Hebrides or rural Wales. This stew-based diet required the use of bowls, something which is perhaps most dramatically demonstrated by the Barra assemblage, where bowls comprise over 50 percent of the total assemblage. As previously noted, tea-drinking was originally an activity associated with metropolitan elites. Thus the presence of teawares in the Outer Hebrides dramatically demonstrates how material culture closely associated with ideologies themselves associated with those elites gradually filtered through to the geographical and economic margins of the British Isles.

It must be stressed that it is not being argued that British metropolitan identity and ideology somehow replaced traditional socio-cultural behaviour in the margins of Britain. Nor is it being argued that the teawares are adopted as part of an anachronistically conscious rejection of Welshness and Gaelicness or a conscious adoption of Britishness. Instead, this paper is only noting that the teawares can be seen as part of the growing influence of metropolitan ideologies amongst the rural poor of Britain, and as part of the ongoing development of a syncretic culture that came to combine elements of both traditional and metropolitan behaviour and ideology.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the negative connotations often assigned to traditional Gaelic and Welsh culture and identity within Britain, might well have assisted the acceptance of metropolitan British culture. After all, if it is argued that teawares were implicitly high-status wares, and are associated with metropolitan ideologies, there is a strong implication that 'British' culture was high status while Hebridean and Welsh culture was low status. To the modern observer, this distinction will probably appear to be deeply prejudiced, but the division was very much alive even in the modern period—including amongst archaeologists. The title alone of Curwen's 1938 *Antiquity* paper, 'The Hebrides: A Cultural Backwater', is itself indicative of past attitudes. More recently, Webster eventually gave up her attempt to identify a specifically Hebridean tradition in surviving dressers and pottery, noting that:

Hebridean families have sought to put behind them a history of poverty. In so doing they have resisted the role of guardians of timeless tradition that the outside world has attempted to impose upon them. (Webster 1999: 71–2)

Meanwhile, the infamous 1848 report on the state of education in Wales, known locally as 'the treachery of the blue books', made a direct connection between the Welsh language, religious nonconformism, supposed sexual immorality and the inadequacies of Welsh rural education (Davies 1993: 390–392; Jones 1992: 103–165; G. Williams 1991: 208). When these negative attitudes are combined with the social transformation of the Welsh and Hebridean environment, whether through the demographic transformation of rural Wales in the wake of industrialisation, or the arrival of crofting and the collapse of the kelp industry in the Hebrides, it surely comes as little surprise that the households involved slowly, but remorselessly and perhaps inevitably, came to include elements of the British worldview that was transforming their world into their everyday lives.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

At this point, the discussion will return to the American sites. Naturally enough, a very different environment is to be found in the newly-independent United States of the Stewart/Watkins and Quarter sites. Differences in teaware distributions between these two sites are not based on con-

cepts of British identity or ideology. Instead, the teaware distributions are informed by racially-based hierarchies of status based on the perceived differences between whites and enslaved African-Americans. Here discussion returns briefly to the African culinary grammar, and the American assemblages to their Welsh and Hebridean counterparts.

Earlier, it was mentioned how (at the risk of overstatement) an American archaeologist might describe differences between the Stewart/Watkins and Quarter assemblages in terms of the conscious or unconscious adoption of the European worldview by the enslaved African-American community. This might well be demonstrated by the differences in teaware distributions, which are the most common forms at Stewart/Watkins but far less common at the Quarter Site. At this point, it is important to consider the distributions of the most common forms across all six of the sites (Chart 3). Without resorting to a full statistical discussion used in the original presentation of this data (Brooks 2000: 170–174), the four most similar sites are the Quarter site, Llystyn Mill, Pwll Mill and South Uist, while the two dissimilar sites are Stewart/Watkins and Barra. If the differences between the two American assemblages

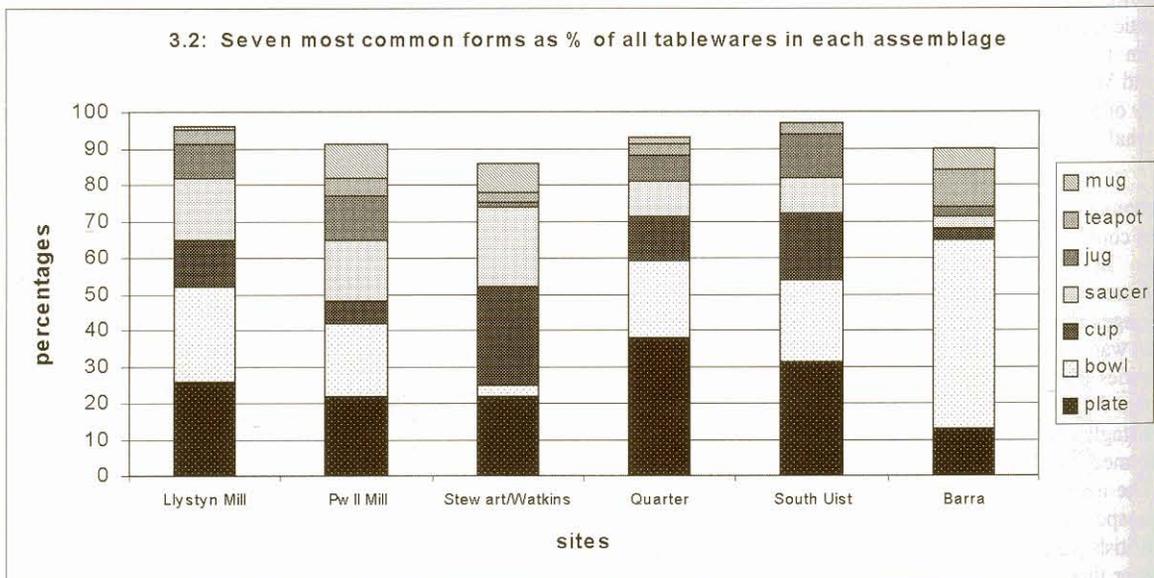
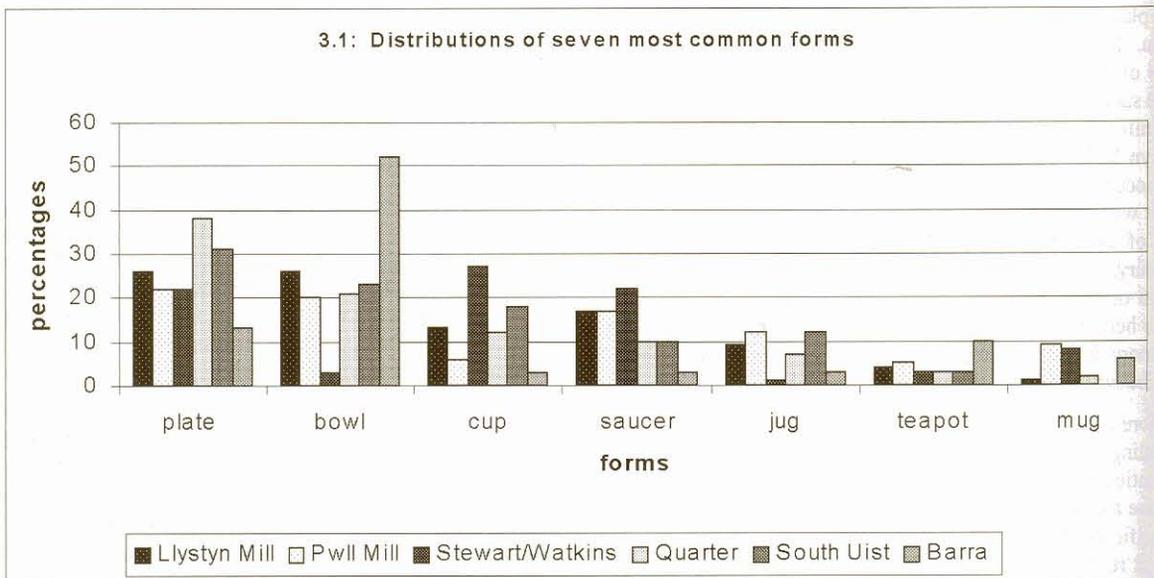


Chart 3: Distributions of the seven most common forms at the six sites (Chart 3.1), and the seven most common forms as a percentage of each (Chart 3.2).

primarily determined largely by an adherence to African cultural traits, it would be necessary to believe that the Welsh and Gaelic assemblages have a closer cultural affinity to the African-American Quarter site than to the poor Euro-American Stewart/Watkins site. This somehow appears unlikely. If, on the other hand, the African culinary grammar is set aside, but the differences between the American assemblages signal *are explained as a rejection, whether conscious or unconscious*, of white Euro-American material-culture use, analysis would still have to explain why poor British sites (and Virginia had, after all, been a British colony in the not-too-distant past), generate form distributions similar to the African-American site, but wholly dissimilar from the Euro-American site.

The simple answer is that the rural poor, irrespective of cultural background, traditionally (though, it must be stressed, by no means exclusively) rely on stew-based diets. Relevant examples to this discussion include the *bwyd llwy* (spoon food) of Welsh Cottagers (Owen 1991: 9–10), the boiled stews and sauces of West Africa (Ferguson 1992: 94), the milk-based foods of the Hebridean diet (Webster 1999: 69), and the 'incongruous mixtures' of the slaves and overseers of the coastal American south (Otto 1980: 10). With this in mind, it is significant that there is a higher ratio of bowls to plates at the four British sites than even at the Quarter site. Most of these ratios are fairly close, but in the case of the Barra assemblage, there are four bowls to every plate.

The teawares at the Stewart/Watkins site are particularly important to this discussion. It is the only one of the five where plates and bowls are outnumbered by teawares. Indeed, there are nearly twice as many teawares at this site as bowls and plates combined. It therefore appears entirely possible that the primary determinant in the American form distributions is not conceptions of African ethnicity, but rather economy and status—though the former should by no means be rejected out of hand. More specifically, it is not being argued that enslaved African-Americans had abandoned socio-cultural practices of African origin, or that these should not be studied archaeologically, but rather that overall African-American pottery form distributions, particularly as involves teawares and bowls, are not conditioned by African practices any more than Welsh or Hebridean form distributions are. Poor people traditionally tend to eat stews. Stews require bowls. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sites involving the rural poor will thus in most cases have relatively larger quantities of bowls.

The exception to this rural poor theory is the Stewart/Watkins site, and here the teawares are the key. In this comparative context, it seems more likely that the differences between the Quarter site and Stewart/Watkins assemblages are not caused by the slaves differentiating from the norm by embracing their cultural roots or rejecting Euro-American culture, but rather by the poor free whites differentiating themselves from the enslaved population by acquiring material culture with specific status connotations, in this case teawares, and thereby—whether consciously or unconsciously—rejecting material culture and food with strongly negative connotations, in this case bowls and stews. When the American assemblages are examined in trans-Atlantic context, it seems far more probable that it is the poor whites who are differentiating from the norm of the marginalised rural poor, not the enslaved African-Americans.

International comparative research also suggests that some aspects of traditional North American ceramics methodology should also be reevaluated. Some methods, such as the mean ceramic date, are simply statistically unsound (Brooks 2000: 47–50, 207–208), which, while interesting, is a point that lies outside the scope of this paper. More interestingly for this discussion, others, such as Miller's CC index (Miller 1980; 1991),

are revealed as valuable research tools in the United States, but virtually worthless in the rest of the world. The CC index is an American means of calculating the relative worth of certain pottery assemblage components based on decoration and form, and with appropriate adjustments across time. This is can be a powerful research tool in the United States, but the British and American pottery markets often differed significantly in the wake of American independence. While broader Miller-based observations on which types are more expensive than others appear to remain valid, the specific CC index values almost certainly do not when removed from an American context. Up until 1812, the United States was largely used as a dumping ground for cheap British materials, while from c.1845 the white granite ware type replaced transfer-prints as the most fashionable common tableware in North America (Ewins 1997: 18–37), but is hardly ever recovered from domestic sites in its country of production. Indeed, to the best of this author's knowledge, only two white granite vessels have ever been recovered from nineteenth century British domestic sites, both from a Welsh cottage not included in this paper's discussion (Brooks in press). Thus a quantitative tool designed to calculate relative values in the United States, and often invaluable in that specific context, is considerably less helpful in other contexts due to international variations in taste and supply (Brooks 2000: 186–188, 192–194, 210–211).

If this type of comparative analysis has had implications for both British and American historical archaeology, then it equally has potential implications for historical archaeology in Australia and indeed New Zealand—though the focus of this paper is very much on the former. Research in this regard is still ongoing, but nonetheless there are a few issues that can be raised in this paper. During the nineteenth century, the most important global social and economic entity was the British Empire, of which both Australia and Great Britain were components; the archaeological implications of this point have previously been raised by Lawrence (in press). Theory-informed comparisons between analogous assemblages from Britain and Australia will be able to provide valuable information on many points. One example would be the study of the tension between the emergence of a distinctly Australian taste in ceramics and the Metropole's use of subsidiary markets as a dumping ground for unfashionable materials—as indeed happened in the USA until 1812. Other examples would be to study to what extent distinct groups from Great Britain—whether cultural or social—continued to use material culture according to their group of origin, and/or to what extent they interact with the emerging British metropolitan and Australian identities in this period.

A specific example of how these various issues could potentially impact Australia involves the role of white granite in Australian assemblages. This potentially important ware type is still the subject of some confusion in Australia, and descriptions of its primary diagnostic features may be found in works by Barker (2002), Ewins (1997; this also includes pictures), and Miller (1993). Of particular importance are Barker's and Miller's discussions of why the terms 'white granite' and 'ironstone' are not interchangeable, and do not indicate the same material. However, Miller's seven-point aid to the identification of white granite (1993: 6) was designed for an American audience, and his dates and events are not entirely relevant for Australia and New Zealand. The following list of points is both copied (occasionally word for word) and adapted from Miller (1993) in order to provide a brief preliminary guide more suited to the specific circumstances of Australasia.

1. For pre-1845 assemblages, there will not be any white granite ware—exports of the material began in the early 1840s.

2. If embossed moulding occurs around the marley (i.e. the part of the plate from the rim to the shoulder), the vessel is most likely white granite.
3. Similar embossed moulded decorations occur on teawares, though usually over most of the body rather than just the rim.
4. The body is often quite thick and is also quite highly fired—often to the point of being vitrified.
5. If the body, rather than the glaze, has been tinted to make it look light blue or grey, the vessel is most likely white granite. A minority of white granite also has blue-tinted glaze, though the overall effect is different from pearlware.

Not coincidentally, the term 'pearl' came back into use in the post-1840 period. Thus the occurrence of marks such as 'pearl china', 'pearl stone ware', 'pearl white ironstone', 'pearl white' and 'opaque pearl' on post-1840 materials is a feature of white granite, not pearlware.

Traditional Northern Hemisphere discussions of white granite have focussed on the material's role within Trans-Atlantic trade and the American market (Ewins 1997). Nonetheless, this material is very much present in Australian assemblages. Ongoing analysis on assemblages held by Heritage Victoria has identified this material at sites from the Melbourne CBD, then-rural sites from Melbourne's immediate hinterland, and country Victoria. This material occurs across all social strata. Indeed, the on-going upgrade of the Hyde Park Barracks catalogue in Sydney (part of the La Trobe University-led Exploring the Archaeology of the Modern City Project) appears to show that in New South Wales white granite was also occurring in an institutional context (Pullar pers. comm. 2/25/02).

White granite thus clearly occurs in Australia—but in what quantities? Is Australia closer to the American model where undecorated white granite becomes the fashionable ware of choice in the second half of the nineteenth century (Ewins 1997), or the British model, where white granite is virtually entirely absent from domestic sites, and colourful decorated wares remain common. In fact transfer prints appear to become more common amongst the rural poor in Britain once white granite became fashionable in the USA (Brooks 2000: 192–195). Does the presence or absence of white granite involve uniquely Australian considerations, and what might these considerations be? Are 'American market' materials being dumped in Australia's 'immature' colonial market by British merchants, or do they indicate local taste and preference? Are these latter two points mutually exclusive? These issues can only be fully addressed in the future through international comparative work.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate that Australasian and British archaeologists think carefully whenever they use or consider the use of American theory and methodology in their research. American work has been developed to consider American issues, usually with no consideration of how other parts of the world might differ from North America, particularly the United States. Not for a second is it advocated that Australasian or British archaeologists simply abandon the important body of innovative American work, which will often provide invaluable context, simply that archaeologists remain aware of the dangers in using this work uncritically and think about what might be appropriate for the unique contexts, questions and issues that arise in Australasian and indeed British historical archaeology. And it should be openly acknowledged that if comparative research between American and British archaeology has caused the re-evaluation of American methods and interpretations, comparisons between Britain and Australia might well lead to similar re-evaluations in both of these countries. It must also be acknowledged that the sample of assemblages in this paper is small, and further

comparative analysis may well necessitate re-evaluation of the conclusions offered herein. This type of international comparative analysis is in its infancy, and the small number of assemblages included can only be seen as a challenge to continue to expand this type of work to its full potential.

As this paper has demonstrated, past comparative work both within Great Britain, and between Great Britain and North America, has clearly shown the value of this type of research. It has both added to our knowledge of the past and directed analysis towards new, non-traditional conclusions. The important historical connections that existed between Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand in the nineteenth century, mean that international comparative analysis of the material culture record between these countries can only lead to a greater understanding of each other's past, and part the cloud of unknowing that currently veils this important aspect of the archaeological record.

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