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Juvenile Convict Labour and Industry: The Point Puer Landscape ¹

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The nineteenth-century boys' establishment at Point Puer operated as a carceral institution that attempted to reform young inmates by offering trade training. These functions, however, are poorly understood. Previous historical research has established that the training was separated into a series of trade and work tasks, that a highly regular and disciplinary routine was enacted, and that a growing population and lack of resources marred the success of the training programs.² However, a more nuanced understanding becomes possible when Point Puer is considered through the lens of its work and various industries. Operating between 1834 and 1849 as an outstation of the Port Arthur penal settlement, Point Puer provides an institutional snapshot of the specialised and separate treatment of juvenile criminals in colonial Australia and also a case study of how training and industry formed a crucial part of prisoner labour systems, both in Australia and worldwide.³ In this article the processes and products of juvenile labour at Point Puer are examined through the archaeological landscape and historical record. A focus on industry provides a framework for understanding the value of juvenile labour and the network of activity that existed at and around Point Puer.

Point Puer is located on the Tasman Peninsula, on a narrow, northward projecting peninsula that connects to Port Arthur via Carnarvon Bay, approximately 1.5 kilometres across the harbour from Port Arthur (see Figure 3 in Introduction to this Volume). Point Puer was administratively connected to the Port Arthur penal settlement

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- ¹ This research was supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery Project, Landscapes of Production and Punishment (DP170103642) administered by the University of New England and the Australian Archaeological Association's Student Research Grant Scheme 2019.
 - ² For example, see I. Brand and G. Dow, 'Cruel only to be kind? Arthur's Point Puer', *History of Education Review*, Vol. 15, 1986, p. 2; C. Nunn, "'Making them good and useful': The ideology of juvenile penal reformation at Carters' Barracks and Point Puer", *History Australia*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2017, pp. 329-343.
 - ³ H. Shore, 'Transportation, Penal Ideology and the Experience of Juvenile Offenders in England and Australia in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Crime, History & Societies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2002, pp. 81-102.

and both sites now form part of the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage serial listing. However, Point Puer was not itself a penal settlement for recidivists, being built mostly for managing juvenile convicts who were considered unassignable rather than being under a colonial sentence. Transported predominantly from Britain and Ireland, these boys were commonly between 14 and 17 years of age, being among the approximately 25,000 convicts (mostly males) who were aged eighteen or under on arrival in Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales.⁴ Those sent to Point Puer from 1834 were selected for specialised treatment and purposefully separated from the general convict population.

There has been a notable lack of research on juvenile convicts as workers and labourers, despite the centrality of labour and economic perspectives to analyses of the convict experience in colonial Australia.⁵ The impact of nineteenth-century western industrial change on children has been widely discussed, particularly in relation to improvements in working conditions and social welfare, but the literature rarely refers to juvenile work processes in any particular depth.⁶ In Australia, juvenile labour is occasionally mentioned in passing in more comprehensive studies of convict labour, or in studies of colonial children and family life.⁷ Yet there has been more interest in the children of convicts, rather than convict children.⁸ There are few studies that review the industries undertaken at Point Puer, although

⁴ P. King, 'The Rise of Juvenile Delinquency in England 1780-1840: Changing Patterns of Perception and Prosecution', *Past & Present*, No. 160, 1998, p. 121; K. Humphery, 'Objects of compassion: Young male convicts in Van Diemen's Land, 1834-1850', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 98, 1992, p. 17.

⁵ C. G. De Vito and A. Lichtenstein, 'Writing a Global History of Convict Labour', *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 58, 2013, p. 321.

⁶ Such as K. Honeyman, *Child Workers in England, 1780-1820: Parish Apprentices and the Making of the Early Industrial Labour Force*, Aldershot, 2007; M. Cruickshank, *Children and Industry: Child health and welfare in North-west textile towns during the nineteenth century*, Manchester, 1981.

⁷ S. Nicholas (ed.), *Convict workers: reinterpreting Australia's past*, Melbourne, 1988, p. 175; R. Tuffin, 'Australia's Industrious Convicts: A reappraisal of archaeological approaches to convict labour', *Australian Archaeology*, Vol. 76, 2013, p. 5.

⁸ J. Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History*, St Leonards (NSW), 1997, pp. 23-24.; E. C. Casella, 'Little Bastard Felons: Childhood, Affect, and Labour in the Penal Colonies of Nineteenth-Century Australia', in B. L. Voss and E. C. Casella (eds), *The Archaeology of Colonialism: Intimate Encounters and Sexual Effects*, Cambridge, 2011; M. Belcher, *The Child in New South Wales Society: 1820 to 1837*, PhD, University of New England, Armidale 1982.

similar studies have considered NSW juvenile convicts.⁹ The opportunity to consider convict children as workers is often missed.¹⁰ One important exception is Cameron Nunn's essay on 'Juveniles as Human Capital', although he is not exclusively concerned with industries in institutional settings.¹¹

Studies of Point Puer have consistently ignored the details of the economics and industries that existed there, despite the knowledge that trade-training played a fundamental role in the attempt to turn criminal boys into 'useful' colonial workers.¹² Greg Jackman has placed the labour of Point Puer boys within the context of nineteenth-century debates over penal discipline and changing conceptions of childhood.¹³ Other research on Point Puer has emphasised institutional discipline over industry or labour activity.¹⁴ This may be because the historical sources were heavily focussed on reform, and industry, statistical and economic data relating to Point Puer is not easily accessible. However, labour and industry were critical activities at Point Puer that shaped the experiences of the occupants. It is through the lens of labour and

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- ⁹ For example, P. MacFie and N. Hargraves, 'The Empire's First Stolen Generation: The First Intake at Point Puer 1834-39', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.129-154; F. C. Hooper, *A Study of the Penal and Educational Treatment of Juvenile Transportees in VDL 1830-1850*, M.Ed. Thesis, University of Melbourne, pp. 82-92; G. Jackman, 'Get Thee to Church: hard work, Godliness and tourism at Australia's first rural reformatory', *Australiasian Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 19, 2001, pp. 6-13. For NSW, studies include B. Earnshaw, 'The Convict "Apprentices" 1820-1838', *The Push from the Bush*, No. 5, 1979, pp. 82-97; K. Gorton and J. Ramsland, 'Prison playground? Child convict labour and vocational training in New South Wales, 1788-1840', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2002, pp. 51-62.
- ¹⁰ D. Gojak, 'Convict archaeology in New South Wales: An overview of the investigation, analysis and conservation of convict heritage sites', *Australiasian Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 19, 2001, p. 77. For example, C. Frederickson, 'Confinement by isolation: convict mechanics and labour at Fort Dundas, Melville Island', *Australiasian Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 19, 2001, p. 50, notes the presence of errand boys' in the convict labour force, but states that 'the majority of convicts were men, but the presence of at least two women is also recorded', while this classification is more concerned with sex than age, the likely juvenile convicts were not considered separately.
- ¹¹ C. Nunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-68.
- ¹² H. Maxwell-Stewart, 'Convict Workers: "Penal Labour" and Sarah Island: Life at Macquarie Harbour, 1822-1834', in I. Duffield and J. Bradley (eds), *Representing Convicts: New Perspectives on Convict Forced Labour Migration*, London Washington, 1997, pp. 148.
- ¹³ G. Jackman, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-13.
- ¹⁴ I. Brand and G. Dow, *op. cit.*, p. 99; K. Humphery, 'The Remaking of Youth: A Study of Juvenile Convicts and Orphan Immigrants in Colonial Australia, Masters Research, University of Melbourne, 1987.

industry, backed by new evidence, that we better interpret and understand this institution.

Like adult prisoners in early colonial Australia, juveniles were required to work for the duration of their sentence, with most being under sentence for seven years.¹⁵ Work was seen as a form of punishment and an avenue to reform, but convict labour obviously had wider economic benefits as well.¹⁶ Certainly, work was integral to the functioning of the establishment at Point Puer. In Britain, productive child labour was considered economically and morally vital and was part of most small-scale industrial activities and factory workplaces.¹⁷ This flowed through into prison settings, where children were required to do the same work as adult prisoners.¹⁸ There is also a longer and larger history of trade training in juvenile prison environments around the world, particularly through apprenticeships that established a pathway out of the prison system. Examples include the Rasp-Huis in Amsterdam from the seventeenth century, the Mason de Refuge that opened in 1817 in France, and Parkhurst Prison in England from 1838, all offering apprenticeships, basic education or other programs for re-integrating juveniles into society.¹⁹ In colonial Australia there was a particularly strong inducement to ensure that child convicts emerged from their servitude as reformed and profitable members of society. It was believed that the key to that lay in trade or agricultural training.

The transportation of young offenders to Australia was considered appropriate, even beneficial. Young men were perceived to be more

¹⁵ P. H. MacFie, R. McLachlan and M. H. Mathias, *The Point Puer Lads: Tried and Transported - the Point Puer Lads and Their Prison 1833-1849*, 2nd ed., Morabbin (Vic), 2018 [1987].

¹⁶ E. C. Casella, *The Archaeology of Institutional Confinement*, Gainsville, 2007, p. 58; D. Meredith, 'Full Circle? Contemporary Views on Transportation', in S. Nicholas (ed.) *Convict Workers: Reinterpreting Australia's Past*, Melbourne, 1988, p. 23.

¹⁷ J. Rule, *The Labouring classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*, London, 1986, p. 15; H. Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century*, Oxford, 1991, p. 51.

¹⁸ V. K. Tikoff, 'Before the Reformatory: A Correctional Orphanage in Old Regime Seville', in H. Shore and P. Cox (eds), *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth, 1650-1950*, London and New York, 2002, p. 63.

¹⁹ T. Sellin, *Pioneering in Penology: The Amsterdam Houses of Correction in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1944, p. 43; K. M. Nilan, *Incarcerating children: Prison reformers, children's prisons, and child prisoners in July Monarchy France*, PhD, Yale University, 1992, p. 261; B. Manser, *Behind the Small Wooden Door: The Inside Story of Parkhurst Prison*, Isle of Wight, 2000.

likely to survive the journey, and it was thought they would find it easier to become 'reliable, independent wage-earners'.²⁰ However, incarcerated children often completed their sentence while still young, potentially at an age where they were incapable of making an autonomous living as a worker, which conditions were likely to promote recidivism. The imperial and colonial administrations thus became increasingly focused on preparing juvenile offenders for a future post-servitude. As young emigrants, juvenile convicts were recognised as the backbone of the future workforce that would power colonial economies, so their training and upskilling became a stronger component of management and treatment while under sentence. As one commentator noted of Point Puer in 1843, 'instructions in trades and various industrial employment is valuable as both a means for reforming the juvenile delinquent and of preparing him after his liberation to preserve his subsistence by honest labour'.²¹ While the upskilling of convicts has traditionally been viewed as a reformatory technique, the training of convict juveniles was also explicitly pragmatic.²²

Nevertheless, the deliberate separation of convict juveniles was uncommon. Boys were more frequently merged with the general convict population, being assigned to private employers, public works or confined in institutions (such as Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney) alongside adults.²³ Initially, training programs were less institutional for example, Governor King's attempts at apprenticeships in boat building or carpentry (1803), and the agricultural training of boys at Toongabbie Farm (from c.1792) and at Grose Farm (from c.1819).²⁴ Commissioner Bigge's enquiries formalised a preference for the institutional treatment of boys rather than private assignment,

²⁰ K. Reid, *Gender, Crime and Empire: Convicts, Settlers and the state in the early Colonial Australia*, Manchester, 2007, p. 13; H. Shore, *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London*, London, 1999, p. 132.

²¹ B. Horne, *Report to Sir John Franklin on Point Puer*, 7 March 1843, Colonial Office, Original Correspondence Tasmania, CO 280/157, National Library of Australia (NLA), p.4

²² Kociumbas, *op. cit.*, p. 23, Nunn, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-343.

²³ Gorton and Ramsland, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

²⁴ W. Thorp, *Non-institutional convict sites: A study on work gang accommodation*, unpublished report prepared for The National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW, 1987, pp. 65, 133; King to Hobart, 9 May 1803, *Historical Records of Australia, Series 1*, Vol. 4, p. 81.

particularly for convicts under sixteen.²⁵ An increase in the number of boys arriving in the colonies, their immaturity and lack of skills, as well as fears that they would be preyed upon by adult men, led to institutional confinement in both New South Wales (Carters' Barracks from 1820) and Van Diemen's Land (Point Puer from 1834). The stated reasons for forming institutions and training facilities were more pragmatically founded in accommodating unassignable boys than implementing specific penal ideologies. These juvenile establishments, as physical entities with detailed administrative records, provide valuable insights into contemporary attitudes towards, and the management of, juvenile labour in the colony.

Point Puer was planned by Lieutenant Governor George Arthur and the Port Arthur Commandant, Charles O'Hara Booth, in late 1833. There had been convict boys at Port Arthur from the outset. Early settlement rules demanded they not 'associate with the men, except when they are absolutely at work with them'.²⁶ The separate institution was a response to an unmanageable increase in the male juvenile convict population in the Hobart Prisoner Barracks, 'who cannot be assigned and who are a dead weight upon the government'.²⁷ Point Puer was selected over other sites on the Tasman Peninsula for its proximity to Port Arthur, where Commandant Booth could supervise them and 'where they will be perfectly safe from any intercourse with the present Establishment [of Port Arthur]'.²⁸ In January 1834, the first 68 boys were sent to Point Puer.²⁹ When the Quaker James Backhouse visited in November that year, there were 150 boys at the site. The establishment, which he thought was 'one of great interest', was already under a system of 'restraint & coercive labour'.³⁰ The boys were being taught 'to maintain themselves by honest industry' in order to one day become 'useful members of the community'.³¹

25 J. T. Bigge, *Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry into the State of the Colony of New South Wales*, London, 1822, p. 163.

26 'Orders and regulations for the Government & management of the Settlement at Port Arthur', 13 June 1831, CSO1/551/1207, Tasmanian Archives (TA).

27 Forster, to Arthur, Lieutenant-Governor, 23 November 1833, CSO1/690/15198, p. 141, TA.

28 Booth, Commandant, to Burnett, Colonial Secretary, 24 December 1833, CSO1/690/15198, p. 147, TA.

29 P. MacFie and N. Hargraves, *op. cit.*, p.130.

30 James Backhouse and George W. Walker, 'A Report of a Visit to the Penal Settlement on Tasman's Peninsula, in the 11th Month 1834', CSO1/807/17244, TA.

31 *Ibid.*

The site continued to grow steadily in the late 1830s and, following an increase in arrivals from 1837, reached its peak population in 1843 when there were reportedly 706 boys on the establishment (Table 1 and Figure 1).³² In its heyday, population outstripped the place's capacity, with boys having to be accommodated in almost all of the establishment's buildings, including gaol, chapel and workshops.³³ However, it transpired that the site was not well chosen. It had no reliable fresh water source, inadequate supplies of timber for firewood and construction, and poor soils that did not support successful agriculture. These problems added to the pressures of a growing population. As the failings of Point Puer became more obvious, an alternative site for a juvenile settlement was proposed at Safety Cove in the early 1840s (see Figure 3 in Introduction).³⁴ While attention shifted away from Point Puer towards the design and construction of this new institution, the number of boys requiring incarceration declined rapidly. By 1847, both sites were no longer needed, and in March 1849 the remaining boys were integrated into the adult convict workforce at other probation stations, particularly the nearby Cascades Probation Station.³⁵

32 'A Return showing the number of boys, number landed, deaths at PP [Point Puer], and employment and value of work from Jan 11 1834 to Dec 21 1835', Return No. 38 *Statistical Returns of VDL 1824-39*, Hobart Town, 1839; 'A Return of the Number of Boys, the Number landed and the Number of Deaths, at Point Puer', also employment of the boys and the value of their labour, 1842, 43 and 44', Return No. 49, *Statistical Returns of VDL 1842-44*, Hobart Town, 1845.

33 An English juvenile prison investigator, Benjamin Horne, reported that younger boys used the Chapel/School building as barracks, while at the workshops and barracks complex 'in the different rooms they sleep on the floor'. Benjamin Horne, *op. cit.*, p. 7. Commandant Booth reported boys sleeping in the barracks and the shoemakers' and tailors' shops. Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secretary, 24 July 18379, Colonial Secretary's General Correspondence 1837-1841 (CSO5) 35/728, TA.

34 Champ, Commandant, to Forster, Comptroller General, 29 July 1844, Enclosure 2, No 15, *Correspondence Relative to Convict Discipline*, London, 1846, pp. 36-7.

35 'Cascade Station', Superintendent, to Hampton, Comptroller General, 14 January 1850, Misc. 62-31-A1131, TA. Untranscribed reference material collated by Ian Brand, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority [PAHSMA].

Table 1: Estimated annual numbers of boys learning trades at Point Puer at the end of each year (unless otherwise stated). The percentage of the population learning a trade excludes 'labourers' and boys that were sick.

Year	Population & Growth Rate (%)	Percent at a trade*	Percent Labouring	Carpenters	Blacksmith / Nailors	Shoemakers	Tailors	Sawyers	Stonemasons	Brick Layer/Maker	Coopers	Labourers	Quarriers	Boat Builders	Book Binders
1834 April	85	55%	26%	28		19						22			
1834 Dec	165	30%	67%	12	4	16	10	8				111			
1835	270 (63%)	34%	55%	20	6	35	18	14				149			
1836	271 (0%)	35%	63%	20	6	40	7	16				171		5	
1837	315 (16%)	39%	57%	22	8	37	17	18	12		3	179		5	
1838	455 (44%)	30%	64%	22	10	46	22	16	15		4	292		3	
1839	488 (7%)	36%	57%	22	11	54	28	18	15		8	280	17	5	
1840	494 (1%)	43%	56%	20	15	61	44	20	20		5	279	27		1
1841	617 (24%)	46%	54%	26	15	79	36	26	17	8	13	335	55	6	1
1842	712 (15%)	38%	60%	23	15	70	45	27	20		16	430	50	6	1
1843	706 (0%)	44%	55%	23	16	70	54	30	23	11	16	387	62	12	2
1844	634 (-10%)	43%	52%	28	15	73	50	29	15	39	20	330	14	19	2
1845	549 (-13%)	35%	63%	22	15	49	30		15		20	346	25	16	2
1846	490 (-10%)	38%	60%	20	15	40	25		15		25	293	25	20	1
1847	346 (-29%)	55%	45%	22	16	42	25		15	2	24	155	24	20	1
1848 May)	256 (-26%)	48%	49%	10	13	38	39	10			7	126	0	7	0
1849 Jan	162 (-36%)	50%	48%	7	11	30	25				4	77		4	

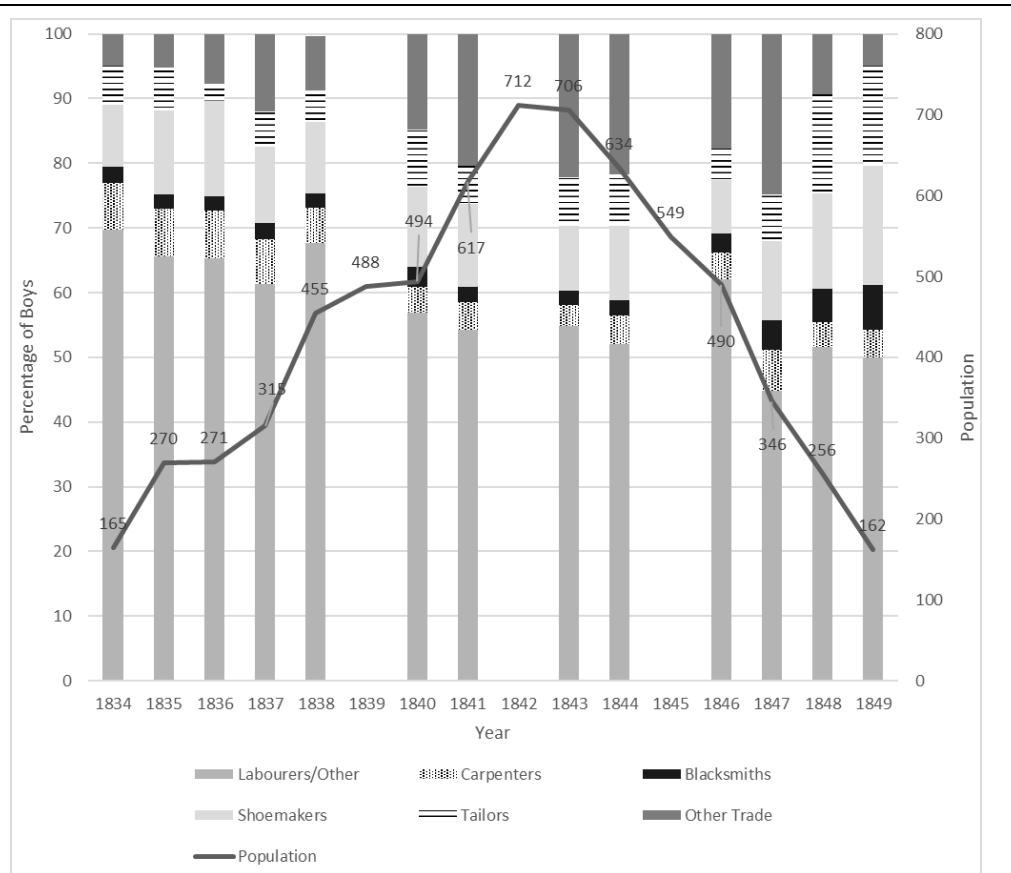
Figures in italics are estimated from other sources, particularly labour values rather than no. of boys. Source: Statistical Returns of VDL 1839, 'A Return Showing ... employment at Point Puer', 1834-1838 Enclosure no. 38, 1839-1841, Enclosure No. 46 and 1842-1845, Enclosure No. 49, Estimate of the Expenditure of Convict Services in VDL 1846-7; Return of the Number of Convicts at each Station on Oct 29 1847 showing how they were employed on that day.

Table 2: Number of boys employed with adult work crews at Port Arthur, and the first year of Point Puer from 1831-1834. Italics show estimated figures. Note, details of boys in trades after 1832 are less detailed and therefore appear to have lessened in numbers. Boys are shown as a number of the total number of the workforce, including boys, adult convicts and overseers working in that trade.

Port Arthur	Boat Crew	Boat Builder	Blacksmith/ Nailor	Brick layer/ maker	Carpenter	Lab'r	Sawyer	Shingle splitter	Shoe maker	Tailors	Other Boys in Trade Tasks	Total Workforce
Jan-Mar 1831	1 of 2		1 of 2	3 of 4	1 of 4	5 of 25	6 of 20	4 of 11	0 of 2		1 limeburner 1 painter 1 sick	90
April- Jun 1831	1 of 4		1 of 4	1 of 2	1 of 6	4 of 36	11 of 32	2 of 10	0 of 4	0 of 1	4 sick 1 wardsman	124
July-Sept 1831	1 of 4	0 of 2	2 of 6	0 of 1	1 of 6	4 of 30	14 of 34	3 of 6	0 of 4	0 of 1	1 painter 1 plasterer 1 wardsman	133
Oct-Dec 1831	1 of 5	0 of 1	1 of 6	3 of 7	2 of 6	4 of 42	12 of 37	2 of 5	1 of 5	0 of 1	1 painter 1 wardsman	157
Jan-Mar 1832	1 of 7	0 of 1	0 of 10	0 of 4	2 of 6	4 of 43	13 of 35	4 of 7	1 of 4	0 of 1	1 painter 1 plasterer 1 sick	151
Apr-Jun 1832	1 of 6	1 of 3	0 of 5	0 of 10	2 of 9	8 of 62	13 of 33	4 of 10	1 of 7	0 of 1	1 painter	212
July-Sept 1832	1 of 6	1 of 3	0 of 5	1 of 8	2 of 9	6 of 56	12 of 33	4 of 12	1 of 8	0 of 1	1 painter 1 burner	212
Oct-Dec 1832	0 of 7	1 of 4	0 of 8	0 of 10	2 of 13	7 of 70	11 of 32	4 of 11	2 of 27	0 of 1	1 plasterer 1 turner	263
Mar 1833	0 of 6		1 of 7	0 of 9	1 of 14	0 of 107	0 of 28	0 of 12	3 of 30	0 of 1		296
Jun 1833	0 of 13	0 of 4	1 of 11	0 of 6	1 of 20	0 of 136	0 of 31	0 of 15	5 of 40	0 of 2		376
August 1833	0 of 12	1 of 5	1 of 12	0 of 9	2 of 20	0 of 195	0 of 35	1 of 19	4 of 39	0 of 2		431
Oct 1833	0 of 13	0 of 6	1 of 12	0 of 9	2 of 20	0 of 194	0 of 35	0 of 14	4 of 39	0 of 3		419
Mar 1834	0 of 13	0 of 10	1 of 10	0 of 18	6 of 22	0 of 210	0 of 27	0 of 12	2 of 28	0 of 3		460
May 1834		4 of 12	1 of 7	0 of 6	1 of 16	0 of 251	0 of 35	0 of 14	7 of 35			548
Point Puer	Boat Crew	Boat Builder	Blacksmith/ Nailor	Brick layer/ maker	Carpenter	Lab'r	Sawyer	Shingle splitter	Shoe maker	Tailors	Other Convicts at Site	Total Workforce
March 1834						68 of 69					1 schoolmaster 1 (adult) cook	71
May 1834					28 of 29	22 of 23			19 of 20		1 schoolmaster 1 (adult) cook 1 (adult) woodcutter 3 (adult) well diggers	85
Nov 1834			4 of 5		12 of 13	111 of 112	8 of 9		16 of 17	10 of 11		165

Source: Labour returns for Port Arthur, CSO1/511/11180, TA.

Figure 1: Estimation of number of boys in labour tasks at Point Puer. An estimate of the convict population at the site is shown at the top of each column.



Source: Statistical Returns of VDL 1839, 'A Return Showing ... employment at Point Puer', 1834-1838 Enclosure no. 38, 1839-1841, Enclosure No. 46 and 1842-1845, Enclosure No. 49, Estimate of the Expenditure of Convict Services in VDL 1846-7 and Return of the Number of Convicts at each Station on Oct 29 1847 showing how they were employed on that day.

The first Point Puer boys were put to work constructing the site's buildings and clearing land. By the end of 1834 the facilities were clustered around the northern end of the site and included 'a large Barrack' which permitted 'constant surveillance', workshops, and accommodation for a catechist and superintendent.³⁶ In the first four

³⁶ Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secreatry, 24 July 18379, CSO5/35/728, TA.

years, the layout of the settlement was set and although it grew over time, it remained generally consistent in design (Figure 2). The barracks and workshop buildings were expanded for the growing population. There were solitary cells and a gaol with three physical classes for punishment at the southern end of the settlement, and a chapel and school in the centre of the site (Figure 2). By 1845 the site had extensive workshops for a wide range of trades and the punishment facilities had been significantly developed. Historical sources indicate that the land surrounding the Point Puer buildings was primarily used for vegetable cultivation, but archaeological survey suggests a wider range of ephemeral activities were taking place around the settlement, revealing a complex arrangement of yards, roads and water management structures (Figure 3).³⁷

The boys at Point Puer were employed both in learning trades (discussed in more detail below), but also in the unskilled labour required for the upkeep of the settlement.³⁸ Labour and industries at Point Puer were primarily directed towards mitigating costs by supporting the needs of the settlement. As discussed later, products and outputs of the establishment were predominantly used on site or on nearby convict stations. The formalisation of the teaching of trade skills for boys was not documented, although the introduction of trade-training was also clearly intentional for upskilling purposes. Contrary to common descriptions of Point Puer as an establishment with a singular model of juvenile management, it involved fifteen years of relatively intense modification to practices and infrastructure.³⁹ That is to say, the labour and industry undertaken by the boys changed over time. Overall, some general trends are visible. Labour tasks undertaken at Point Puer usually reflected similar processes to those that were coordinated across the Tasman Peninsula, particularly refinement of raw resources, manufacturing (shoemaking

³⁷ Austral Archaeology, 'Point Puer, Historical Archaeological Assessment', unpublished report prepared for Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, 1997. Additional fieldwork was undertaken in July 2019 by the author, which has supplemented the archaeological record.

³⁸ It is noted that in many colonial contexts those working in a trade were labelled as 'mechanics', as opposed to 'labourers', however, at Point Puer they were also referred to as 'learners' or 'learning trades'.

³⁹ A. Kyle, 'Little depraved felons', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 99, 1992, pp. 319-324 .

and tailoring, for example), building, maintenance and cultivation.⁴⁰ These utilised the abundant but variably skilled workforce of Port Arthur convicts available to oversee work and available natural resources for economic gain, while avoiding activities that would have been high risk in a prison environment, such as raising livestock that could feed escaped convicts.⁴¹

In fact, Point Puer showed few differences to Port Arthur in terms of the labour and industry undertaken. In some respects, Point Puer can be considered a microcosm of Port Arthur, with scaled down practices for a reduced population and involving fewer resources. There was, however, a significantly narrower range of industries at Point Puer. For example, basket making, shingle splitting and sail making were undertaken at Port Arthur but not (as far as we know) at Point Puer.⁴² There are no known industries that occurred at Point Puer that did not also occur at Port Arthur. Both sites witnessed a diversification of labour tasks over time, and raw materials, equipment and expertise were shared. The operation of Point Puer relied on the skills of convicts at Port Arthur, as discussed in more detail below.

Unlike Port Arthur, the industries at Point Puer did not prioritise raw resource extraction, such as timber getting. While this was a primary task at Port Arthur, particularly during the 1830s, its absence at Point Puer most likely reflects a workforce not suited to the physically demanding labour of felling trees.⁴³ Secondary industry, where primary resources were altered into finished products through manufacturing, was more suited to the labour of juveniles and dominated the trades of Point Puer. The small stature of boys at Point Puer may also explain the institution's progression to substantial manufacture workshops more quickly than Port Arthur. For example, while Port Arthur initially had only a handful of tailors, Point Puer created a tailoring operation comparatively quickly, having a

⁴⁰ R. Tuffin, M. Gibbs, D. A. Roberts, H. Maxwell-Stewart, D. Roe, J. Steele, S. Hood, and B. Godfrey, 'Landscapes of Production and Punishment: Convict labour in the Australian context', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2018, p. 51.

⁴¹ While livestock husbandry was never a significant industry at Point Puer, livestock were sometimes kept at stations. By 1848, the Convict Department kept a small herd of pigs at the Point Puer. 'Return of Livestock belonging to the Convict Department on 30th April 1848', GO33/1/64, TA.

⁴² 'Return of Work done by Prisoners at Port Arthur from the 1 to 30 June 1832', CSO1/511/11180, p. 121, TA.

⁴³ R. Tuffin and M. Gibbs, 'Early Port Arthur: Convict Colonization and the Formation of a Penal Station in Van Diemen's Land 1830–35', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2019, p. 575.

workshop for these purposes before Port Arthur did in 1835.⁴⁴ But then such operations required imported resources, which was a constant problem on the remote peninsula. Soon after the first boys commenced tailoring at Point Puer they were returned to 'clearing ground about their barrack owing to my not having any woollen cloth or material of any sort to set them to work upon'.⁴⁵

Point Puer boys performed a variety of tasks during their incarceration. Table 1 estimates the allocation of boys to trade tasks during each year between 1834 and 1849. It is not always known what each 'trade' actually consisted of in terms of tasks or outputs, and these clearly shifted over time. The earliest trades performed were carpentry and shoemaking, introduced by April 1834, only months after the place was established.⁴⁶ Trades were soon diversified to include tailoring, sawing and blacksmithing. In May 1834, 55% of the boys were allocated to learning a trade, with consistent tasks scheduled for each boy. There was initially a routine of field labour before breakfast, trade-training during the day and scholastic and religious instruction in the evenings.⁴⁷ However, as the population quickly grew, an increasing percentage of the boys were assigned to labouring tasks rather than a trade. By the end of 1834, most boys were labouring and the number learning a trade dropped to 30% (Table 1). This change foreshadowed a trend of ongoing difficulties in managing the influx of new arrivals and allocating resources to train them in trades as intended.

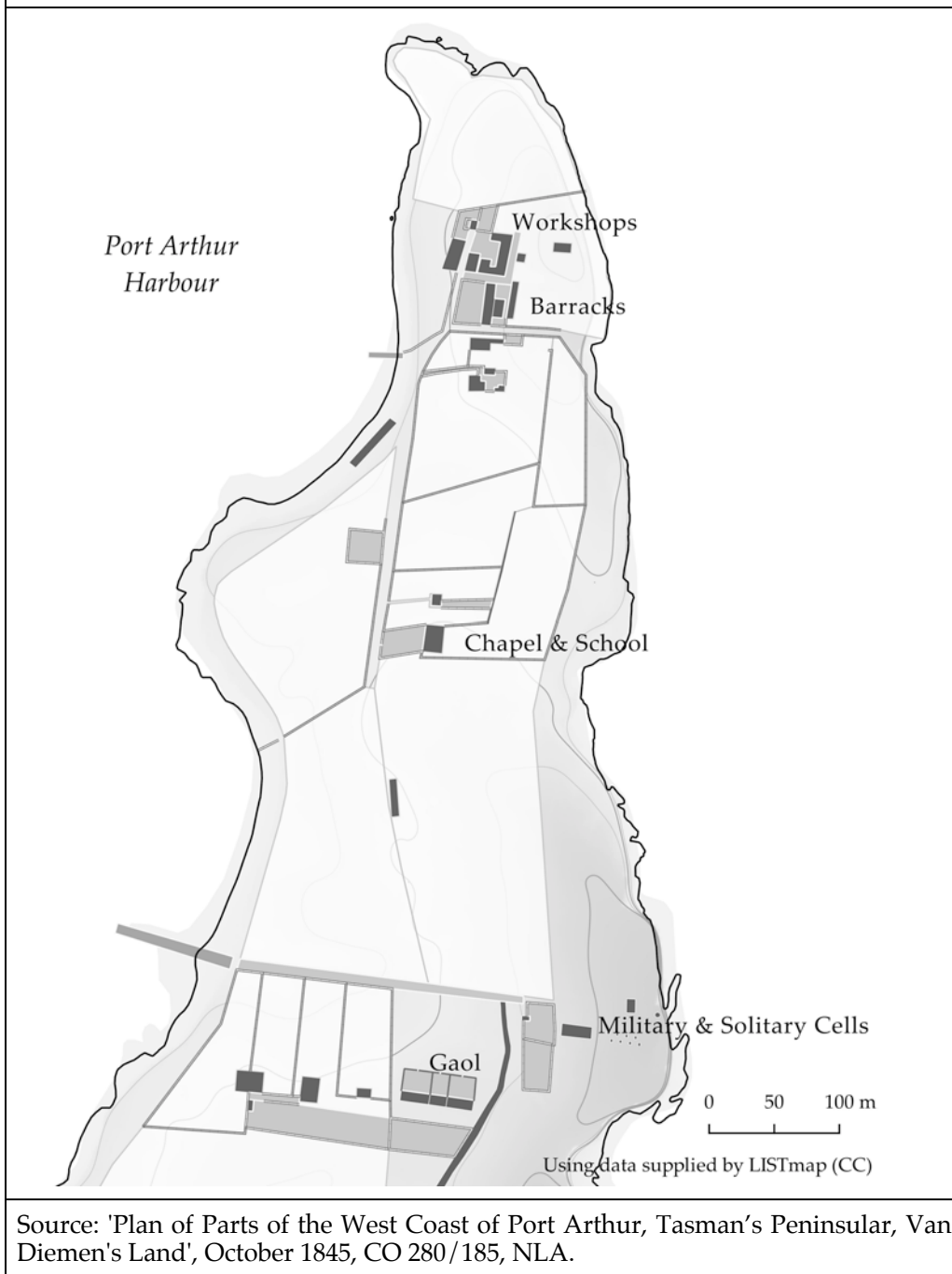
⁴⁴ See Table 2, which shows a gradual increase from none to three tailors at Port Arthur between 1831 and 1834, and the outputs of 10 tailors at Point Puer in its first year in 1834. Also see: Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secreatry, 11 May 1835, CSO1/484/10750, p. 123, TA. This states that a Tailor Establishment was being formed at Port Arthur, separately of the one already at Point Puer.

⁴⁵ Booth, Commandant, to Burnett, Colonial Secreatry, 21 April 1834, CSO1/690/15198, p. 177, TA.

⁴⁶ 'Return of Work done by Convict boys at the Establishment at Point Puer during the month of April 1834', May 1834, CSO1/511/11180, pp. 327-8, TA.

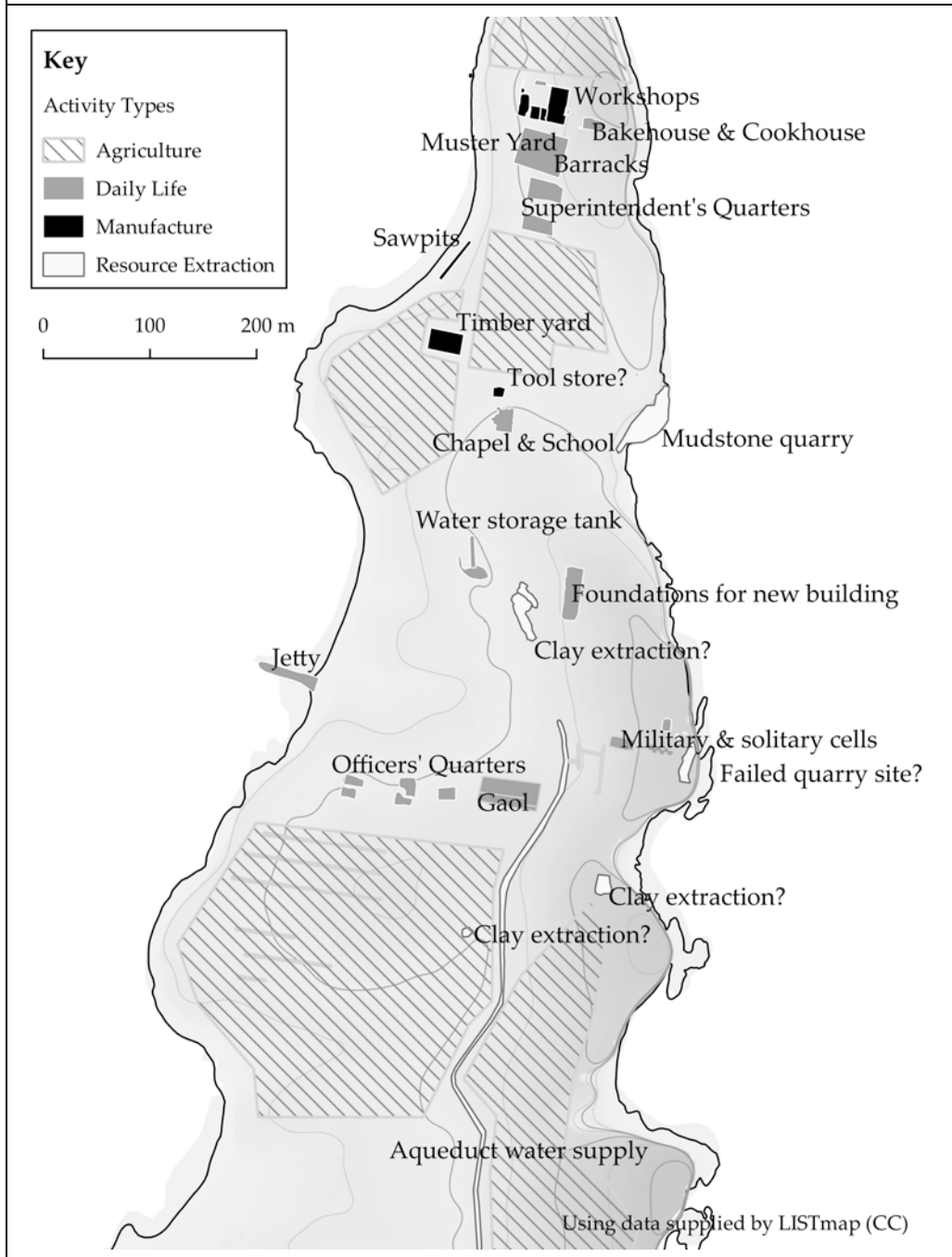
⁴⁷ James Backhouse and George W. Walker, 'A Report of a Visit to the Penal Settlement on Tasmans Peninsula, in the 11th Month 1834', CSO1/807/17244, p. 65, TA.

Figure 2: Point Puer as planned in 1845, showing key functional areas in green.



Source: 'Plan of Parts of the West Coast of Port Arthur, Tasman's Peninsular, Van Diemen's Land', October 1845, CO 280/185, NLA.

Figure 3: Archaeological features of Point Puer, showing areas where various activities were undertaken



Thereafter, trade training rates fluctuated between 30 and 45% of the boys, showing a slight correlation with the annual growth rate in the number of boys present at Point Puer, as opposed to overall population (Table 1). Point Puer was unable to offer a trade again to more than 50% of the boys until 1847 when the annual growth rate was in significant decline (-29%). The annual growth rate is calculated as the difference between population from one year to the next, rather than the overall number of boys present each year. It was affected by annual fluctuations in the number of transport ships arriving in Van Diemen's Land that carried boys and the colonial government's decision to send them to Point Puer rather than out to assignment or to other stations, as well as the policy of when to release boys from the facility.

After 1841, the introduction of the probation system likely impacted the population growth rate, as boys could be sent to other probation stations that had the facilities, such as separate apartments, to manage juveniles amongst cohorts of adult convicts.⁴⁸ This may have allowed administrators to control the intake of boys at Point Puer to more manageable levels. The correlation with population growth rate may indicate that the settlement grew in capacity over time, but that the influx of new arrivals impacted trade and labour allocations on a short timescale. For example, while the overall trend was in increasing capacity for trades in this period, a high population growth rate of 44% in 1838 was met with a reduction in trades taught down to 30%, suggesting individual influxes of boys took time to place into trades. This also likely reflects the policy of waiting for good behaviour from the boys before allowing a trade to be learnt.⁴⁹

The priority tasks for each trade or labouring activity were initially focused on the construction of local infrastructure. Archaeology shows evidence of bricklaying, carpentry, shingling, stonemasonry and landscaping. The initial barracks were likely constructed by Port Arthur convicts, and adult convicts continued to undertake specialised tasks for some time, as in 1834 when three Port Arthur men were sent to Point Puer to dig a well.⁵⁰ However, it

⁴⁸ See Table 1. Population growth rate did not begin to decline until 1843, however, probation likely took a number of years after its introduction to have an influence.

⁴⁹ Hooper, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁵⁰ Booth, Commandant, to Burnett, Colonial Secretary, 24 December 1833, CSO1/690/15198, p. 147, TA; 'Return of Crown Prisoners at Port Arthur showing

appears that the boys were soon performing the majority of construction tasks, under the supervision of an adult overseer.⁵¹ Much of the activity occurred in the workshops complex, located at the northern end of the peninsula. Commenced in 1834, the workshop by 1836 had specialised areas for tailors, carpenters, shoemakers and nailors.

Figure 4, the detail of which was provided around 1836, shows the spatial layout of work stations and fireplaces (including forges for nailors).⁵² It shows the workshops as a series of tightly controlled working environments, with planned sources of heat, light, ventilation, supervision and task-specific equipment, as well as separate rooms for each trade. These provided centralised locations for certain tasks but also limited the number of boys who could participate. Labour returns in 1836 listed 40 boys doing shoemaking, 20 at carpentry, with 7 tailors and only 6 nailors.⁵³ The variation in the numbers employed in each task can be roughly correlated with the input of capital to establish the industry; tasks that required more capital and space to establish could only afford a small workstation and therefore a small workforce. Nail manufacturing, for example, was a suitable task for boys, as it was physically undemanding (at least relative to some other tasks) and generated useful outputs, but it was a very minor industry at Point Puer. This is probably because furnaces were expensive, and metal had to be imported to the site.

Conversely, shoemaking required less capital investment, using hides that were more easily acquired and equipment such as work benches, shoe sprigs and closing clamps that were simple to create on site.⁵⁴ The value and success of shoemaking over time is indicated by

their Trades and the Number of Each Trade, March-May 1834', CSO1/511/1180, p. 303, 318, and 329, TA.

51 'Return of Work done by mechanics at Point Puer from 1 to 31 May', May 1834, CSO1/511/11180, p. 324, TA.

52 Convict architect, Henry Laing, was required to provide elevations and plans of both Port Arthur and Point Puer in c.1836. The images he drew provide valuable insight into the actual construction at the site, unlike many other plans that were proposed and potentially altered before implementation.

53 'A Return showing the number of boys, number landed, deaths at Point Puer, and employment and value of work from Jan 11 1834 to Dec 21 1835, along with three years following', Return No. 38, *Statistical Returns of VDL 1824-39*, Hobart Town, 1839.

54 By 1836, closing clamps, stools, benches and shoe sprigs were being produced by the carpenters and nailors at Point Puer. See: 'Return of various particulars relative to Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer, for the Year ending 31 December 1836',

the consistent strength in numbers at Point Puer, with as many as 79 boys employed as shoemakers in 1841. Other trades were performed outside the workshop. Sawyers were at the sawpits, which were on the beach below the workshops, built in 1834 and covered with a rough timber shed for protection for the weather (Figure 5). Unlike sawpits at adult convict sites, the placement along the shoreline and installation of a windlass was likely planned to allow the manoeuvring of timber by boys. Carpentry may have been located exclusively in the workshops, but was likely also undertaken elsewhere, close to the structures that were being worked on.

By 1837, Commandant Booth's written reports on Point Puer indicated an increase in the range of trades undertaken. Point Puer boys were recorded as working as 'Boot and Shoe Makers, Carpenters, Blacksmiths, Nailors, Tailors, Coopers, Bakers, Kitchen Gardeners and Sawyers; a few are about to be put to Book Binding... a number of boys have been removed to Port Arthur ... for the purpose of learning Stone cutting and Boat-building'.⁵⁵ Many of these new industries might be understood as variations or extensions of the trades already being taught. For example, blacksmithing was an extension of nail making, and turning and coopering was pursued instead of just carpentry. But the diversification of activities, including drawing on the work being undertaken at the main settlement at Port Arthur, allowed for more trade-training. Figure 1 shows the trend in increasing diversification of trades taught (seen as the increase in 'other trades') as the population increased. However, population growth remained an issue and the numbers of boys undertaking trades was still less than desired. In 1837, Commandant Booth noted that 'neither the buildings nor circumstances will *yet* admit to the whole [of the boys] being employed at trades'.⁵⁶ Additional buildings had to be constructed almost constantly. The diversification of tasks also resulted in new daily routines. Boys were no longer required to undertake field labour and the bulk of the day was spent at 'work', a term that accommodated any task, from unskilled labour to trade training.

CSO5/178/4230, p. 91, TA. Tanning was undertaken at Port Arthur throughout some periods although it may also have been imported, see 'Return of Prisoners at Port Arthur, 1st to the 31st August 1832 inclusive, Showing their Trades and the number of each Trade', CSO1/511/11180, TA.

⁵⁵ Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secreatry, 24 July 18379, CSO5/35/728, p. 65, TA.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68. Booth wrote this report two months after the arrival of a purposefully separated shipload of boys on the *Francis Charlotte*, and prior to the arrival of a further eight ships carrying almost exclusively convict boys between 1838 and 1842.

Yet some trades appear to have been inconsistently performed, such as boat building, depending on the availability of suitable resources (particularly skilled overseers). Confusingly, the labour returns from 1837 do not reflect the addition of these new trades except for stonemasonry, despite the Commandant's description of them being performed.⁵⁷ Stonecutting and boat building were not included in any further statistical returns for Point Puer during this period, likely because the work was done at Port Arthur and so was captured in the output statistics for that settlement. Potentially, outputs of the new tasks were included under the existing categories established in the labour returns. The statistics for this period show a range of manufacturing tasks under the simplified heading of a trade. For example, 'carpentry' captured many activities such as coopering, joinery and turning.⁵⁸ That was a bureaucratic convenience that tended to grossly oversimplify the history of industries at the site.

There was a shift in the location of trade facilities in the early 1840s. Boat building and stonemasonry were now undertaken at Point Puer, in new buildings at the workshops.⁵⁹ Quarrying also commenced in 1839, presumably at the eastern edge of the peninsula where archaeological evidence of a mudstone quarry can be found (Figure 3), although possibly boys were also taken to other sandstone quarries close to Port Arthur (Figure 5). Bookbinding was also undertaken, using a book press and bookbinders shop built by the boys learning carpentry in 1840, although that was not particularly extensive, judging by the lack of reporting of results and the small cohort who were taught.⁶⁰ There was also brickmaking, which appears in administrative records as a trade taught from 1843, although there is, currently, no archaeological evidence of a brick-production site at Point Puer. Most likely, the boys were integrated with adult convicts working at Brick Point or further away at Brickfield Hill. These changes show a wider range of trade locations were being used, involving increased traffic as boys were likely either walked or boated to their worksites (Figure 5). There were increased labouring tasks too,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* Booth describes twelve trades, although the labour returns for the same year only listed laboring, stonecutting, carpentry, tailoring, sawing, shoemaking and nail making.

⁵⁸ 'Return of various particulars relative to Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer, for the Year ending 31 December 1837', CSO5/178/4230, TA.

⁵⁹ D. Heard (ed.), *The Journal of Charles O'Hara Booth: Commandant of the Port Arthur Penal Settlement*, Hobart, 1981.

⁶⁰ 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer, and showing the Valuation thereof', *Secondary Punishment*, London, 1841, pp. 129-133.

related to the construction of a 3.5km long aqueduct that was likely dug out by the boys and the extension of local agricultural land. There was diversification also in the tasks undertaken within some trade categories. For example, while initially shoemakers were only closing shoes, by 1840 they were producing wellington, blucher, laced, women's, children's and watertight boots, ladies' shoes, galoshes, clogs, gentlemen's tie-shoes and civil officers' shoes.⁶¹

The increasing diversification of tasks and work locations was likely the result of the growing size of the establishment as well as the implementation of the probation system, which placed additional strain on site systems. Probation resulted in a shortage of capable station administrators, which likely impacted the ability of Point Puer to meet the training demands, as well as new principles to implement, such as separate apartments for prisoners.⁶² The large increase in the number of boys at the institution constrained the availability of trades, as facilities like the workshops were likely at capacity. However, over the period of 1840 to 1844, the percent of trades taught actually increased to above those in the late 1830s, despite the general population growth. While administrators had difficulties victualling and providing accommodation at Point Puer, the increased diversity of tasks performed allowed for a greater rate of trade training.

Another result of the increased prisoner population was a larger cohort of labourers to perform a phase of renewed development at the site, including the erection of a new chapel and school, accommodation for officers, a gaol complex and additions to the workshops. This created more work for the boys while resolving some of the station's accommodation and storage concerns. Water management infrastructure was also built in the early 1840s, occupying the boys in a manner that helped improve the facilities and resolved some practical issues at the site. Tasks such as largescale landscaping, which remains visible in the extensive terracing to the north of the gaol complex, as well as the aqueduct, new building foundations and the erection of a water storage tank, must have required large amounts of labour but

⁶¹ 'Return of Work done by Convict boys at the Establishment at Point Puer' 1 May 1834, CSO1/511/11180, p. 309, TA; 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer, and showing the Valuation thereof', *Secondary Punishment*, London, 1841, pp. 129-133.

⁶² R. Tuffin and M. Gibbs. "'Uninformed and Impractical'? The Convict Probation System and Its Impact Upon the Landscape of 1840s Van Diemen's Land" *History Australia*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2020, p. 106.

did not necessarily require skill.⁶³ These physical features, which are archaeologically present (Figure 3), were probably the result of spontaneous and haphazard decisions made with a view to occupying an increasing number of boys without considered planning.

While administrative reporting throughout this period suggests a strong focus on industry outputs at Point Puer, there was also an increasing awareness of the resourcing constraints and the shortfalls of the boys' landscape.⁶⁴ A comparison of the site plan with almost any other similar juvenile institution of the time, emphasises the uniqueness of the sprawling landscape and a lack of spatial organisation of the site. While other facilities, such as Parkhurst in England and Carters' Barracks in NSW, were constructed as a single institutional building, the primary structures of Point Puer extended across a peninsula approximately one kilometre in length. Most activities at Point Puer appear as a contradictory combination of ideologically founded planning and haphazard responses to immediate circumstances. Many of these issues were present during the planning phase before the boys began arriving, such as the selection of a landscape with no natural water supply and limited raw materials for building. The site selection clearly prioritised proximity to Port Arthur for shared administration, and the natural security of a peninsula, rather than available resources.

The construction of the workshops in 1834 limited the number of boys who could learn certain trades in that building. While the complex was altered and expanded many times over fifteen years, the foundational limits of the workshops were primarily established early on. However, the administrators overcame some of these constraints by increasing the range of trades taught and utilising the expansive landscape for additional labouring tasks. They also moved activities beyond the confines of workshops, allowing more boys to be accommodated in work tasks across a wider area. Moving beyond the confines of the institution was a strategy also utilised at Carters' Barracks for facilitating trade training options. Boys were marched to nearby workplaces, including the lumber yard and dockyard, where

⁶³ Construction of the gaol additions, likely including the terracing, occurred between 1838 and 1843, see B. Horne, *op. cit.*. There is no known documentary evidence of the construction of the aqueduct, building foundations or water storage tank, however, archaeological evidence and correlation with the 1845 plan suggests they were also built in the early 1840s. 'Plan of development at Point Puer', 1845, CO 280/85, NLA.

⁶⁴ Reporting from Commandant Booth, Benjamin Horne and statistical returns form the period emphasise the value of production tasks.

the boys worked alongside convict men and learnt a range of trades including as shipwrights, wheelwrights and carpenters.⁶⁵

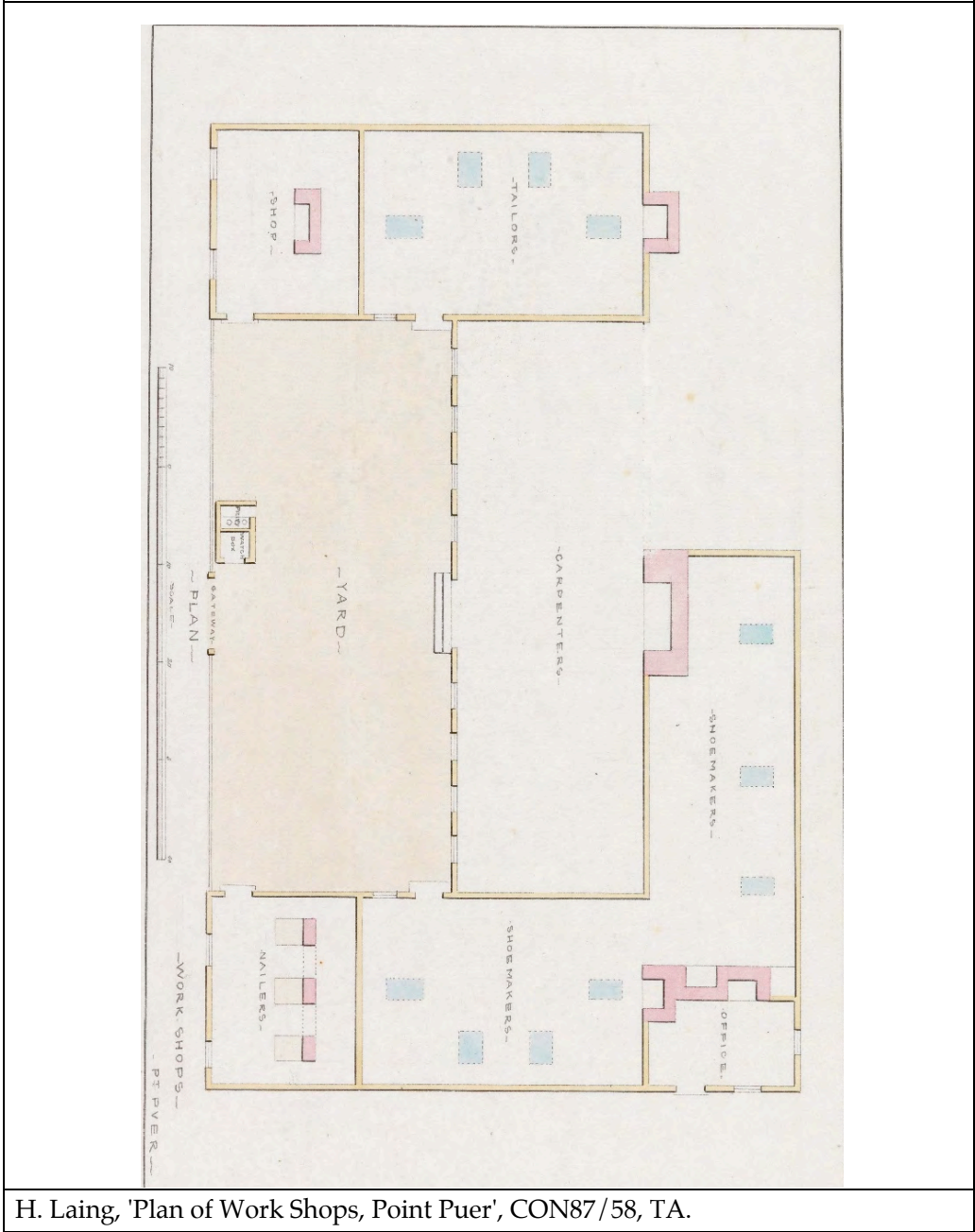
Other techniques were implemented to improve trade training rates at Point Puer. By 1843 the daily routine was adjusted so that boys alternated between days in training and days in school, allowing twice as many boys to complete both trade and education tasks within the existing facilities (although without increasing the rate of production overall). The routine became more complex, with many stages of mustering, inspection and tasking. Over 700 boys were organised daily across an increasingly wide landscape that extended many kilometres from the peninsula. The range of products made at Point Puer suggest that organisation of the boys for manufacturing, at least within the workshops, was successful, and as discussed above, there was a diversification of trades being taught, those being, according to the Commandant, the ones 'most likely to be useful in a new country'.⁶⁶

While it is unlikely that each boy was taught any more than one of these trades, the diversity of tasks taught highlights the strategic intention of providing the boys with the skills necessary for a useful future. Yet in reality, throughout almost all of the settlement's institutional use, the largest proportion were simply engaged in labouring tasks rather than specific trade training. However, as is discussed later, labouring tasks sometimes offered the opportunity to learn a range of potentially useful skills. Less is known about labour and industry in the final years of the settlement between 1845 and 1849. Overall, the range of trades began to decrease as well as a gradual decline in numbers performing each task (Table 1). The number of arrivals declined, and attention was likely more focused on building a new facility at Safety Cove instead of trade training, industries and production.

⁶⁵ Bigge, *op. cit.*, p. 27 and Appendix to Commissioner Bigge's Report: Convicts, Documents, A. 51-9, Quarterly Returns of convicts employed at the Sydney Lumber Yard and Dockyard, June 1819-December 1820, pp. 62-66,

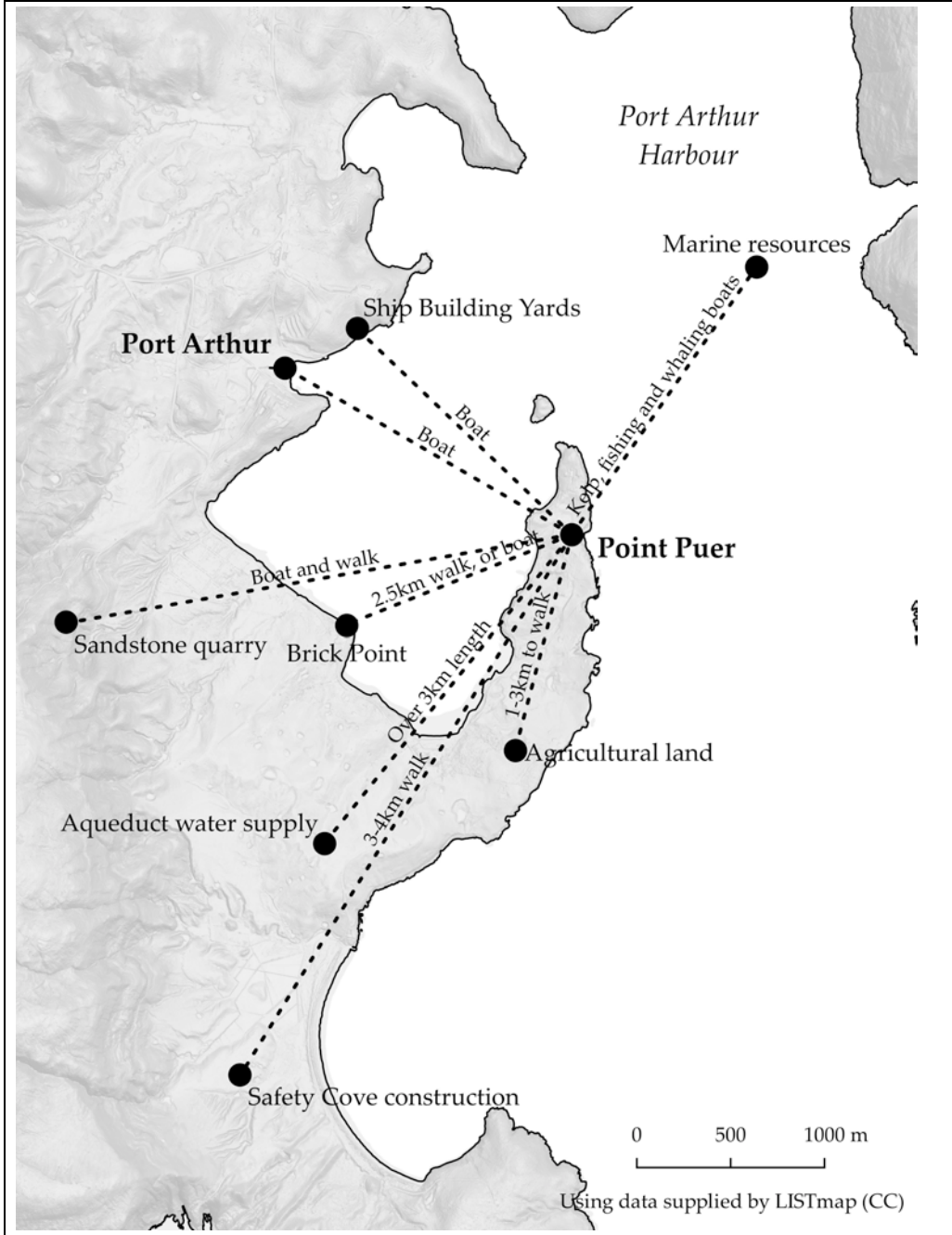
⁶⁶ Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secretary, 24 July 18379, CSO5/35/728, p. 65, TA.

Figure 4: The Point Puer Workshops, as they existed in 1836, prior to ongoing extensions and alterations. North is oriented to the top of the page.



H. Laing, 'Plan of Work Shops, Point Puer', CON87/58, TA.

Figure 5: Map showing the extended Point Puer landscape, to the south and encompassing the aqueduct, agriculture and Safety Cove.



A variety of training techniques were likely used at Point Puer to teach on a day-to-day basis. In some instances it appears that the institution adopted an apprenticeships model, as was customary in those craft trades where specialised skills had to be learned over a period of time.⁶⁷ Apprentice-style work was at times undertaken by allowing boys to work away from Point Puer amongst men, such as in stone cutting and boat building. Point Puer likely attempted to continue the apprenticeship-style approach that was in use at Port Arthur prior to the advent of Point Puer. As noted, there were boys at Port Arthur soon after 1830, accommodated in separate barracks but allowed to work alongside men. Some young convicts were thus trained among crews of adult workers, such as the twenty-two boys sent to Port Arthur in November 1830 'to learn Sawing'.⁶⁸ In early records of Port Arthur, the term 'learning a trade' was used only for those who were 23 and under, and most commonly applied to shoemaking, carpentry, shingle splitting, sawing and specific labouring tasks such as brick laying (Figure 6).⁶⁹ However, a wider range of training techniques beyond apprenticeships were needed at Point Puer because on site industry tasks were not being primarily undertaken by adults for the boys to work alongside.

Initially at Point Puer, there were many potential skills available to the boys in the form of convict teachers, as the convict population at Port Arthur included a wide range of skills amongst the men. Convicts were brought to both Port Arthur and Point Puer specifically to train boys, yet both sites struggled to provide adequately skilled overseers for teaching.⁷⁰ Throughout 1834, convict men were overseeing the building of Point Puer, as well as providing services to the catechist, military and superintendent. The positions of schoolmaster, baker and cook were filled by convicts from at least March 1834 and as each trade was introduced an adult convict was added to the Point Puer cohort. These men were listed as overseers but presumably they were required

⁶⁷ K. Honeyman, *op. cit.*, p. 130; O. J. Dunlop, *English apprenticeship & child labour: a history*, 1912, p. 231.

⁶⁸ On 19 November 1830, 22 boys were sent to Port Arthur 'to learn Sawing' and most continued to work at Port Arthur for the next few years. 'Return of Crown Prisoners at Port Arthur showing their Trades and the Number of Each Trade', March-April 1831, CSO1/511/11180, TA.

⁶⁹ Those listed as 'learning a trade' were aged 23 or younger. Various labour returns for Port Arthur 1831-34, CSO1/511/11180, TA.

⁷⁰ For example, Peter Stubbs was sent to Port Arthur on 19 November 1830, "to assist in teaching boys". 'Return of Crown Prisoners at Port Arthur showing their Trades and the Number of Each Trade', March-April 1831, CSO1/511/11180, p. 14, TA.

to fill the role of trade teachers for the boys.⁷¹ By 1835, Point Puer was relying on a wide range of skilled convict men to train the boys. While the overseer of shoemakers was a paid position filled by a free man, there were at least fourteen convict men receiving tea and sugar rations to support Point Puer in other tasks.⁷² These included an overseer of tailors, sawyers and an additional shoemaker and teacher. Convict overseers likely slept at Port Arthur and travelled by boat daily, as there is no known accommodation for adult convicts at Point Puer. Some overseer accommodation was built before 1839, although this appears to be for free men only.⁷³

At both Point Puer and Port Arthur it seems that boys, once selected to learn a trade, continued to work at that task until they were proficient rather than moving between multiple trades. Trade training was intended for those who were considered well-behaved. As Booth explained in 1837, the 'advantages' of learning a trade 'have hitherto been held out as an inducement to good conduct; and as vacancies occur the better disposed are selected to be placed at a trade which is eagerly sought after'.⁷⁴ The model at Point Puer required the employment of one overseer and a group of boys learning a task. It is difficult to know how such large numbers of boys learnt a trade in the Point Puer environment, although it is most likely that techniques varied, depending on what was being taught, who was performing the training and the resources available to them. Booth also described 'a number of boys' being 'removed to Port Arthur (where every attention possible is paid in keeping them separate from the adults) for the purpose of learning'. It is unclear how they learned trades at Port Arthur without having contact with convict men, but presumably they were placed under the immediate charge of trusted convict overseers and tradesmen.

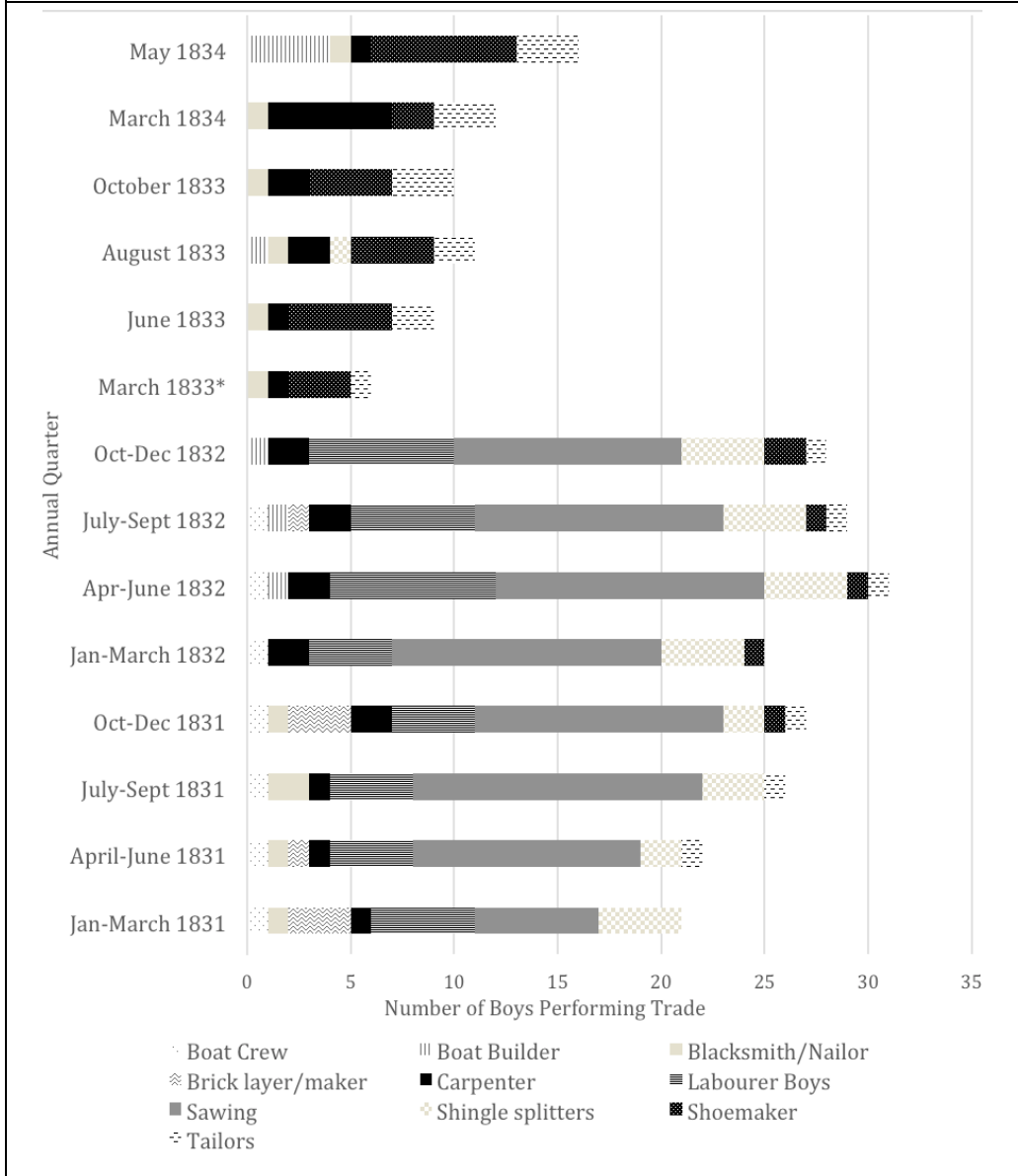
⁷¹ 'Return of Crown Prisoners at Port Arthur showing their Trades and the Number of Each Trade', March-May 1834, CSO1/511/11180, pp. 302, 317-8, TA.

⁷² 'Crown Prisoners Receiving Tea and Sugar as an Indulgence for services rendered', October 1835, CSO1/731/16936, TA.

⁷³ Overseers' residences appear to be for the cooper and shoemaker, who were both free men. 'Yearly return of work performed showing valuation thereof at Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer', 1839, CSO5/292/61, p. 28, TA; 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer, and showing the Valuation thereof', *Secondary Punishment*, London, 1841, pp. 129-133.

⁷⁴ Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secretary, 24 July 18379, CSO5/35/728, pp. 65-66, TA.

Figure 6: Estimation of the number of boys performing trades at Port Arthur from 1831 to 1834 (also see Table 2).



Source: Labour returns for Port Arthur, CSO1/511/11180, TA. Historical data of boys in trades after 1832 are less detailed and therefore appear to have lessened in numbers.

During the probation period, the boys were released either when their sentence expired or, in the words of La Trobe, whenever 'they are considered able to maintain themselves'.⁷⁵ The result was a constant turnover in the workforce as juvenile boys came and went. New arrivals inherited a landscape of industry from the inmates before them, and their experience at Point Puer would have varied depending on their access to and success in trade-training. Over time, a wider range of products were made in many trades at Point Puer.⁷⁶ However, the high turnover of boys meant that the institution did not accumulate an increasingly skilled workforce. Rather, the increased range of production reflected an improvement in the institution's ability to teach and extract a wider variety of tasks from boys of varying skill levels. It could also be attributed to improved resourcing and a larger convict population from which the best workers could be skimmed for productive tasks.

The role of labour in assessing the boys' readiness for adult life highlights a key function of the institution, although not all boys learnt a trade. Point Puer training played an important role in the on-flow of boys from juvenile prison to adult life as a free man. Remarkably, the age of the convict boys was not considered as a factor in determining their ability to re-join society. There was no specific consideration of whether they were too old or too young for Point Puer, or for the outside world. Rather, boys stayed at Point Puer until they were deemed to be sufficiently skilled to work and live independently, which appears to have been qualitatively assessed for each boy rather than imposed as a legal age limit. In other instances, their sentence could expire before they were sufficiently independent, and it cannot be determined if young convicts whose sentences expired would have been freed any differently to an adult convict.⁷⁷

The quality of training at Point Puer can be assessed in terms of whether the boys became accomplished at the tasks set for them, as well as whether those tasks involved the acquisition of useful skills.

⁷⁵ La Trobe to Grey, Secretary of State, Enclosure No. 5, 'Point Puer Probation Station, Report on Unnatural Crime', 31 May 1847, CO 280/206, NLA.

⁷⁶ See: 'Return of various particulars relative to Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer, for the Year ending 31st December 1836', CSO5/178/4230, pp. 91-95, TA; 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer, and showing the Valuation thereof', *Secondary Punishment*, London, 1841, pp. 129-133.

⁷⁷ Boys could be as young as 15 when they were released from Point Puer with a sufficient skillset for assignment, alternatively they could be as young as 14 when their sentences expired at which point they were presumably freed.

The value and range of a skill set likely depended on how the trade was taught and the diversity of the task activities, which at Point Puer varied considerably. For example, once a wide range of shoemaking activities was underway, the boys involved likely acquired a reasonably broad skill set as shoemakers. Other occupations may have generated a less rounded skill set. For example, in 1840 boys were quarrying stone for a boundary wall, flagging, rough ashlar and metal for roads (Figure 6).⁷⁸ Archaeological evidence suggests that these materials were made from local mudstone, quarried on the eastern edge of Point Puer (Figure 3). That probably meant that the boys were not being sent further afield to learn other rock quarrying techniques, such the quarrying of sandstone. Working mudstone, a material not known for its building use, was unlikely to have developed the range of quarrying skills that were most valued within the colonial economy.

Further, it has been suggested that the quality of training at Point Puer was low because most boys were simply doing general labouring.⁷⁹ However, although the term 'labouring' is vague and generalised, the tasks performed by labourers were actually quite varied and sometimes required practical skills. The general labour carried out at Point Puer can be split into four categories: menial tasks, upkeep of the settlement, basic construction, and cultivation. Menial tasks included repetitive, unskilled work, for example breaking stones or carrying stores such as water around the site. Those tasks did not teach valuable skills. However, upkeep of the settlement, which was also often described as 'Barrack Duties' included baking, cooking, cleaning and washing.⁸⁰ While classed as non-skilled labour, baking was a profitable skill in the colonial environment and, like tailoring and sawing, was taught by an adult convict overseer.

Similarly, there were twenty-one boys at Point Puer in 1848 performing the task of Officer's Servant, not a trade as such but

⁷⁸ 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer, and showing the Valuation thereof', *Secondary Punishment*, London, 1841, pp. 129-133. These included rough ashlar for a portion of the gaol building and jetty, both archaeologically surveyed in 2018 as mudstone, although sometimes referred to as siltstone in other literature.

⁷⁹ A. Scott, 'The Point Puer Boys: Graduates of a Helpless Establishment', Hobart, Tasmanian Historical Research Association Lecture, 9 July 2019.

⁸⁰ 'Return Showing the Employment of all Male Convicts at Stations in VDL on 1st January 1849', GO33/1/66, TA.

involving employable skills.⁸¹ Labour returns at Point Puer generally classified boys involved in barrack duties as 'labourers'.⁸² While cultivation and construction could consist of unskilled labour, such as the carting of building materials, these pursuits could involve the use of specialised techniques and tools.⁸³ Commandant Booth acknowledged that labourers were also learning skills:

on their arrival [the boys] are employed in what is termed the 'labouring gang', cultivating the Government garden... making roads, felling, cross-cutting and splitting timber for firewood ... The whole of the boys more or less are taught the use of husbandry-tools, the axe, saw...⁸⁴

If only one type of task was performed, each of these four spheres of labour would have provided the boys with few practical skills. However, assuming that the boys were moved between the many different tasks, they would have learnt a reasonably wide range of labouring skills.

Despite the abundance of skilled convicts at Port Arthur (discussed elsewhere in this volume of *JACH*), there was a significant shift away from using adult convicts for trade training, although they were retained as overseers of skilled and unskilled workplaces. This shift, which began as early as 1837, probably occurred because the men were seen as less economically valuable while at Point Puer, at a time when their skills were greatly wanted to drive production and construction on the main settlement at Port Arthur. The long-term strategy of training boy convicts to become economic assets was likely undermined by a view that allocating the labour of well-skilled adults to train them was an unaffordable extravagance and a low priority.

⁸¹ 'Return Showing the Employment of all Male Convicts at Stations in VDL on 1st January 1849', GO33/1/66, TA.

⁸² 'A Return of the Number of Boys, the Number landed and the Number of Deaths, at [Point Puer] PP, also employment of the boys and the value of their labour, 1842, 43 and 44', Return No. 38, *Statistical Returns of VDL 1842-44*, Hobart Town, 1845.

⁸³ 'Yearly Returns of Work Performed at the Boys' Establishment Point Puer during the year 1837 showing the production thereof', CSO5/178/4230, p. 108-115, TA; 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer 6 January 1841, BPP, Secondary Punishment 1841, No. 412, p. 135.

⁸⁴ Booth, Commandant, to Montagu, Colonial Secreatry, 24 July 18379, CSO5/35/728, pp. 66-67, TA.

After 1843, free overseers were preferred, when new recommendations sought to bring Point Puer in line with the English juvenile facility, Parkhurst Prison.⁸⁵ Continual requests to fill positions show that administrators had difficulty finding and keeping suitable candidates. Thus, convict overseers continued to be employed after 1843, in various capacities such as transferring goods to Point Puer from Port Arthur and sub-overseeing sawyers, until the practice was discontinued in 1847.⁸⁶ The daily productivity and quality of the training that boys received was highly dependent on the abilities of an overseer, and the results were likely inconsistent at Point Puer. One exception was the training of shoemakers, who were consistently taught from 1835 until 1849 by Mr James Meyers, a free man with strong skills in that trade.⁸⁷ His success is visible in the increased and varied production of the shoemakers. In the early 1840s, there were regularly over seventy boys learning the trade.

Any materials that were available around Point Puer were utilised. Archaeological evidence suggests that local clay, mudstone and timber were extracted from the surrounding landscape and used wherever possible. Despite its poor quality for building, it appears that mudstone was quarried, cut to rough ashlar and flat slabs, and used for building foundations and paving at various locations across the site. Land clearing produced space for agriculture as well as providing timber for building and burning. Charcoal burning, likely from locally sourced timber, was introduced as a task at Point Puer in the late 1840s.⁸⁸ A boat was used exclusively at Point Puer to gather kelp, suggesting that considerable quantities of this resource were wanted, probably for maintaining nutrients in the sandy soils.⁸⁹

Shipping additional resources to Port Arthur and subsequently to Point Puer made up the remaining required materials. Some materials were extracted on the Tasman Peninsula by convict labour and moved

⁸⁵ B. Horne, *op. cit.*, pp. 38.

⁸⁶ 'Return of number and descriptions of officers, men and nature of employment', 30 June 1846, CO 280/181, NLA; La Trobe to Grey, Secretary of State, Enclosure No. 5, 31 May 1847, CO 280/206, p. 206, NLA.

⁸⁷ Meyers to Grey, Secretary of State, 5 December 1849, CO 280/256, p. 239, NLA.

⁸⁸ 'Return Showing the Employment of all Male Convicts at Stations in VDL on 1 May 1848', GO33/1/64, TA.

⁸⁹ A Point Puer kelp boat, as well as a ration boat and wood boat, were in operation and undergoing maintenance in 1842. 'Annual return of articles furnished and work completed in the shipyard at Port Arthur', 1 October 1842, Tasmanian Papers (TP) 135, Mitchell Library (ML).

via boat to Point Puer, including barrels of water, timber for firewood and construction, and sandstone and bricks, the raw materials to be worked by the boys in the sawpits and workshops. As the establishment grew, the amount, frequency and diversity of places requiring resources increased. Balancing this change, there was also a greater labour force to complete the tasks, although these factors likely tested the institution's organisational capabilities. Industry required resources and the failure to provide them could result in tasks being shut down, as noted earlier with regard to tailoring in 1834. Obtaining the required quality and volume of materials needed for shoemaking and tailoring was a constant challenge throughout the life of Point Puer.⁹⁰ Outputs were also reduced when the boys in trades were required to assist with settlement upkeep. For example, in 1837 all trades took turns carrying firewood around the settlement and each spent about five weeks solely at this task.⁹¹ As these issues persisted, administrators increasingly spent time justifying the use of resources for juveniles at Point Puer and the inefficient use of resources within the Point Puer landscape.

Production statistics suggest that Point Puer outputs were focused on items that were inherently useful to both the immediate Point Puer environment, and the wider network of Port Arthur, convict outstations and the paid employers working within these sites.⁹² Very few, if any, items were produced for export or external sale. Rather, most had a clear use within the settlement itself. In some cases, such as the quarried mudstone, the products were not of a suitable quality for export anyway. A possible exception was the making of shoes. Items such as dress, children's and ladies' shoes were unlikely to have been made for convicts. However, the quantities made, such as in 1837 the approximately seventy pairs of children's shoes and boots and two

⁹⁰ In 1837 the bad quality of leather for shoemaking was reported by the overseer. Meyers and Burrows, to Booth, Commandant, 13 April 1837, CSO5/40/846, TA. Also, in late 1841, both the tailors and shoemakers were employed in labouring tasks, as there were no materials available to continue production. 'Half Yearly Return of the Work Performed by mechanics and others at the Juvenile Establishment Point Puer, 1st June to 30th November 1841', CSO 49/1/8, p. 111, TA.

⁹¹ 'Yearly Returns of Work Performed at the Boys' Establishment Point Puer during the year 1837 showing the production thereof', CSO5/178/4230, pp. 108-115, TA.

⁹² 'Return of Work done by Convict Boys at the Establishment at Point Puer during the month of April 1834', 1st May 1834, CSO1/511/11180, TA; 'Return of various particulars relative to Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer, for the Year ending 31st December 1837', CSO5/178/4230, TA; 'Yearly Return of Work Performed at the Juvenile Establishment, Point Puer, and showing the Valuation thereof', *Secondary Punishment*, London, 1841, pp. 129-133.

pairs of gentlemen's dress shoes, may have met the needs of the free population at Point Puer and Port Arthur.⁹³ A smaller range of products and Point Puer labour were distributed further afield, reaching as far as Hobart. These opportunities appear to have been inconsistent, although Point Puer administrators seized any opportunity for a suitable external source of teachers and resources for the boys. On some occasions the colonial government specifically requested the labour or manufactured goods of Point Puer boys. In 1836, carpenters at Point Puer produced items including shutters, tables and stepladders for Government House in Hobart.⁹⁴ While in 1843, 30 boys were sent to Hobart to learn the trades of masonry, bricklaying and carpentry.⁹⁵ These labour outputs likely served a promotional purpose for the colonial government as well as a cheap source of labour.

In summary, Point Puer's labour and training regimes can be viewed as a complex web of intentions, processes and outcomes. This article has highlighted change over time through the institution's adaptive training strategies and the projects that were initiated and forgotten. The visible landscape of the site today appears to visitors as a momentary snapshot in history, but in reality it reflects a layering of processes across fifteen-years of occupation and use. This article has shown that the inner workings of juvenile labour in this specialised and productive environment were diverse and complex. Clearly, training was a particular focus of the Point Puer facility, but the colonial government was unwilling to invest the capital required to generate a valuable colonial workforce from that institution. Juvenile workers could be productive, judging from what they built and produced from their surrounding landscape. However, the reliance on Port Arthur and the reluctance to commit to capital investments in the boys made it difficult to manage a fluctuating inmate population, a poorly selected site and an inadequately designed institution. Although not all boys actually learned a skilled trade, a range of resourceful techniques were applied to upskill each boy, in some way or another. The industries of Point Puer formed part of a global trend in the specialised treatment of juveniles but, like many colonial

⁹³ 'Return of various particulars relative to Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer, for the Year ending 31st December 1837', CSO5/178/4230, TA.

⁹⁴ 'Return of various particulars relative to Juvenile Establishment of Point Puer, for the Year ending 31 December 1836', CSO5/178/4230, TA.

⁹⁵ Bicheno, Colonial Secretary to Booth, Commandant, 5 June 1843, CSO 22/76/1658, TA.

enterprises, was marred by a flawed and shifting colonial management.