

## AN ACCOUNT OF FOOD AND DRINK IN TASMANIA. 1800-1900.

## "SLIPPERY BOB AND BLOW MY SKULL."

By

J. F. HOWELER-COY

*Nutrition Officer, Department of Health Services,  
Tasmania.***ABSTRACT**

The consumption of food in Tasmania is traced from historical accounts between 1800 and 1900. The consumption patterns were apparently greatly influenced by the historical and economic development of the Colony. The differences between the diet of the free settlers and the captive part of the population are described.

**INTRODUCTION**

The problem of what determines food habits and how they can be changed is of concern to the health of mankind.

These food habits have been built up in every country over the years, as the result of natural movements within its society.

If information can be collected about past food trends it may be possible to find the causes of change and so predict the pattern of change in coming years. With that in mind, an attempt was made to collect data concerning the changing food habits of Tasmanians between 1800 and 1900. As will be noticed, this information is only scantily available for Tasmania.

Historians can make a great contribution by recording this type of data, particularly concerning people who have moved into new conditions with prevailing food habits different from their own. Historians will then help social and natural scientists in their efforts to devise methods and techniques which will induce food habit changes which fit in with past and existing currents of change.

**BEFORE SETTLEMENT**

For the aborigines, Tasmania was virtually one big butcher's shop. When the Tasmanian aborigine picked up his weapons, all fur and feather creatures were his target. These included the big Forester kangaroo, platypus, bandicoot, spiny anteater; even Tasmanian devils were destined for his cooking fire. The women were delegated to catch the possums, seals and fish, the pick of the hunt being for the male aboriginal. This diet accustomed their palates to a variety of flavours, possums giving a strong eucalyptus flavour, the kangaroo and wallaby rats and the bandicoots being earthy in taste, whereas the platypus had a muddy flavour and the spiny anteater or native porcupine tasted like pork. The Tasmanian devil, being a scavenger, would be strong meat indeed.

Both land and water birds and their eggs were in plentiful supply, those of the emu, though smaller than the mainland kind, being the biggest. Roast duck of various types was on the menu—the black and mountain duck, the grey teal, quail, and heron were all available. Hawks, falcons and kestrels fell to their weapons. Cockatoos and parrots also were brought down.

Tiger snakes and copperheads, thick as a man's arm, went on the cooking fires, as well as goannas or blue-tongued lizards.

With crayfish the price they are today, we can only envy the plentiful supplies of giant freshwater crays which weighed up to 8 lb., and measured 2 feet. The South Esk and its tributaries yielded mussels up to 4 inches across. Grubs were another delicacy, particularly the large white Wattle Goat Moth, also the fat creamy grubs of the Longicorn or Banksia beetles.

Sweets were practically off the menu. Manna, which tastes a bit like icing sugar, was occasionally obtained from the twigs of the White Manna Gums. The amber-coloured gum, particularly that from the Black Wattles, was also sought for its sweetness. Vegetables were very scarce. "Yams" were dug with digging sticks. These "yams" were the small tubers that form on the root of the many species of the native orchids. Roots of the bracken fern were also eaten. These were dug up and pounded and steeped in water. The white powdery substance was mixed into paste and baked on hot stones. The best thing was to find a loaf of Blackfellows Bread. This was an underground fungus, with a hard crust, which may weigh several pounds. The inside is white and cellular with the texture of bread, with an acid rice pudding flavour. In autumn mushrooms were in plentiful supply.

**1804-1808**

Van Diemen's Land settlements were populated at first by nothing but convicts, with their guards and some officials. There were hardly any free settlers. Provisions were brought in by ships, and game captured in Van Diemen's Land made a valuable contribution to the diet. Reverend Knopwood, the first Chaplain in Tasmania, told in his diary about the food he ate. He recorded that he killed some quails and kangaroos and when on October 10, 1804, Knopwood dined with his friends, the "piece de resistance" was emu, which was found "very excellent". On another occasion

he dined with his military friends on fish, kangaroo soup, roast saddle of kid, two fowls pelleted with rice, bacon and roast pig.

Knopwood shot a large 20-lb. conger eel and caught crayfish. In November, 1804, 17 black swans were killed by Bowden and his party, while another group killed 22. It therefore seemed very wise of the Governor to make the first game law in 1804, prohibiting black swans to be molested during the breeding season, because he feared that such a valuable source of fresh food might be exterminated.

Oysters were found in bountiful quantities, and oyster shells, being so plentiful, could be sold for the official price of threepence per bushel and were used for building purposes.

Although little food was grown, a dish of green peas was presented to the Governor on October 19, 1804. In York Town more was planted; after only 10 weeks of settlement, vegetables such as peas, french beans, potatoes and turnips, were available.

The following prices for food were fixed by General Order of June 22nd, 1804:—

"Salt Beef .....	9d. per lb.
Salt Pork .....	1/- per lb.
Kangaroo .....	8d. per lb.
Flour .....	1/- per lb."

As mechanics earned 3/6 per 10-hour day, and labourers 2/6, they could buy with their money 2 lb. beef and 2 lb. flour or 1 lb. pork and 1½ lb. flour. However, at the end of 1805, provisions became scarce. In April, 1805, the weekly ration was reduced to 3½ lb. beef, 6 lb. flour, 6 lb. wheat and 6 oz. sugar, but in August the allowance had to be clipped to 2 lb. 10 oz. pork, 2 lb. flour, 2 lb. wheat and 2 lb. meal, and to Knopwood's distress there was "not a drop of spirit in the colony". As he was interested in food, and looked after his garden well, he paid £3 10s. for one bushel of seed potatoes. Prices went up and up, and on September 27, 1805, the following prices were paid: biscuits 4/- per lb.; meal 8/6 per lb., maize 2/3 lb., sugar 5/- per lb., rice 2/6 per lb., kangaroo 1/- per lb., tobacco "not fit to be made use of, 2/6 per inch". On October 4, potatoes were 2/- per lb., and flour 6/- per lb. On October 13, he reported "my poor pigeons are almost dead for want of provisions—only 4 remaining out of 16". The entry for November 28, 1805, is: "Meat 3/6 per lb., coarse meal 9/-, Indian corn 7/- per lb.; very bad and little can be obtained. No work is done—the poor people go out fishing". Misery continued, Lieutenant Lord bought the last pound of tea and paid six guineas. Sometimes the store was empty of provisions "Not an ounce of meal, wheat or anything to be served to the military or prisoners—none in the store for anyone. No ship arrived".

The population of Hobart Town was only small at that time, merely 471, and at Launceston 301. On April 28, 1807, Collins sent for the bakers and as a result the price of a 2-lb. loaf of bread was reduced from 5/- to 4/-. In 1808, Lt. Governor Collins reported that he had to receive kangaroo into the store and made a regular issue of kangaroo

and emu meat to all in the settlement at Hobart Town.

Similar reports were received from Port Dalrymple. Botany Bay Greens (*Atriplex*) a plant related to saltbush and Pig's Face (*Mesembryanthemum*) were collected from the seashore, cooked and eaten. Crap or refuse of the blubber of whales washed up on the shore and from which the oil had been removed was also eaten. When finally one of the ships came in, Knopwood was delighted to receive 228 gallons of spirits from it. He wrote that in the afternoon "he felt so unwell that he could not dine at Mr. Bowden's". He was a frolicksome parson, who loved his social engagements, hunting, fishing, eating and drinking.

#### 1808-1824

When the news of a possible occupation by the French reached England, an order was given to transfer all free settlers from Norfolk Island to Van Diemens Land. Two hundred of them, all farmers, millers and gardeners came to Tasmania and received small grants around New Norfolk. These were the first small free holders in Tasmania. To encourage prisoners and if possible to accustom them to industrious habits, small grants were given them. Land about Hobart, Sorell Town, the Coal River, Bagdad and Tea Tree Brush, New Norfolk at the south side, Norfolk Plains and Pattersons Plains was allocated.

Moreover, the land near the settlements was cleared and cultivated by convict labour. As a result, Hobart Town and Launceston became more self-supporting.

In 1814 immigration of free settlers received a boost. Free grants of land were promised in proportion to the value of the capital brought in to Van Diemen's Land, that is to say, that for every £1,000 of capital, new settlers could get a grant of 1,000 acres. Another bonus was the possibility of getting assigned convict servants to do the farm work for nothing or for the cost of their food. The next 20 years saw many settlers snapping up land in the plains and open forest country in east V.D.L., so much so that the area round Pittwater became the Colony's and Australia's granary. As wheat was reaped by sickle and threshed with a flail, all hand work, the free-of-charge convict labour made this possible. The development of the land for stock and crops also improved conditions considerably.

Another profitable venture was the whaling industry. Within 20 years the black whales in the estuary of the Derwent were almost extinct, but the great sperm whales remained to be chased in the open ocean. Thousands of seals were caught and slaughtered for their skins and blubber. Generally speaking, however, growth of the Colony was not spectacular until the 1820's.

#### 1824-1840

The new Governor, Arthur, was not interested in free enterprise and development of V.D.L. His interest was to shape the Colony into a first-class penal settlement. Although citizens and free settlers did not like him at all, because now they

had to take a back seat, the population increased rapidly.

	Total	
1821	7,400	bond and free
1825	15,000	
1835	25,000	
1836	43,000	—17,000 bond and 26,000 free.

The issue of free grants was completed by 1830, from then on land had to be purchased from the Crown, even though the best farmland had all been taken up.

Accounts of the pains of starting up farms are found in diaries. Building a house, digging land, and getting stock had all to be done at the same time. J. C. Sutherland wrote in his diary of 1823 how he sowed potatoes, onions, turnips, carrots, spinach and other vegetables, "planted two ridges of potatoes, fetched seven bushels of wheat, one bushel of barley, one hundred weight of potatoes and sowed them all". "He made a capital bedstead of wattles for his wife Lucy, and himself, the trees were cut in the morning". He also bought 100 ewes at 16/- (£80) and finished the hen house. He then set out to get salt from the salt pans. This salt was shovelled up during the summer months on the beds from several lakes. For that reason salt was always plentifully available in the diet of the free and the bonded V.D.L.ers. He "shore six of the longest woollen sheep and they were pretty well done for a first attempt". He found that it was not worth digging his potatoes "it proves so toilsome and improductive, the rest may remain in the ground". For Christmas dinner in 1824, they had "a big dinner of roast mutton and some whisky". Next year's Christmas fare was a bit better. "Anne, Lucy, Clara, dearest baby, and myself, had lots of pudding and a bottle of wine. Colin enjoyed himself over a potent tumbler of punch. The men received an extra joint of meat to roast, a pudding and a bottle of rum".

Another free settler's wife, Mrs. Fenton who accompanied her husband and her little daughter Flora, to open up land past New Norfolk in 1830, found that her little girl had lost all her colour and appetite. She feared that the nurse, "who is both ignorant and wilful, gives her when out of my sight such food as I do not permit". On her trip she asked at a private house for "a little milk, or a little sago or a little bit of anything for food for the baby". However, she was civilly informed that milk was never used and that children lived on fried meat and black tea. When finally settled, she had no bread, but "cakes of unleavened bread were baked in the hearth".

Life in Hobart Town appeared much softer. Henry Savery, describing a wedding breakfast celebrated on August 7, 1829, related that they had "not merely tea, toast and muffins, but a cold collation including the choicest productions of the farmyard as well as spoils of the sportsman. Things of all descriptions, rusks, buttered and covered with anchovies, shell fish, pies of various sorts, and a long list of jellies, trifles, blanc-manges, custards, dried fruit, the whole crowned by a magnificent cake upon which the love of Pyramus and Thisbe was emblematically recorded".

For new settlers coming to V.D.L., Hobart Town shops looked very good in the 1830's. Jane Ann Brownell wrote to her sister in 1834 that she was now using good green tea at 1/8 per lb., which she bought in a chest which contained 80 lb. Sugar sold at 3½d. per lb. by the bag of 100 lb. and coffee at 1/- per lb. Flour varied according to the price of wheat, which rarely exceeded 7/- per bushel, but was more generally 5/-; poultry, eggs, butter and milk were somewhat dearer than in England, but wine and spirits nearly one-half lower. She bought good Cape Wine as low at 3/6 per gallon.

Her father, Thomas C. Brownell, M.D., wrote to his brother in March, 1835, that he had 2 and 3 acres of potatoes and hoped to realise about 20 tons, generally worth about £5 per ton. He also had poultry, one milking goat and two kids. "The season will bring us abundance of wheat, potatoes, barley, turnips, etc.". John Espie's land on the east of Bagdad stream was very fine. Potatoes weighing 4 lb. each grew here.

#### Captives in V.D.L.

However, life was not so rosy and full of promise of better days ahead for little Peter McCann. In his unpublished diary he wrote about his life in Tasmania before he came over to Port Fairway to work for John Griffiths as head man of a whaling crew in 1837. He lost his mother at a young age, and was sent to the boarding school kept by Mr. and Mrs. Howard. "My first recollection of my school life was that I had travelled a long distance and that having arrived, late in the afternoon, I was very hungry. Shortly after my arrival the bell rang for tea, for which I was quite ready. Every boy was given a number which was placed by his mug of black tea and a small cube of bread with butter, the size of each cube varying according to the age of the boy, quite irrespective of any differences in appetite. Being hungry, I had gulped down my small morsel before I knew I had properly commenced. I went to bed hungry and got up empty, hoping that breakfast would be better. My hopes, however, were not realised. Then came dinner, composed of rough boiled meat with potatoes boiled in their skins and as much boiled stinging nettles as one could eat. No condiment other than salt was provided. The nettles were considered by the teacher to be the best and most economical blood purifier. I cannot remember how long I remained in this purgatory, but it must have been at least twelve months, and I may state here, that had it not been for the kind hearted charity of an old lady, that lived nearby, named Mrs. Daily, who was in the habit of sending us big dampers, as large as a moderately sized grind stone, I think we should have literally starved to death".

Free settlers had a diet which ranged from starvation diet to bounty, whereas the convicts had a more regular and reliable meal pattern during this period. For instance, prisoners regarded it as a privilege to be housed at Port Arthur, founded on October 30, 1830, because rations provided there were good.

Of the 16,069 convicts on the island, 931 were at Port Arthur, the military guard consisting of

a total of 52. In the first years many of the buildings of this model prison were erected by the prisoners. In the years 1836-1837-1838 extra work brought money in. Ships, boats and barges were built to the value of £2,000; moreover, ships' spares, cartwheels and boots were manufactured, and timber sawn to the value of £30,000. Farm and garden produce, potatoes, turnips and cabbages, up to the value of £2000, were produced at the same time.

The number of deaths each year at Port Arthur was far less than is usually thought. From the official records we learn the following:—

Year	Deaths	Proportion
1830	none	
1831	none	
1832	4 drowned in harbour	1 in 69
1833	7	1 in 68
1834	27	1 in 27
1835	34	1 in 27

Scurvy, caused by lack of fruit and vegetables, was not only found in Port Arthur, but also at Macquarie Harbour. Official reports indicate that there were seven cases of scorbutus at Port Arthur in 1830, 203 cases in 1831, 46 cases in 1832, 321 cases in 1833, 412 cases in 1834, and 26 cases in 1835.

The four basic types of rations at Port Arthur were based on the following types of food: flour, fresh and salt meat, some green vegetables or potatoes, some sugar, salt and vinegar if vegetables were not issued.

### Ration Scales

Ration Scale No. 2, issued to convicts who were placed in situations of trust, such as clerks, overseers and watchmen, was as follows:—

- 18 oz. flour.
- 1 lb. fresh or salt meat or 10 oz. salt pork.
- 1 lb. green vegetables or  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. potatoes.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. tea.
- 1  $\frac{2}{7}$  oz. sugar.
- 1/49 quart vinegar, when vegetables were not issued.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. salt.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. soap.

This was made into three meals:—

#### Breakfast.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. bread.
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  pts. gruel made with 2 oz. flour.
- 1 pint tea.

#### Dinner.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. bread.
- 12 oz. salt beef or 6 oz. salt pork.
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  pts. soup—made with 2 oz. of salt beef or salt pork plus whole vegetable ration and 2 oz. flour.

When fresh meat was used, soup was made from the whole allowance.

#### Supper.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. bread.
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  pts. gruel.
- 1 pint tea.

Ration Scale No. 3 was issued to convicts on probation and was the same as No. 2, with the exception of  $\frac{2}{7}$  oz. sugar less and no tea at all.

Ration Scale No. 4 was issued to convicts on punishment gangs and was the same as No. 2 scales except that tea and sugar were completely excluded.

Ration Scale No. 5, issued to convicts sentenced to solitary confinement by the Police Magistrate on the Settlement, consisted merely of 12 oz. flour made into 1 lb. bread,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. salt and  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. soap.

At Macquarie Harbour the rations were as follows:—7 lb. meat, 10 lb. flour per week. Assigned servants received half as much again and £10 per annum. No rations for vegetables or potatoes were issued.

The female convicts who were housed in the Female House of Correction in Hobart Town were not as well off.

Their daily ration was as follows:—1 lb. bread, 1 oz. sugar, 8 oz. meat, 1 oz. roasted wheat, 1 lb. green vegetables or  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. potatoes,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz. salt. Plus small amounts of certain other flavourings and thickening materials.

Again soup was made from the meat and vegetables and barley or peas were used to thicken it. In 1830 a special committee had been formed to determine the quantities of vegetables and peas or barley necessary to make 25 pounds of meat into 100 pounds of soup. The roasted wheat was used for making coffee. The nervousness and irritability of the women on this diet was attributed not to the mild or severe deficiency diseases they must have suffered, but to their antagonistic attitude. Women undergoing solitary confinement in a dark cell were given bread and water only. As the Female House of Correction also served as a maternity hospital, special rations were designed for nursing mothers.

The daily ration was:—1 $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. bread, 1 pint milk, some oatmeal,  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. meat, some tea and sugar,  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. vegetables.

Infants were normally fed milk, bread, and sugar. Sick infants were given sago and wine, sago having been introduced as a replacement for poor quality bread.

Once the convicts had served their sentence, they were set free. Some would look for work. In the Journals of the Land Commissioner for V.D.L. we read that finding work and earning a living was not all clear sailing. The Commissioner wrote: "His Excellency may not understand the routine and expense of fencing. An instance which occurred the other day will put the matter in a clear point of view. On bargaining with two splitters, the rate of wages was as follows:—To split and put up four railed and morticed fence, by the rod or sixteen feet and half—four shillings and sixpence.

To pay the employer for:—

mutton	6 pence per lb.
flour	2 $\frac{1}{4}$ pence per lb.
tea	8 shilling per lb.
sugar	9 pence per lb.
tobacco	8 shilling per lb.

When the job is finished a balance is struck and an order or Bill Field does the rest. Or in other words, after having lived miserably in the forest, buying little or no mutton, which would be a let off against them, but preying as they do on the neighbouring flocks, they take on orders for their money, or the cash itself to a publician in Hobart or Launceston and never quit the Public House until the proceeds of their labour is quite expended. Wheat, the staff of life, is the standard for wages in other countries, here, rum is the alpha and omega, such has been the mode of life for years of these prisoners, that without an inducement, such as obtaining rum, they will not work". In other words, the cost of food was to be deducted from their wages, therefore to minimise food costs, mutton was stolen from neighbouring flocks by the workers. When the job was finished the balance of pay minus food costs was received and exchanged for rum in a hotel. This hand to mouth existence of free convicts became a sizeable problem when more and more left prison after finishing their sentence.

#### 1840-1850

In 1840, life must have been quite pleasant and food plentiful. Louisa Anne Meredith wrote that on their trip from Hobart to Oyster Cove they had "Toast, mutton chops, eggs, fried ham, a mighty teapot, and a comely mountain of home-made bread with an English bottle ale". And when once settled, she had "chickens, duck, and turkey to rear, butter, cream, cheese, and other country comforts to make and calves to feed. Mushrooms to pick and convert into ketchup. To visit the fields to see the wheat and oats growing and to cast an eye on the turnips and potatoes". Weary bush fire fighters were supplied with food, tea and cool cider, made from apples, grown in her orchards and processed on the farm.

In a description of the life of the Woods family of Sorell Valley, it is obvious that Mrs. Woods was not short of stores for her household. She could order any brand of tea (Tonkay, Imperial, Orange Pekoe) in packages of various sizes or in chests or half-chests, as well as West Indian sugar, East Indian rice, or West Indian coffee, Liverpool salt, Dutch mustard, Sydney and English cheeses. All these foods were shipped in, but the family grew plenty of food themselves—"Knopwood apples, red peaches, apricots, Orleans and Magnum Bomun plums, Kentish cherries, raspberries, gooseberries, and strawberries". For vegetables they grew black and kidney potatoes, onions, parsnips and carrots as main crops, and in addition, cabbages, cauliflowers, and lettuces. They had mutton from the flock, home raised pigs and salted, smoked pork, and chickens for Christmas and Easter. They also had honey from hives, which had been successfully brought into Tasmania in 1831. They made butter in round pats with a design of rose, thistle, shamrock or swan. Sponges would be baked in flat dishes and cakes made from risen dough with currants and sugar, plain cakes and fruit cakes, cherry pies in season and jam turnovers and boiled Christmas pudding.

Young fruit trees from V.D.L. found their way to the other States as early as 1841. Joseph May

from Mount Barker, South Australia, complained in a letter to T. May in England in 1841, that he had not been able to get any fruit trees—"not living in Adelaide and going there very seldom, we do not know always when young trees from V.D.L. are for sale".

A "Mercury" article in 1883 mentioned that a lady on her wedding day on October 25th, 1845, had partaken of new potatoes, green peas, ripe strawberries, cherries, gooseberries, and currants. These were grown in Lane's garden at the foot of the Sandhill in Launceston.

The Judd family coming from England to Tasmania in 1842 were delighted with the Hobart shops and the low prices of food. Thomas Judd quoted the following prices in November, 1842: "Common wine is but 6d. and 8d. per pint, Scotch ale is 8d. per pint, beef 4d. to 6d., mutton 3d. to 5d., bread 7d., sugar 3d. to 4d., tea 3/-, 4/-, coffee 1/4 per lb., salt butter 1/6, fresh butter 1/9, cheese 1/4 per lb., tobacco 3/3, pepper 1/-, loaf sugar from London 8d.". The average rate of wages per diem to mechanics in Hobart Town in the year 1846 was 5/6 for plasterers, bricklayers, carpenters, painters, masons, and joiners, quarrymen got 3/-.

When land became difficult to get in Van Diemen's Land, free settlers began to look for fresh land and sailed over to Victoria where John Batman made his famous purchase of the site of Melbourne in 1835, John Fawcner from Launceston having followed soon after and the Henty brothers having left Launceston the year previously. Most sheep and cattle for Victoria were shipped from Tasmania as well as other supplies. Sheep worth 10/- now brought £2 and horses and cattle also brought good prices. Exports of wheat and flour brought in £140,000 during 1846. Other exports included fruit, to the value of £4,500, to other States. Hay, oats and potatoes were sold for £18,000. The first apple export outside Australia was in 1849 to New Zealand.

The convict population was still living on a ration scale. Regulations for hiring male and female probation passholders, of September 1st, 1847, state:—

"Masters will in every case be required to provide suitable lodging and bedding for their servants without making any deduction from their wages, on that account. They will also be required to supply their servants with sufficient quantities of wholesome provisions and soap according to the following scale of daily rations:—

- 1 lb. meat.
- 1½ lb. bread or 1 lb. bread and 2 lb. vegetables.
- 1 oz. roasted wheat or ¼ oz. tea.
- 1 oz. sugar.
- ½ oz. salt.
- ½ oz. soap".

The aborigines who had been removed to Flinders Island as from 1830 could now also be counted under the captive part of the population. In November, 1831, the number captured was 54. In 1832, 63 more were captured, and 5 died on Flinders Island; in 1833, 42 were taken, 40 died

and 4 escaped; in 1834, 20 were taken but 14 died; in 1835, 17 were taken and 14 died, thus leaving 123 on Flinders Island in 1836, whereas in 1815 the numbers had been estimated at 5,000. The V.D.L. Royal Kalendar, 1848, related that "They have now been removed from Flinders Island, where they have been domiciled since 1833, to a station about 30 miles from Hobart Town, on the banks of the Derwent, called Oyster Cove. The country round the station is thickly wooded and abounds in such game as the aborigines delight in, viz, opossums, wallaby, etc., and the river abounds in fish of every description. The number of the aborigines removed from Flinders Island in October, 1847, is 45.

Each aboriginal native is rationed on the following scale:—

14 lb. fresh meat per week  
10 lb. flour  
3½ oz. tea  
14 oz. sugar  
3½ oz. salt  
3½ oz. tobacco  
3½ oz. soap,

besides vegetables of every description. Cows are supplied to them which afford milk and butter, and pipes are found for them to smoke with. Their fondness for the conveniences of civilized life, which the Government have taken every means of ensuring to them, seems to be a guarantee for their good conduct and steadiness at the new station".

Prosperous conditions could not go on for ever. The land boom at Port Philip that followed the founding of Melbourne, had burst, prices slumped, sheep were sold at a shilling each. Merchants and land owners went bankrupt. Mrs. Meredith recorded that "When the price of wheat fell sharply, the family was thrown in financial difficulties". Her husband had to take a salaried post as police magistrate at Port Sorell. There was also much unemployment. To make things worse, more and more convicts were sent to V.D.L. and the Colony had to pay the expenses. In 1847, Van Diemen's Land was made the main penal settlement in Australia. Thousands of convicts arrived yearly under what was called the Probation System. These convicts were placed in over forty "probation stations" in different places on the island. They were supposed to cultivate the land, raise their food and vegetables and build bridges and roads in their own district. The great number of convicts and bands of now free convicts were of great concern to the free settlers. They demanded the abolition of transportation and the English Government agreed that transportation should stop in 1850. The name Van Diemen's Land, a name which had so many unhappy associations, was officially changed to Tasmania. A Legislative Council was appointed to govern Tasmania in 1851.

#### 1850-1870

The years from 1850 to 1870 were not rosy. Whaling was finished and there was a slump in trade because as Victoria soon produced enough for her needs, imports from Tasmania were no longer required. Poor farming methods brought

about declining crops of cereals and a reduction of stock. Heavier timbered areas were now tackled with axe and saw, and small selections were the result. These small settlers could always grow some of their needs. They produced milk and butter, grew vegetables, ground flour in small steel handmills and could always eat wallabies if there was no fat stock to slaughter. In this manner the North West Coast was opened up and after 1856 settlers came to Scottsdale and Ringarooma, then in 1875 orcharding started in the Huon, Tamar and Mersey valleys. Raspberries and currants were grown for the Hobart Town jam factories. A very good description of this toil on a small holding is found in the diaries of Robert and James Sawers (1861-1935), who came to Tasmania as little boys in 1854 from Scotland, to help their Uncle and Aunt on the farm on Hope Island, near Dover. Their labours were incessant and varied: clearing, stoning, and digging pieces of land, ploughing, and sowing enormous numbers of cabbages and potatoes, onions, carrots and mangolds, picking gooseberries, killing pigs, &c. This diary tells how in January, 1863, they were reaping barley and mowing oats. "Cut 20 cabbages by moonlight. Took another 20 dozen cabbages". Mowing wheat, Aunt made gooseberry and raspberry jam". "Uncle, John and James, carted in the barley before breakfast". "Churned the butter and took 11 lb. over to the Beach". "Filled 21 bags of barley. Sold 2 pigs to Bob and George for £2.0.0 a piece". "Received from the ship a piece of beef, ½ sheep and twine. Got 3/- and 3/6 for the cabbages".

The entries for February, 1863, run as follows:—"Cleaning barley in the sieve and weighted 86 bushels. Cut 47 dozen cabbages for town and carted 23 bags of barley to the vessel. Uncle baking. Uncle, Aunt, and I went over to the station. Aunt purchased at the new shop cheese—mustard, spice, coffee, sardines and lollipops. Pulling turnips in the big paddock. Uncle sowing cabbage seeds. Aunt finished the sewing of the main sail. Sent up 43 dozen cabbages. Purchased at the store shingle nails, lard and lollipops. Reaping wheat and turning up oats. Went over to the store for ¼ mutton, 3 lb. rice, and 2/6 of apples. Boat landed one cask beef, 3 bags flour, one sugar, a cask of apples, and ½ chest of tea". The 264 dozen cabbages sold in 1862 brought £36 9s. 6d., the hay £70 11s. 5d., the mangolds £3 12s. 6d., and for the butter £26 16s. 1d. were netted. The butter was sold for 1/- to 1/6 per pound. In 1882, their income had greatly increased, grains brought £150 7s., potatoes £20, pigs £80, hay £100, butter £80, Total of £430 7s. Sowing dates were carefully kept. In 1863 they sowed oats, barley, potatoes, peas, onions, carrots, parsnips, cabbages, mangolds, marrows, and radishes.

The cost of living in the 50's and 60's was fairly low. From an account book of a Launceston family we glean that a bottle of brandy was 6/-, rum 4/-, a gallon of rum 15/-, 5 gallons Old Tom £3 3s., a bottle of sherry 4/-, porter 3/-, a gallon beer 4/-, 1 dozen whisky £2 5s. This same account book mentioned purchases of a cedar table for 19/-, a double bedstead for £2, and a dozen knives for 11/-. The recipes in the same book look like those in any modern cook book, but recipes for

gout pills, aperient and stomach mixtures, bread poultices, and recipes for dysentery are scarce nowadays.

"The English and Australian Cookery Book. Cookery for the many as well as for the Upper Ten Thousand", by Edward Abbott of Tasmania, 1864, acquaints us thoroughly with many Tasmanian dishes and fishes. Recipes for game include guidance on how to cook kangaroo, and how to roast it, how to prepare kangaroo pasties, kangaroo steamer, also mentioned by Mrs. Meredith as "a delicious dainty dish", is a type of preserved kangaroo said to keep for 12 months or more. There are recipes for jugged kangaroo, and kangaroo hashed and pan jam, made from kangaroo tails. Sticker-up kangaroo is cooked on a stick, and for this the kangaroo is nicely divided into cutlets and spitted on a stick rammed into the ground close to the fire. A piece of bacon is fastened on the stick and drops fat on to the leaner steaks as they cook. Finally, the prize recipe in the kangaroo range:—

#### "Slippery Bob.

*Method:*—Take kangaroo brains and mix with flour and water. Make into a batter with pepper and salt, then pour a tablespoon at a time into an iron pot containing emu fat and take them out when done".

Other interesting dishes were roast emu—"resembles coarse beef in flavour, cannot be recommended unless one has a sailor's digestion". Mutton birds—"the eggs are good and largely used, and the feathers are made into beds of rather a fishy odour". Black swans—"when young they are tender and if properly roasted with good sauce, they are eatable and that is all we can say". Recipes for roast wombat and porcupine, wild pigeons, wattle birds and turkey bustards are also included.

Mundane recipes are given for colonial damper and colonial jam, made from mangolds and carrots. A special drink "Tasmanette" is made from a recipe received from Mr. Allport, who obtained a medal for it at the 1863 International Exhibition in England.

"**Tasmanette.**—In making jam—mulberry, Aldridge plums, morella and quince, after the sugar has been added, skim off and strain the surplus syrup. Keep in a dry place till all are ready, then add a tablespoon of vinegar to every pint".

An intriguing and more potent recipe is given for the beverage "Blow My Skull".

This dates from the days of Colonel Davey, who was called "Mad Tom Davey" by the settlers on account of his behaviour and parties often held with his officers and settler friends. It is said that at that time an invitation to dinner at Government House was accompanied by the polite request to bring your own bread. However, the drinks were free, and Colonel Davey challenged his guests to drink his Davey special: "Blow My Skull".

It was made in the following proportions:—

- 2 pints boiling water with enough loaf sugar, lime or lemon juice.
- 1 pint ale or porter.
- 1 pint rum.
- 1 pint brandy.

A very good and long list of the available Tasmanian fish is included in the same book—trumpeter weighing 1 lb to 40 lb., bass trumpeter, ling, horse mackerel, perch, magpie fish, trevalley or snotgall, mullet, king fish, snapper, 10 lb. to 12lb. barracouta, parrot fish, bream, whiting, conger eels, 20 lb. to an immense weight, flathead, rock cod, skate, hapuka—"Never heard anyone speak in its favour", flounder, carp, gar or guard fish, crayfish, 1 lb. to 7 lb., crown crabs, 1 lb. to 8 lb., oysters all sizes, scallops, mussels, cockles, whelks, perriwinkles, shrimps from Launceston, and very small lobsters.

The author was not impressed with the salmon of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to 16 lb. "At times not fit for human consumption and numerous slight cases of fish poisoning have occurred from eating it. The fishermen say it is when the moon is at the full ('woe to the poachers)" but we rather think that, if not cooked soon after it is caught, it begins to putrefy. It is plentiful and cheap". As freshwater fish he listed eels,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. to 5 lb., "very abundant, and fine", sand fish, mullet "this fish smells like a cut cucumber", sand trout, 2-8 inches long, and lobsters.

#### 1870-1900

When mining activities declined in Victoria, many diggers returned to Tasmania. They became prospectors and looked for gold only, but other metals were also found. Silver-lead was discovered at Penguin before tin was found at Mount Bischoff in 1871. In the N.E. the alluvial gold finds led to hard rock mining of gold at Lefroy and in the Mathinna-Mangana area. Beaconsfield on the West Tamar became a goldfield in 1877 when gold was discovered at Brandy Creek.

The success of the Mount Bischoff mine led to the opening up of the West Coast, i.e., first Mount Heemskirk in 1877, then Zeehan and later still Queenstown, Renison Bell and Rosebery.

Miners were often short of provisions. Supplies for Queenstown, e.g., were taken from Strahan by small rowing boats as far as possible up the river and from there were carried on men's backs to the miners.

In 1880, 52,595 oz. of alluvial gold were found to the value of £201,297, and 34,345 oz. gold were obtained from quartz, the value of which was £130,622. The five big gold companies returned £65,852 as dividends to their stockholders. In the same year tin exports brought £341,736. But although the Secretary of Mines wrote magnificent and jubilant annual reports, the quantities of mineral output declined rapidly and dividends dropped sharply. In 1881, the gold companies had paid out £99,250 in dividends, in 1890 it had fallen to £13,609. This should have warned investors that all was not well.

In Victoria another land boom had burst and caused a depression in Tasmania. This, together with the fact that much money had been wasted by incompetent management, by the purchase and erection of inadequate machinery, and by squandering of money for purely speculative purposes, caused the prevailing idea that the mining industry was decaying.

The first bank in Tasmania, called the Van Diemen's Land Bank, opened for business in 1824,

and paid 36 per cent dividend in 1826. It had to close its doors on August 3, 1891. This bank failure created great consternation and distress to the colony and was, as an official statement mentioned, due to "overtrading in securities of insufficient values".

Account books of private individuals indicate that some people were not hit. Mr. R. Hickman of Lenah Valley still bought crays and salmon at 6d. and the costs of his wife's and children's clothes, shoes and hats showed no sign of curtailed expenses. He still bought large quantities of fruit for his jam factory and paid for raspberries 2½d. per lb., blackcurrants 2d. per lb., red currants 1½d. per lb., Kentish cherries ¾d. per lb.

The Sawers boys from Scotland, grown up by now, closed off their dealing with the Van Diemen's Land Bank on July 27th, 1891, and received their new cheque book from the Commercial Bank early in August. However, many families now living in Tasmania can tell the sad tale of the reduced circumstances which befell their forebears due to the bank failure in 1891.

From the above account it can be seen that not very much information about the food habits and actual food intakes is available from the period of 1800-1900.

This may have been caused because some historians feel that this sort of information actually "mars" historical accounts. Even the second half of last century leaves us guessing as to what the daily diet consisted of.

However, abundant documentation by anthropologists, sociologists, economic historians and also by commercial enterprises who spent colossal sums

on consumer preference surveys, should make the study of changing food patterns much easier in this, the 20th century.

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