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The land 'flow[ing] … with milk and honey': Cultural landscape

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The land 'flow[ing] … with milk and honey': Cultural landscape changes at Peel town, Western Australia, 1829–1830

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This paper examines the cultural landscape of Peel town, a transient camp occupied for a short time in 1829–1830 during the Swan River settlement's initial colonisation phase. The camp comprised indentured free colonists from Britain under the leadership of Thomas Peel. The research described shows that the camp's layout altered over time as disease, low morale and the addition of further colonists from Britain into the camp area eroded the predetermined ideas of class segregation and the control of resources, seriously affecting the leadership group's ability to maintain authority.

INTRODUCTION

Peel town was one of many temporary settlements established soon after the founding of the Swan River on the west coast of Australia in June 1829. Unlike earlier eastern Australian settlements and King George Sound on the south coast, the Swan River was founded as a 'free' (non-convict) colony with private speculators negotiating with government for land in return for organising settlement schemes. The rapid influx of people from Britain resulted in the formation of many transient camps such as Peel town, but inexperience, mismanagement and poor organisation saw Peel town's members suffer, with between 22 and 37 people dying of various causes within several months (Berryman 1979: 159-162; Collie 1830; Friend 1830; Meares 1830a). The camp began breaking up in August 1830, with most people gone by January 1831 (Elmslie 1831a, 1831c). Although the fate of the camp became an oft-cited part of the story of the supposedly disastrous first years of the Swan River (Battye 1912: 43; Colebatch 1929: 23), it was unclear where the site of the camp was until three years ago.

Peel town provides a unique opportunity for archaeological study, for it is rare compared to other first European settlement sites in Australia due to its non-convict and non-military nature, very short period of occupation by a group just alighted from ships from Britain, and limited post-occupation disturbance. This paper examines what the archaeological record – gathered after two years of surveys and excavations – suggests about the construction of status and social hierarchical distinctions within the camp. Peel town's cultural landscape, visible through archaeologically observable elements such as dwelling remains, surface artefacts and other spatial features like tracks and paths taken from cartographic and documentary records, suggests that shifts in power occurred between groups at the site during the nine-month occupation. Landscapes constructed by one group to control others are commonly studied in circumstances with large social or economic voids between groups and where harsh penalties exist for those that break rules (Delle 1999, Hayes 2005). However, they are rarely analysed in the context of initial colonisation by a 'free' group of British subjects. This study fills this research gap.

The historical record and Peel town

Much is known about the beginnings of Peel town and what occurred there. The camp's members were part of the newly established British colony of Swan River, the first occupation of Australia by an all-free group (Cameron 1981: 52-53). The Colonial Office's sanction of the settlement in mid-October 1828 and enthusiastic efforts to promote private investment began a flurry of activity called 'Swan River mania' (Appleyard and Manford 1979: 144). Between the first arrival of colonists from June 1829 to April 1830, 36 passenger ships with about 1500 people arrived on Australia's lower west coast (Anonymous 1829b [1923]: 606-608; Appleyard and Manford 1979: 150).

The colonists comprised two general groups – those paying their passage with their own funds and usually of the British middle or upper-middle gentry classes, and a group from the wide spectrum of agricultural, industrial trade and labouring classes (Mazzarol 1978: 30). The gentry had the time and finances to arrange and pay for their passage, but the trade and labouring groups either indentured themselves and their families to the gentry as servants for a specific period or arrived as part of large sponsored syndicates like Thomas Peel's Swan River Association (Mazzarol 1978: 32). Peel's scheme was possibly particularly attractive as he was the second cousin of well-known Tory politician Sir Robert Peel, who within five years became Prime Minister of Britain. The granting of land at the Swan River in return for importing goods rather than for cash, were terms imposed by the Colonial Office, with items given a monetary value including an equivalent value of £15 for each indentured servant over the age of ten (Anonymous 1829b [1923]: 607). These regulations resulted in many ill-advised purchases of agricultural items and the shipment of possessions like pianos, carriages and other finery inappropriate for the colonising process (Cameron 1981: 86-89).

All private colonists and those connected with syndicates were under the impression that the area of the Swan River contained fertile soil, an ample water supply and a year-round mild climate – as described in many British urban and rural newspapers (*The Times* 20/10/1828; *New Monthly Magazine* 6/1829; *Westminster Review* 1/1830). Reality, however, was much different, for instead of the land 'flow[ing] … with milk and honey' (Wilson 1835: 224), they found millions of hectares of infertile sand, an unrelenting wind and, in summer, hot temperatures like nothing they had ever experienced. Problems with the Swan River settlement occurred immediately. James Stirling, the colony's Lieutenant Governor and responsible for the glowing descriptions after he surveyed the area in 1827, arrived on 1 June 1829 but was unable to disembark on the mainland due to winter storms. Instead, the Swan River settlement's administrative vanguard established a temporary camp for ten weeks on Garden Island, 12 km from the mainland settlement at Fremantle (Appleyard and Manford 1979: 141-148).

The frequent arrival of ships with colonists from the start of August 1829 caught Stirling unprepared. The historical record describes chaotic conditions in the temporary camps established along the coast near the Swan River's mouth. Most of the new arrivals were enthusiastic to acquire their promised land quickly, but Stirling was adamant there would be no allocation of land until proper surveys occurred (Stirling 1830; Appleyard and Manford 1979: 151).

Thomas Peel's Swan River Association made a substantial contribution to the Swan River's initial population group. The Colonial Office promised Peel 250,000 acres (about 101,000 ha) if he and 400 people arrived before 1 November 1829. Unfortunately, the first ship – the *Gilmore* – arrived off the Swan River on 15 December 1829, six weeks late (*The Times* 15/8/1829; Anonymous 1829a). Peel's lateness meant he and his group lost rights to land in the Swan River settlement – a situation that Stirling, already gripped by the problems at hand, was unwilling to resolve immediately. With nowhere to go until the making of new land allocation arrangements between Peel and Stirling, *Gilmore's* 180 passengers established themselves south of Fremantle camp where the main colonist group was. On 12 February 1830, the Association's second ship *Hooghly* arrived, followed (14 May 1830) by *Rockingham* (Scott 1829, 1830a, 1830b). After *Rockingham's* arrival, about 500 people – one-third of Western Australia's non-Indigenous population – were camped at Peel town (Burke 2006, 2007: 148).

Descriptions of the Peel settlement, called variously 'Clarence Town or Brighton ... or as the sailors generally term it … Canvas Town' (*Sydney Gazette* 20/5/1830) but popularly referred to as Peel town, are poignant and very similar to the negative descriptions left by others in the various small and large camps spread along the coast (Bayly 1830a; Currie 1830; Shaw 1830). Colonists lived in an assortment of structures, with Peel's dwelling a converted horsebox (Bayly 1830a). After six months of misfortune that included illness and a gunshot wound, June 1830 saw Thomas Peel recuperating on HMS *Sulphur* moored in Gage Roads off Fremantle, leaving Peel town without command or advice. Illness at the camp was rife, with both *Gilmore* and *Hooghly* passengers affected by sickness shortly after alighting with many deaths occurring (Bayly 1830a; Anonymous 1830). General illness such as ophthalmia and stomach ailments were common in the Swan River at this time (Milligan 1830), but the high concentration of people at Peel town resulted in greater severity (Collie 1830).

Peel's apathy to his people left Stirling little option but to approve requests from Peel town residents for release from their indentures (Leake 1830; Henty, Leake and Bannister 1830). The first successful discharge in late July 1830 resulted in a flood of requests by groups and individuals between August and October. By November 1830, Richard Goldsmith Meares, from his allotment north of Peel town, was addressing his correspondence from 'near the Deserted village' (Meares 1830). Those that stayed for a short period into 1831 lived in poor conditions (Elmslie 1831b, 1831c).

The area occupied by Peel town remained deserted for about 120 years. The 1940s and 1950s saw a few stumped fibro-asbestos and weatherboard shacks built, with these structures removed in the early 1980s when the area became part of the Beeliar Regional Park. Broken fibro-asbestos sheeting and exotic vegetation – particularly the introduced Victorian tea tree in weed proportions – highlight the area's twentieth-century residential uses.

Methodology

Until recently, most considered Woodman Point 8.5 km south of Fremantle as Peel town's location (Hasluck 1965: 86;

Cameron 1981: 113; Bourke 1987: 46; Statham Drew and Marchant James 2008: 1). A town site called 'Clarence' – one of many names for Peel's camp – was pegged out here in 1836 and that suggested to some that it was the original site. However, archaeological surveys of Woodman Point in 1998, 2005 and 2006 found no archaeological evidence, despite good survey conditions of large areas of undisturbed open ground and a thin layer of soil over limestone (Burke 2007: 146-147).

Ambiguities in the secondary historical accounts about the camp's location resulted in a search of primary historical documents dating to the time. It was this material – colonists' letters, survey department files (maps and field books), and to a lesser extent Western Australian and New South Wales newspapers – that provided the first clues suggesting that Peel's group was not at Woodman Point but instead 5.4 km further south near a limestone hill called Mt Brown. Maps of this area by Smythe (1830) and Sutherland (1830a, 1830b) showed structures and paths nearby, while a memo stated that land was issued to Peel near Brown Hill because it was here that 'his Excellency the Governor permitted you [Peel] to locate yourself and followers on your first arrival in the Colony' (Roe 1836). These documentary finds narrowed the general location of Peel town to an approximate 30-hectare area of coastal limestone ridge and undulating ground. However, for pinpointing specific sites these sources initially were inadequate because their vague topographic information could not be reconciled with the present physical landscape.

The survey area comprises three geographical regions (see Figure 1). The first region – fronting Cockburn Sound – contains a sandy beach in the south and to the north a limestone shelf rising about 4 m above sea level and fronted by cliffs. The second region is to the east – a low ridge of sand-covered limestone paralleling the coast. Short saddles in the ridge connect the coastal area with the third region, an undulating plain in the ridge's lee, comprising pale yellowish-brown sand derived from limestone breakdown. Areas of exposed limestone are common in the three regions. The regions' vegetation varies in density, with initial reconnaissance surveys between November 2005 and April 2007 concentrating on areas devoid of vegetation naturally and through human and animal use. These clear areas produced the first surface scatters of artefacts with 1820s attributes.

RESULTS

Nine mounds of sand and limestone rubble, four areas with dense artefact scatters and many single artefacts were recorded as a result of the survey. As Figure 1 shows, there is a strong positive correlation between artefact location and cleared areas, with the four dense artefacts scatters on tracks or firebreaks. However, mounds and single artefact finds were in areas of dense vegetation. Fragments of ceramic and bottle glass comprise most of the surface artefacts, but clay tobacco pipes, English flint and cuprous and ferrous artefacts were also present.

The mounds – designated Sites 1 to 9 – varied in shape, size (1–5 m long axis) and proportion of sand to limestone. Excavation on three (Sites 1, 2 and 3) showed them to be the remains of large cooking hearths made of local limestone and imported low-fired yellow brick. The hearths were attached to dwellings with preserved remains suggesting the use of a range of construction materials. Site 1 was a probable pre-fabricated timber dwelling with a limestone and mortar floor measuring 2 x 4 m; Site 2 an improvised structure using local timber, salvaged ship's items and canvas; and Site 3 a store purchased canvas wall tent measuring 3 x 5 m.
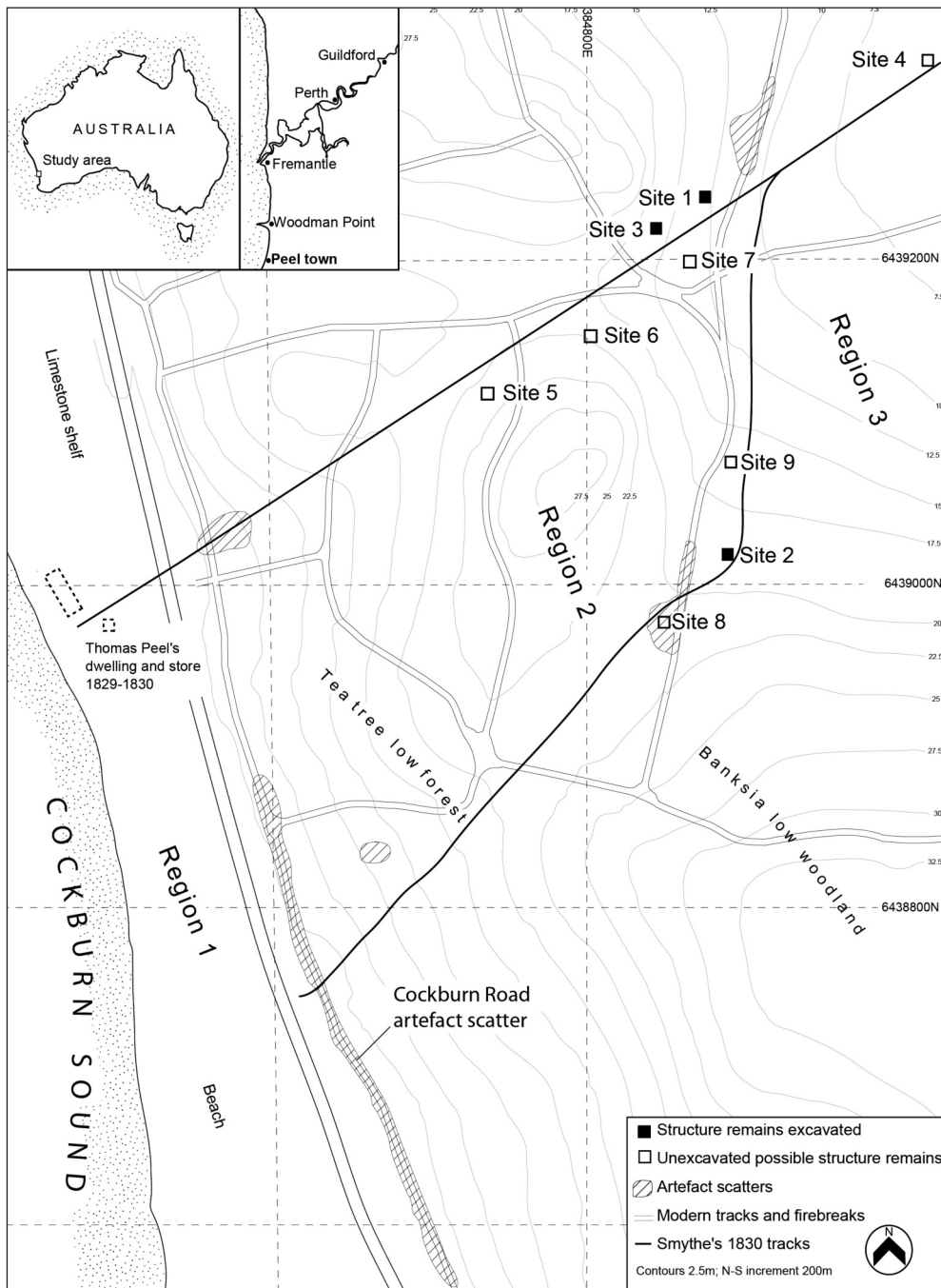
Figure 1: The location of structural remains, artefact scatters and regions at Peel town.

The excavations also produced a large artefact assemblage from both sheet scatters and sealed rubbish pit contexts. Recording of this material is presently ongoing, but preliminary results suggest that artefacts like inkwells, brass balance-scale weights and high quality ceramic and glassware assemblages, point to comparable social standing for the occupiers of Sites 1 and 3. In contrast, Site 2 contained no writing associated artefacts and lower quality ceramic and glasswares but many 'trade' objects like two-piece brass pins and rolled rim thimbles.

Combining the archaeology and history

The archaeological and historical records individually provide a limited understanding of the location and status of those residing in various areas of Peel town. However, the two data sets combined achieve a temporal and spatial understanding allowing an interpretation of the camp's cultural landscape. The historical record comes from the diaries, drawings and

maps by Bayly (1830a, 1830b), Sutherland (1830a, 1830b) and Smythe (1830). A drawing of the camp (Figure 2) by Bayly, the *Hooghly's* second officer sometime between late February and March 1830, shows a long structure representing Peel's store on the limestone shelf with a smaller structure (Peel's dwelling) to the shed's south (Bayly 1830b, Sutherland 1830a, 1830b; Smythe 1830). Southeast of Peel's dwelling and store is an indistinct mass of v-tents on the west side of the ridge, and other structures of indistinguishable construction type in a line passing in an easterly direction over the ridge. This line of v-tents corresponds with the location of a broad road marked on Smythe's map (Figure 3). Bayly (1830a) in his journal also described the broad road 'marked out by the surveyor' along which the *Hooghly* people had 'their cottages … in a line on each side', but Smythe's map – drawn before the *Hooghly's* arrival in February 1830 – does not show the structures lining the broad road. Here the archaeology assists with determining the camp's layout, with Sites 4, 5, 6 and 7 and artefact surface finds corresponding with the broad road's
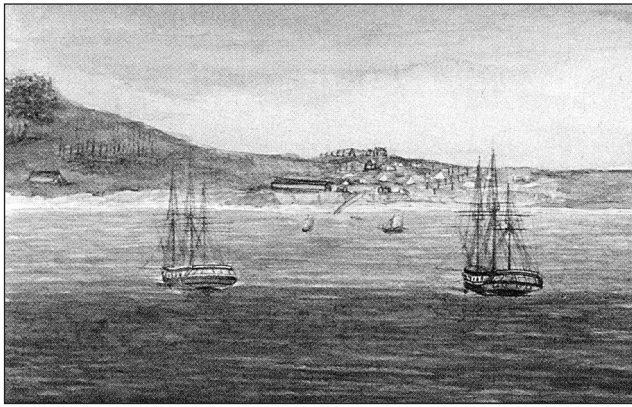
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Figure 2: Detail of Bayly's drawing of Peel town dating to February or March 1830 (Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena).

location. The mounds are most likely the remains of the *Hooghly* people's dwellings given that the three mounds excavated at Sites 1 to 3 showed them to be large cooking hearths associated with structural remains. The mounds at Sites 1 and 3 correlate with two of four structures in an area further east occupied by members of Peel's leadership group (Smythe 1830, see Figure 3).

A narrower path on Smythe's map, proceeding in a north easterly direction south of Peel town's store, corresponds with the mass of v-tents in Bayly's drawing and coincides with the large Cockburn Road artefact scatter. In addition, the narrow track, after crossing the limestone ridge onto the undulating plain, aligns with mounds at Sites 2, 8 and 9 suggesting that these sites and the Cockburn Road artefact scatter are in association and most likely represent the *Gilmore* camp established in December 1829.

The archaeological and historical records provide snapshots of where groups of various classes camped in an approximate 40 ha area between December 1829 and February 1830. The two data sets give valuable temporal information to help determine how sections of the camp changed over time and how these changes affected the cultural landscape during the camp's nine-month existence.

The camp's cultural landscape

Combining the archaeological and historical records allows a decoding of the cultural landscape, with four areas identified as representing occupation by groups of different social status (Figure 4). First is a small administration area on the limestone shelf where the Association leader Thomas Peel occupied a small structure within metres of the camp's store. The camp occupied by colonists of the agricultural and industrial trade and labouring classes from the *Gilmore* is the second area. It is on higher ground covering the west, top and east side of the limestone ridge and represented by the Cockburn Road artefact scatter and Site 2 – with its large assemblage of sewing items but missing artefacts associated with literacy – and Sites 8 and 9. The camp's supervisors (Bailey, Elmslie and Oakley), surgeon (Lyttleton) and their families on the east side of the limestone ridge occupied the third area. These middle class colonists helped Peel with the running of the camp by assisting with the rationing of supplies and record keeping. Artefacts associated with these roles have been recovered at Sites 1 and 3. This group was located 420 m from Peel and the camp's store and about 500 m north of the main section of the *Gilmore* camp. However, the limestone ridge would have inhibited this group's visibility of the store, Peel's dwelling and most of the *Gilmore* camp (Figure 4).

Maintaining control of a large group of people with ambitions and real or perceived fears and uncertainties in a foreign land would have been paramount for Peel, especially given the disappointment of the settlers after seeing their new home. However, the camp's layout contains atypical characteristics when compared with other early British settlements in Australia where cultural landscapes were created to assist one group's control over others. As Upton (1988: 362) and Delle (1999: 139) have suggested, topography and the use of high
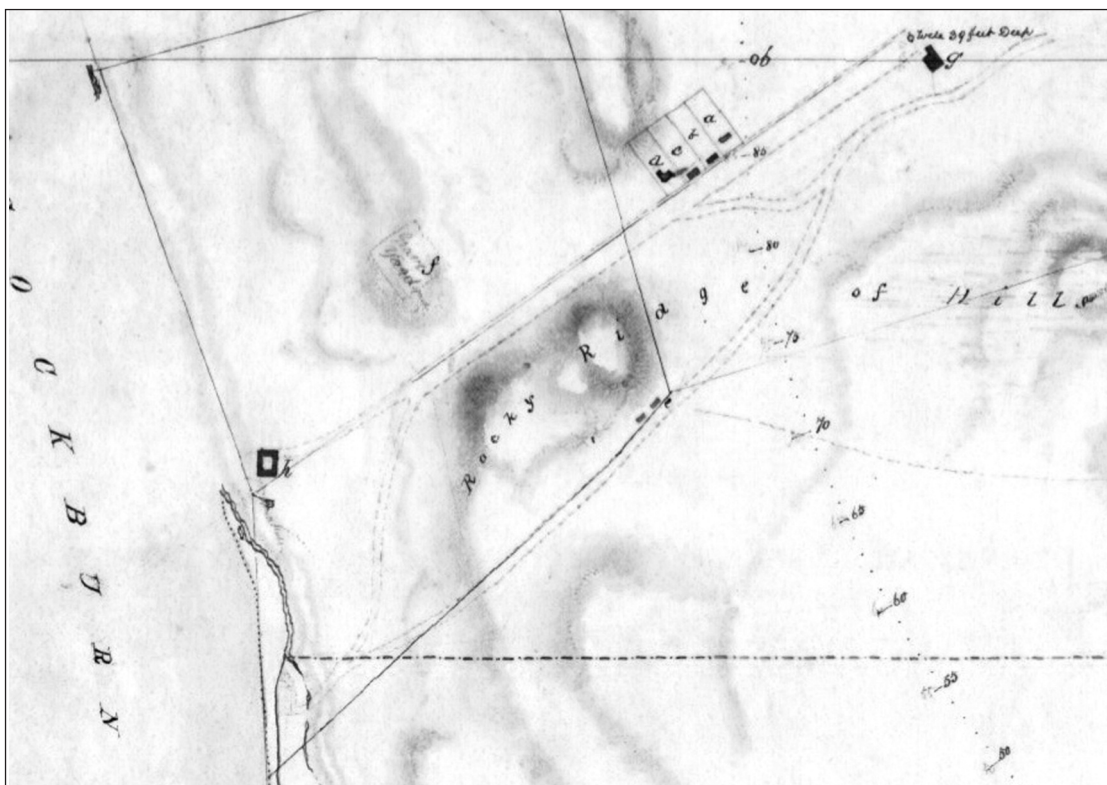

Figure 3: Detail of Smythe's December 1829 or January 1830 map of Peel town showing the supervisors' area marked a, b, c, and d, and Thomas Peel's store and dwelling h (State Records Office of Western Australia WAS 32 CON 3844 item 142, reproduced by permission of Landgate, WA, 2010).
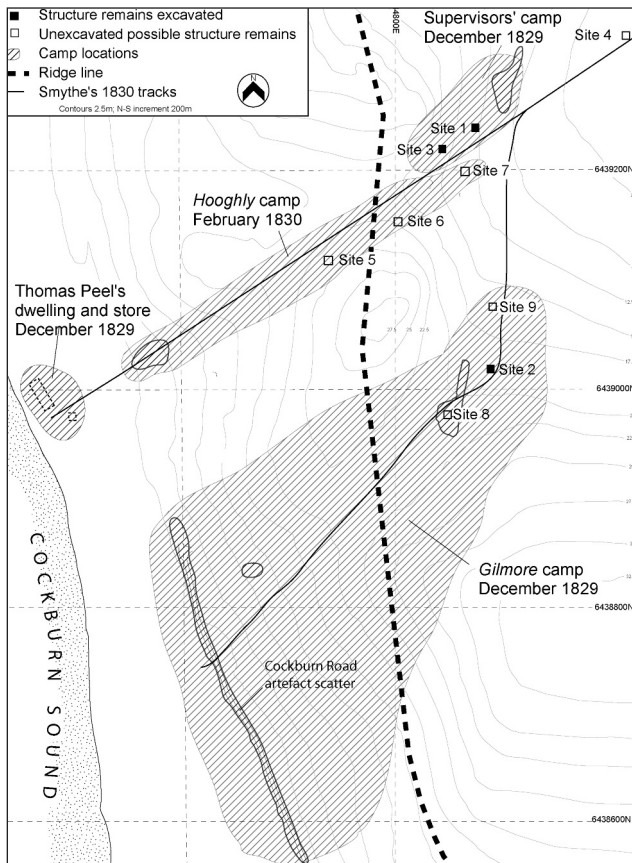
Figure 4: The location of Peel town's various camps.

and low ground to define status and allow for surveillance is a dominant influence on settlement layout. At other Australian sites the authority figures' residence – whether the Governor at Sydney, Yorktown or Port Essington (Karskens 1997: 10, 18; Hayes 2005: 11; Allen 2008: 3) or the military commander at King George Sound or Risdon Cove (Hillman 1838; Chauncy 1851: 15; McGowan 1985: 10, 90) – is typically on high ground overlooking accommodation and work areas of others. Peel, however, lived in a horsebox at the camp's lowest point. While providing some surveillance of the *Gilmore* and *Hooghly* camps, he could not see those over the ridge's crest or the plain east of the ridge, while his less than inspiring abode did not fit the model of the upper classes' maintenance of status by conspicuous consumption (Paynter and McGuire 1991: 10; McGuire 1991: 110-113).

Segregation of different social or ranked groups is another method used by those in authority to highlight class and privilege differences. It is common at most Australian convict or military settlements (McGowan 1985: 16-24; Hayes 2005: 12; Allen 2008: 117-120). However, at Peel town segregation does occur but exists instead between groups of the same class (the labourers and tradespeople at the *Gilmore* and *Hooghly* camps), while Sites 5 to 7 and surface artefacts suggest that Hooghly town was very close to the area containing the camp's supervisors.

The non-convict and non-military nature of the settlers and settlement could account for Peel town's cultural landscape which appears to have few signs of manipulation to maintain control. However, as studies of agricultural (Garman and Russo 1999: 126-129), industrial (Gibbs 1997: 55-57; Taksa 2005: 17, 20) and urban landscapes (Mrozowski 1991: 81-87) show, landscapes constructed for control were not restricted to convict and military sites. However, closer analysis of the archaeological and historical records dealing with the camp's development over time suggests that the cultural landscape

shows the slow breakdown of authority that eventually led to the camp's dissolution by late 1830.

As it is clear that cultural landscapes are the construct of humans and often autobiographical (Yamin and Metheny 1997: xv; Hood 1997: 121; Delle 1999: 137), it is pertinent to examine the person responsible for the attributes in the artefact that is Peel town. As noted above, Thomas Peel was second cousin of the then Home Secretary Robert Peel with a prosperous family founded on the Lancashire cotton industry (Hasluck 1967: 320). Belonging to one of the top 5 per cent of Britain's wealthiest families, he had little interest in going into his father's firm after his elder brother entered the church, but was attracted instead – like many – by the Swan River's opportunities (Hasluck 1967: 320). Peel had many personality traits suggesting an introverted nature, often avoiding social events at a time when making and preserving contacts in one's social group was essential for advancement in life (Hasluck 1965: 10). He was, however, determined, like many of his social group, and he saw the Swan River as a vehicle to achieve his ambitions.

Peel's introverted character accounts for one atypical landscape attribute of Peel town – that of Peel living away from the *Gilmore* camp and supervisors despite his location on the area's lowest point. However, the placing of his dwelling near the camp's store suggests he recognised that a level of control was required given the distressed circumstances of the settlement. The historical record notes the unsuccessful attempts at hunting the area's native wildlife (Bayly 1830a), meaning that the supplies brought by Peel were initially the camp's only source of food. Peel living near the store with its precious provisions meant he maintained control by surveillance and overseeing the issuing of goods to the camp's members. Later, when supplies brought from Britain began to dwindle and requests were made for food from the government store on Garden Island, Peel still maintained control by ensuring provisions came directly to the camp's store before issuing to the colonists (Morgan 1830a).

Peel probably feared plunder of the stores, with the perceived threat of theft a common mindset in first colonisation or shipwreck camp scenarios when the timing of resupply and eventual self-sufficiency is uncertain (Gibbs 2003: 132-133). The leadership group of the Swan River settlement based at Perth also knew the importance of controlling provision distribution, with Stirling shifting camp from Garden Island to the mainland in August 1829 but retaining the colony's store and a small staff on the island isolated from the Swan River's population, only transferring it to the mainland after the Swan River attained self-sufficiency in 1831 (Cameron 1981: 118). Like other coastal settlements (Fort Dundas, Yorktown, Port Essington) the logistics of unloading and carting required the store to be close to the landing place (Crosby 1975: 10; Hayes 2005: 6; Allen 2008:4), and Peel town's store is no exception with its location about 50 metres from the sandy beach where landing occurred.

The location of the camp's supervisors show that the physical landscape influenced the cultural landscape. The four structures occupied by the supervisors' and surgeon's families are just east of the ridge's crest, affording some protection from the wind. In addition, the four families occupied the only demarcated lots (of one acre) in all of Peel town (Smythe 1830), suggesting land ownership bestowed by authority. Infertile yellow sands cover most of the camp's area, but the locale occupied by the supervisors is flat, contains deep sand and has fewer exposed limestone crags relative to the rest of the area. Peel and his supervisor group most likely considered the area to hold the best opportunity for the successful growing of grains and vegetables.

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Despite some uncharacteristic traits, Peel town's cultural landscape in February 1830 was of one group controlling others by segregation and surveillance, with Peel's dwelling and store, the *Gilmore* camp and the supervisors' camp forming separate enclaves. That month saw 176 colonists – mostly tradesmen and their families – disembark from the *Hooghly*. Joining the *Gilmore* group of similar social standing would have been expected, but instead they camped about 150 metres north of the *Gilmore* group, erecting two lines of structures and living within metres of the camp's supervisors (Bayly 1830a; *Sydney Gazette* 20/5/1830). By settling in this location, the *Hooghly* colonists changed Peel town's cultural landscape by occupying an area important for maintaining the camp's class segregation. Wishing to stay together and maintain friendships formed after four months at sea is one reason to account for the *Hooghly* group's actions, while Bayly's negative descriptions of the *Gilmore* camp's members suggest it as an unattractive place to join is another (Bayly 1830a). However, the *Hooghly* colonists' actions suggest a breakdown of control in the camp, most likely caused by weak leadership from Peel and the camp's superiors.

The historical record alludes to bungled leadership and bad luck for Peel's Swan River Association scheme up to this point. The *Gilmore* captain's marriage and insistence on honeymooning in Cape Town caused the group's late arrival in Western Australia resulting in the loss of land, while the non-arrival of ships from Sydney with supplies and cattle for the Association caused resource stress for the group and severe psychological strain for Peel. Complaints about the camp's mismanagement, poor food and Peel's apparent disinterest appear very early in descriptions about the camp (Bayly 1830a, Morgan 1830b). Weak leadership stemmed from Peel – whose introverted, standoffish nature was interpreted as arrogant and elitist at a time which required strong decision-making, while his absence from the camp in late December (in Perth) and February (exploring land further south) – at the time of the *Hooghly's* arrival – instilled an air of disquiet for the camp's members who thought he had deserted them (Bayly 1830a; Robinson et al. 1830). In addition, it also appears Peel did not have the backing of all his supervisors, with Elmslie writing bitterly to the Colonial Office about Peel's leadership and Oakley applying for land in other parts of the Swan River settlement separate from the Association (Elmslie 1830; Oakley 1836). Many middle and upper class colonists who paid their own way to the Swan River on Peel's ships also communicated their concerns about the camp and its leadership to Stirling in Perth (Dunnage 1830, Meares 1830b).

In February 1830, the spatial arrangement of various social groups in the camp had remained unaltered from the original pattern established in December 1829. However, the psychological stress brought about by continued bad luck, weak leadership and poor living conditions probably played a role in altering the attitudes of most of the residents towards the camp's leadership and authority figures. In addition, boredom – with its inherent corrosive effects on discipline – influenced the colonists' mindset. Bayly describes colonists sitting around with little to do, with some turning to drink to pass the time (Bayly 1830a). Authority figures deliberately keeping subordinates busy to keep their minds off worsening or tedious conditions occurred in many isolated settlements (Mulvaney and Green 1992: 287; Gibbs 1997: 43), but there is no evidence suggesting that Peel or his supervisors used this ploy, thus adding to the ever ripening conditions for unrest. The establishment and maintenance of authority rests not only on the material culture of landscape but also charisma and experience – intangible but essential for the maintenance of control – and apparently missing from Peel and his supervisors.

The culmination of negative events on the Swan River Association had weakened the camp's leaders' authority to the extent that the *Hooghly* passengers when they arrived in February 1830 may not have received advice about where to locate. In addition, due to the atmosphere of despair and semi-anarchy, it is possible they did not recognise the landscape as one supposedly built to maintain authority. Peel constructed a landscape of control, but for its success, it had to make some sort of meaningful sense to those he wished to control. For the *Hooghly* people it did not, establishing their camp not with colonists of similar social standing as Peel and the camp's supervisors wished, but in an area that upset the segregation of groups. By July 1830, any semblance of authority had completely disappeared at the camp when colonists began requesting release of their indentures through the colony's legal system.

It is unlikely the actions of the *Hooghly* passengers were a deliberate act of resistance. However, their deeds, and those of the entire camp from July 1830 were behaviours previously unseen from European people in Australia. Tenured by contracts that tied them to middle and upper class groups for anywhere between two and seven years but which also made the latter responsible for their well-being – and with release of contract possible if this did not occur – the colonists at Peel town had more power than any convict or low-rank military group. Unlike convicts and military at other Australian settlements, most at Peel town and the Swan River colony generally *wished to be there*, resulting in behaviour reflecting people not submissive or overly resistive, but just wishing to better themselves. The age of improvement, with an ethos including individual agency and independence, reason, and the pursuit of bettering oneself by clean and moral living (Tarlow 2007: 20-27), had developed rapidly in Britain and had altered the British way of life. What occurred at Peel town suggests that improvement and aspiration was not class-specific – it also applied to the agricultural labourers and tradespeople.

CONCLUSION

The cultural landscape of the temporary camp of Peel town, established as part of the Swan River's 1829 settlement from Britain, changed during the camp's nine-month occupation. The landscape, comprising structural remains and other artefacts deposited by four groups of different social standing, was constructed initially on predetermined ideas of class segregation and the control of resources, changed as the harsh realities of colonisation affected the leadership group's ability to maintain a landscape of control. The camp's population comprising free colonists introduces a variable rarely seen in Australian landscape archaeology, with the camp's collapse because of the inabilities of the leadership group to control people who had options regarding where they chose to settle – choices that convicts and the military did not have.

Importantly, the result emphasises the importance of Peel town for research questions covering colonisation of new areas. While Australian history is littered with doomed settlements such as Peel town (Allen 1969, 2008; Crosby 1975; McGowan 1985; Richards 1999), only rarely is the archaeological record of failed first colonisation still available for study (Connah 2003: 149). In addition, as Dyson (1985: 2) states – with Lawrence (2003: 28) reiterating – the absence of archaeological research from some regions of the world with initial migration site types severely restricts the study of the global phenomenon of British colonisation that occurred at the time. The research occurring at Peel town – which is still in its preliminary stages on a range of various topics – has produced a result through the analysis of cultural landscapes that begins

to fill the research void about how those arriving in a new environment attempted to transfer previous mindsets – in this case the maintenance of class hierarchies.

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