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THE COLONIES CLOTHED

A Survey of Consumer Interests in New South Wales and Victoria 1787-1887

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GLOSSARY

Many of the materials commonly used to make clothing in the years covered by this thesis are no longer produced, having been replaced by a wide range of synthetics. For this reason, descriptions of materials referred to in the text are given below.

BAFT(AN): A coarse and cheap fabric, usually of cotton.

BLOND(E): A silk lace of two threads, twisted and formed in hexagonal meshes. White or black.

CALIMANCO: A material used in women's dresses, glossy on the surface and woven with a satin twill, chequered in the warp so that the checks seen on one side only.

CAMBRIC: A fine white linen originally made at Cambrey in Flanders. Also an imitation made of hand-spun cotton yarn.

DIMITY: A stout cotton cloth woven with raised stripes and fancy figures; used undyed for beds and hangings and sometimes for garments.

DUCK: A strong untwilled linen (or later cotton) fabric, lighter and finer than canvas; used for small sails and men's (especially sailors') clothing.

FUSTIAN: A thick twilled cotton cloth with a short pile or nap, usually dyed of a dark colour.

GIMP: Silk, worsted, or cotton twist with a cord or wire running through it, often used for trimming.

GURRAH: A plain coarse Indian muslin.

HUCKABACK: A stout linen fabric, with the weft threads thrown alternately up so as to form a rough surface. Often used for towelling.

IZAR: A long cotton mantle covering the whole figure.

JACONET: A plain cotton cloth of medium thickness or weight.

KERSEYMERE: A twilled fine woollen cloth of a peculiar texture.

MARSEILLES: A stiff cotton fabric.

MODE: Fashionable. As in "a black mode cloak".

NANKEEN: A yellow cotton cloth.

OSNABURG: A coarse linen originally made in Osnabruck in North Germany.

PALEMPORE: A chintz bed-cover, formerly made in India.

RUSSIA: Refers to RUSSIAN DUCK, a light canvas cloth recognized as being of good quality because made in Russia.

SARSENET/
SARCENET: A very fine and soft silk material, often used for lining.

INTRODUCTION

The argument of this thesis is that by choosing to spend the majority of their surplus purchasing power and/or credit on clothing and its materials, a large porportion of the convict and working class settlers shaped the early economic, legal, business and social history of New South Wales and Victoria. There has been an impressive tradition of historians writing over the last fifteen years. Some of these scholars have emphasized the essential decency of early colonial society while repudiating sensationalist accounts of the devient behaviour of a minority of early settlers. However, there has not as yet been a satisfactory study of the consumption patterns prevalent in the early years of these two colonies. There are a number of manuscripts in the Mitchell Library which give precise and detailed evidence of the consumer choices made by hundreds of convicts and settlers in early New South Wales. Similar evidence in the form of Customs statistics and newspaper advertising exists for the colony of Victoria. The manuscript account books of the first storekeepers in New South Wales and the Customs statistics of Victoria have as yet received no close attention by historians. Consequently, no clear evidence exists to put in perspective once and for all the myths surrounding the drinking habits of the early colonists.

These myths have been attacked from various angles by a number of historians but there remain serious misconceptions about early colonial consumer interests (and therefore about the nature of economic and social life in the colonies) which have regrettably influenced even the most recent work by distinguished Australian social historians. It is important that these misconceptions should be redressed by the detailing of extensive evidence of spending habits in the colonies from their inception. A knowledge of the actual consumer choices which were made by most of the convict and working class settlers most of the time, can lead to a wholly convincing picture of early colonial society when added to the work of those historians who have been emphasizing the normality of life in an ill-reputed land of rogues. It was a society not aberrant in any way but one which conformed strikingly to middle class British economic and social norms regarding the saving and spending of money. This

conformity was something that contemporary English middle class observers could never have presaged and thus found hard to swallow and even harder to describe dispassionately. The work of such historians as Fletcher, Hainsworth, Roe, Serle, Davison, Robinson, Alford, Hirst and others provides a coherent image of life in the early colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. It is hoped that this work will form a logical complement to a fine tradition of Australian history already well established.

The two main contributions of this thesis are firstly, the important evidence adduced concerning the spending habits (and thus by implication, the saving habits) of the early convict and emancipist settlers. Secondly, the thesis provides a rationale for the emphasis in contemporary middle class accounts on convict or working class dereliction and drunkenness by demonstrating totally different and utterly respectable spending and saving patterns. New evidence shows that consumption of clothing, even luxury clothing, dominated convict and working class life in the two colonies examined. It is alarming that the evidence concerning colonial drinking habits which is still being cited by reputable historians comes exclusively from contemporary literary observations, the personal impressions of mainly middle class observers.[1] Those same literary sources and others hitherto unexamined by historians will be analyzed critically to demonstrate the consumption habits and interests of most of the early settlers.

There is a plethora of manuscript and newspaper material which corroborates the active decision of those lowest in the socioeconomic structure to enjoy the fruits of their labour in the wearing of best black silk dresses and bonnets or best black suits and fine boots. It will be argued that the social possibilities and implications of this choice - the choice to buy and wear fine clothing - demonstrably antagonized many middle class observers. This antagonism is apparent in the written accounts of the

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1. A.E. Dingle, "'The truly magnificent thirst", an historical survey of Australian drinking patterns', Historical Studies, Vol. 19, No. 75, p. 227, wrote "In view of such unanimity [regarding Australian thirst in the nineteenth century], it is rather surprising to discover that this assumption is based on the scattered observations of contemporaries who usually stressed the heavy drinking they witnessed, rather than on detailed empirical research". Disappointingly, Dr Dingle did not go on to explore the implications of this observation in his article.

colonies. The writers were piqued because the economic potential of the colonies had been adopted whole-heartedly and en masse by the same people who in England had been immediately distinguishable in the streets by their miserable and often ragged clothing. Affronted by the respectable reality of the well-dressed throngs of early Sydney and Melbourne, such observers unconsciously sought refuge in emphasizing minority cases of constant excessive spending on alcohol, thus contributing to a picture of life in early New South Wales and Victoria which has taken scholars many years to dismantle. Only those historians who had little or no recourse to contemporary literary sources, relying extensively on other sorts of manuscript or official evidence, or who recognized their social bias, have managed to create a consistent image of these early years.

The important point about the early history of both colonies is that higher wages and more free time meant that many working class people could exercise a consumer choice. This had marked social and economic consequences as working women and men began to patronize shops and then to display their fine clothes conspicuously in promenades in the Gardens, drives to the beach, picnic races, balls and other delightful pastimes not enjoyed by equivalent social groups on such a scale in contemporary England. By exercising their taste and choosing to spend heavily on clothing, the first generations of Australians were active in creating a new set of social and business traditions. In the colonies, a wider class base of people felt at ease in shops and came to exercise greater consumer power in their dealings with retailers very quickly relative to their contemporary English counterparts. The people of the colonies were responsible for generating a distinctively and recognizably Australian as opposed to English business style. It will be argued that this style had no element of inherent dishonesty or brashness about it, but was the logical outcome of a higher per capita income spent predominantly on a particular type of consumer goods. Thus this thesis demonstrates that given an increase in the standard of living for the lower classes in the colonies, these people took an active part in changing their way of life for the better, and one way they did this was through considerable expenditure on and enjoyment of clothing.

PART I

The Customers

Sydney

1787-1815

... I am myself fully convinced that the nation would save money by feeding their convicts at home upon venison and claret, cloathing [sic] them in purple and gold, rather than provide for them here the worst fare that can be thought of.

Capt. Campbell to Lord Ducie
12 July 1788

CHAPTER 1

PROVISIONING OF NEW SOUTH WALES

SYNOPSIS

Outline of argument. British Government policy regarding the clothing of the convicts. State of convict clothing before leaving England. Evidence of middle class clothing resources. Scarcity and inadequacy of initial official clothing supplies to the colony. Economic and social consequences of lack of clothing. Continued official ineptitude in the supply of clothing for the colony. Official awareness of convict needs and preferences. Economic and social value of clothing. Convict ambition to own and wear fine clothing.

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The oldest civilizations enacted sumptuary laws in order to distinguish the ruling classes. These laws gave the wealthy and the powerful unique rights to clothe and feed themselves as richly and extravagantly as they chose. By the time of the first settlement of New South Wales by English people in 1788 there were no longer express sumptuary laws governing clothing or food in Britain.[1] What did exist there, however, was a complex moral and social clime which produced economic, political and religious institutions that had very nearly the same function. Economic realities, moral attitudes towards work and religious and family values meant that the wealthy could eat and dress as they pleased and the poor could not. It would be a mistake to suppose this to have been simply a matter of economics. There was considerable moral and social pressure on the lower orders to keep their place and one important sphere in which this was reinforced - the most immediately apparent sphere, in fact - was clothing.

The argument of Part I of this thesis is that the first thirty years of settlement in New South Wales significantly altered some established economic and social patterns. In their altered form, the colonial modes were to change drastically the expectations of the lower classes concerning food and clothing. Not only were expectations raised but there is ample evidence to show that they were fulfilled for many people much of the time. Thus, in New South Wales by 1810, members of the lower and even convict classes could expect to be, and were in fact, better dressed - and better fed - than they could have hoped to be in Britain. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, it means that there is a concrete basis from which to argue that standards of living in the colony were higher than in England for these people.

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1. Quentin Bell, On Human Finery, Hogarth Press, London, 1976, pp. 21-23.

Secondly, working class choice in expressing the rise in minimum standards of living so overwhelmingly in clothing above all other consumer goods including alcohol, did much to change internal perceptions of the colony at an individual and official level. A revolution took place on the streets of Sydney. The convicts strolling by in tailor-made coats and ruffled shirts no longer saw themselves and their lives in the same way as English agricultural and industrial workers stigmatized by their ragged slop clothing. Furthermore, free men had to see them in another light, and class barriers that had been exteriorized by clothing - that most visible of status symbols - began to blur. While impossible to prove, it would be equally difficult to refute the hypothesis that middle class English sensibilities were so offended by this revolution that they ignored it,[2] concentrating on the small percentage of the population who wore their poverty with that satisfactory visibility by which the dominant classes made sense of their social world. In thus making sense of their world - writing about the improvident minority and ignoring the well-dressed majority - they created a myth about early Sydney that has lingered to this day. In order to dispel this myth, an argument will be developed which will show firstly, that circumstances in the colony forced the government to an acceptance of greater responsibility for minimum living standards, secondly that wage labour had a real absolute value, and thirdly that actual consumer preferences and social attitudes showed clothing to be more valued than any other luxury item for most people most of the time.

By undertaking a detailed examination of consumer preferences in the colony, it can be shown that some of the responsibility for determining legal social and economic patterns in early New South Wales rested with its convict and poorer classes. It was their consumer preferences which initiated forms of Government and private enterprise activity. It was their consumer preferences expressed as property which gave them experience of the law as beneficiaries rather than as victims of its operations.

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2. Significantly, observers lower on the social scale were struck immediately by the high standard of dress paraded on the Sydney streets. See note 27, Chapter 2. If upper class observers did note it, there was always a disparaging or patronizing tone in their observations. See note 125 below.

Their upper class contemporaries were extraordinarily ignorant of the reality of these preferences, generalizing so vehemently from cases of drunkenness and insolvency thrust upon their consciousness that it has prevented historians from examining the actual spending patterns of the poorer classes in the colony.[3] For a short but nonetheless significant period of Australian history, the labour of the poorer classes was a valuable commodity both in absolute and relative terms.[4] The social significance of this has received surprisingly little attention from historians and until now, there has been no convincing attempt to discover how the fruits of this labour were consumed.[5] By taking the consumer preferences of individuals of the poorer classes as the starting point, two new assertions can be made about the character of New South Wales at this time. Firstly, studies of consumption at the individual or household level reveal very

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3. A recent work, P. Robinson's The Hatch and Brood of Time: A study of the first generation of native-born white Australians 1788-1828, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, has claimed much for the respectability of the first and second generation of this group in New South Wales. However, the basis for these claims is the rather narrow one of Memorials and Petitions to Governors and information contained in such official documents as Musters, Marriage, Birth and Death certificates. As useful, convincing sources these are limited of their nature and in the circumstances of the colony. In the case of Memorials, they are limited, as Dr Robinson herself points out, because their language is necessarily stylized in the extreme. Another inherent limitation is that a petitioner to the Governor asking a favour, in the nature of the exercise itself, is unlikely to write unfavourable things of him or herself or to select as a referee someone who would be likely to write anything detrimental to his or her plea. Similar constraints operate with the use of Marriage, Birth and Death certificates with the additional rider, as Dr Robinson points out (as does Dr K. Alford, see Chapter 3 note 36) that many members of the poorer classes were unlikely to avail themselves of these rites of the Anglican Church for a number of reasons, thus further limiting their usefulness as evidence for the argument of the respectability of the persons concerned. See M. Roe's review of Robinson's work in Historical Studies, Vol. 22, No. 86, April 1986.

4. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of wages in the colony.

5. A.E. Dingle's article, "The truly magnificent thirst", op cit., perpetuates serious misconceptions about consumerism in early New South Wales and Victoria because of its failure to note the range of consumer goods which were available and widely sought and because it links a decline in drinking during the latter part of the century to the expansion at that time of the range of consumer goods, an expansion that was in fact strikingly evident as a vital economic and social force from the earliest days of both colonies. This article has unfortunately influenced J.B. Hirst's work, Convict Society and its Enemies, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 36-39. Hirst's view of the role of convict and working class consumer interest in early New South Wales is thus incomplete and thereby unnecessarily incompatible with the main threads of his interesting argument.

respectable domestic patterns with little or no scandalous inclination towards heavy drinking. Secondly, by choosing clothing in preference to other luxury items, members of the British poorer classes transplanted to the colony seized on the commodity that most conspicuously altered their own self-perception as well as patterns of interaction with members of other classes.

In a situation in which two individuals crossed each other as strangers in the street, while travelling or on business, each as well dressed as the other, it was not always possible for a person's convict origins or even present convict status to be determined. This, in fact, led to a certain amount of near paranoia among members of the upper classes at times,[6] not to say a great deal of patronizing or indignant comment on the tastes in clothing of the lower orders. Certainly there was and continued to be a marked contrast with contemporary England in which members of the lower classes were pitifully segregated by their rags as they were still to be in the 1850s and 1880s.[7] The fact that the taste of the lower orders could come into question at all in the colonies argued a higher standard of living, a disposable income that could permit them a degree of choice which made considerations of taste more than academic.

As part of his contribution to the debate on whether living standards for the working classes rose or fell as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution in England, E.P. Thompson has quite rightly pointed out that there ought to be no confusion

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6. P. Cunningham, Two Years in New South Wales: comprising sketches of the actual state of society in that colony; of its Peculiar Advantages to Emigrants; of its Topography, Natural History, etc, etc, second edition, London, 1827, pp. 13-15. Cunningham wrote of the social awkwardness which arose in England when one admitted that one had been to New South Wales - people started verifying the contents of their pockets discreetly on the instant assumption that anyone who had been to the colony must be an ex-convict. See also, P. de Serville, Port Phillip Gentlemen, and Good Society in Melbourne Before the Gold Rushes, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1980, pp. 49-50.

7. F. Thompson, Lark Rise to Candleford (1939), Penguin, Reading, 1984, p. 32. "To obtain clothes was an even more difficult matter [than getting boots]. Mothers of families sometimes said in despair that they supposed they would have to black their own backsides and go naked. They never quite came to that; but it was difficult to keep decently covered ..."

between the concepts of **standard of living** based on statistical data compiled on the consumption of luxuries such as tea, sugar and tobacco, and the **way of life** as a factor deducible from literary evidence concerning such things as leisure-time, health, family life, etc.[8] Significantly, Thompson does not include clothing when listing factors bearing either on physical "standard of living" or the more imponderable "way of life". It is a part of this thesis that as a physical item with demonstrable social effects and implications, clothing bridges the gap between standard of living and way of life. Its freedom of selection and wearing may confer - among other things such as warmth or comfort - dignity and pleasure on the wearer. More particularly, in the years under discussion, the ability to select or command tailor-made clothing reasonably freely on the part of many members of a class who could never have hoped to do this in their country of origin, contributed in the wearing of clothing to a new social and economic environment. In this new environment, it is argued that **both** the standard of living **and** the way of life in the poorer classes showed an improvement. Certainly, it must be pointed out that such freedom was only one of many, albeit an important one overlooked in recent debates on the nature of the early colony (see discussion in Chapter 3). Another liberty with great consequences for the emancipated and even some convicts was the fact that they had some degree of control over the amount and type of **paid** work they did and therefore a freedom of movement above that which was their experience in England. Further, these freedoms were offset perhaps for some by yearnings for their country of origin. However, it will be argued that in gratifying their desires for silk handkerchiefs and sprigged muslin gowns, members of the poorer classes greatly altered both their standard of living and their way of life. In so doing they contributed to the creation of a society with - despite real derivatives and similarities - some fundamentally different structures and assumptions.

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8. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1956, pp. 210-211.

While historians like Fletcher and Hainsworth, Hirst and Robinson[9] have widened admirably the interpretations of the period, there has still been no systematic examination of consumer preferences in the colony to 1815. A closer examination of the actual consumption patterns of New South Wales will reveal the immense economic and social importance of clothing - as well as that of tea, sugar and tobacco. The weight of the evidence examined below in Chapter 3 suggests that the only way to account for the enormous amounts of haberdashery and clothing imported into and then bought in the colony, is to argue that most people most of the time spent more of their income on clothing - and on tea, sugar and tobacco which were regarded as luxury items by the working class in Britain - than they did on alcohol. The thesis is that the convict dandy rather than the convict derelict was the man[10] to follow around the streets and roads of the early settlements of New South Wales on his half day off. By analyzing firstly his purchasing power; secondly the total volume of mercantile investments imported to cater for his evident choice[11] to spend large amounts of his spare cash on clothing; and thirdly the profits made by the merchants catering to this choice, it will be seen that in the years prior to 1815 more money was spent by the convicts and small settlers on clothing than on any other consumable item, liquid or solid.

The difficulty of discovering much about the way of life of convicts or emancipists in the first twenty years of the settlement is a very real one. Following the lines of upper class or offical comment has led eminent Australian historians to repeat

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9. B.H. Fletcher, Landed Enterprise and Penal Society. A History of Farming and Grazing in New South Wales Before 1821, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, and D.R. Hainsworth, The Sydney Traders, Simeon Lord and his Contemporaries 1788-1821, Cassell, Melbourne, 1972.

10. The gender specific is deliberate here. Not only was there an imbalance of the sexes in the colony and imported ideas on morality which still had some influence on freedom of movement for women, but also at this time, men rather than women formed the majority of the customers of any shop. See Chapter 3.

11. It must be remembered that the period under discussion predated the age of hidden persuasion. Advertising in its written form had the function of informing rather than persuading; what happened orally was another matter.

unquestioned the bias inherent in such comment.[12] Where efforts have been made to evaluate the lifestyle of the lower classes, these have foundered on the narrow basis of sources used.[13] An important point has been made by a recent study of the period, that British upper class values were of limited relevance in the colonial context.[14] This means that sources such as the Sydney Gazette and the Historical Records of Australia have a finite usefulness. They are insufficient for elucidating any of the social background of the lower classes at the time beyond what might be inferred from a cautious reading through the mirror of British upper or middle class values and experience. There remains one set of unrelated documents which have as yet not been examined in detail; these are the account books of various Sydney merchants and storekeepers which are held in the Mitchell Library. As a source, they are, naturally, by no means comprehensive but they do give information which no official sources can offer. Shopkeepers' ledgers recorded transactions as they occurred. Official dispatches, memorials and certificates contained an interpretation of the information most advantageous to the writer, who was rarely a member of the lower classes. By

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12. C.M.H. Clark, A History of Australia, Vol. I, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1962, p. 138. The convicts "were just as desperately driven by their passion for liquor, there being nothing which they would not risk to obtain it. In the eyes of the moralizers, gaming, whoring and drunkenness stalked in broad daylight without the least check ...". And who were the "moralizers" whose writings Professor Clark has used as the basis for a very vivid sketch of colonial society in the 1790s? Only two in number, they were none other than Richard Atkins, judge-advocate, and notorious alcoholic; and David Collins, soon to take a convict woman as his mistress in Hobart Town. Professor Clark's characterization of the period has been selected from many other similar interpretations for two reasons. Firstly, the narrow basis and unquestioning acceptance of source material, and secondly, because Professor Clark's own writing and reputation carries such authority that it seemed important to show why it should be questioned. By contrast, Hirst's discussion of contemporary English evangelical values and their influence in determining the reality of the colony in English eyes, gives a valuable insight into some of the reasons why early commentary on the colony should be accepted with reservation. See Hirst, op cit., pp. 16-20.

13. See note 2 above.

14. Robinson, op cit., p. 7.

contrast, shopkeepers had no personal interest and little opportunity to distort the information available in these ledgers.[15] From them we can obtain precise and concrete evidence of the standards of living and ways of life among the poorer classes of the colony before 1815. The use of these ledgers in conjunction with official sources opens the way to an interpretation quite different and perhaps wider than previous interpretations relying only on official sources or private commentary by members of the middle classes.

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There were two main sources of clothing for the early inhabitants of New South Wales: the Government and private enterprise. Private enterprise itself could further be subdivided into honest and dishonest initiatives. The latter began on board the transports of the First Fleet and were the most prevalent indigenous means of catering for the clamouring colonial market until the late 1790s. The fascinating range of thefts of clothing will be discussed below in Chapter 2. That people in the colony - convicts, soldiers and officers alike - were so desperate for clothing was initially the result of Government incompetence, accidents and human failure to envisage the physical realities of establishing a settlement so far from any other European one. The combined result of these three factors was an immediate critical shortage of clothing which was to persist - particularly for the convicts - until at least 1803.

At first clothing could only be bought either by Government or private individuals in Britain. Gradually, however, legitimate private enterprise swung in to cater for the apparent demand for wearing apparel and investments began arriving from India, the Cape and Rio de Janiero. It was just over ten years before private enterprise began to supply the colony regularly with clothing. Private merchants, convicts,

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15. Cunningham, op cit., Vol. I, pp. 96-97, "... a stranger stands much less chance of being cheated by our Sydney shopkeepers such as these [ex-convicts], than by London ones calling themselves honest ... in the circumscribed community of Sydney, where every individual is known, the complaints of a stranger regarding any imposition practised upon him, would be multiplied from mouth to mouth, and the custom and credit of the shopkeeper seriously injured."

officials and settlers[16] began to bring in large and small investments by the very early 1800s. Those same ten years saw a complete failure on the part of Government to respond to the need for clothing. A great deal has been written about the scarcity of food and its attendant miseries, but no attempt has been made to describe official policy for clothing convicts and soldiers, nor to analyse the consequences of its disastrous failure. Official inadequacy was so thorough indeed that, had it not been for the very real earning opportunities provided by the labour market and the speedy private initiatives to absorb these by importing haberdashery and related goods, the convicts would still have been scantily clad by 1810. An interesting consequence of British Government failure to supply clothing in combination with the opportunity for wage labourers to earn good money, was that convicts and settlers wanting clothing - whether slops or Sunday best - turned to private enterprise and thus formed an entirely new market. Merchants being ready to supply any market with whatever could bring them profit, began importing large quantities of clothing and/or its materials. The ability to pay for this clothing and the wearing of it around the streets of the colony, were important social factors contributing to the community's perception of itself as a free colony rather than a prison.

There has, in fact, been little attention given by historians to an analysis of the consumer choices made possible by the high wages in the colony during these early years. Most of the surviving sources reflect the preoccupations of only one interested social group and thus need to be read with caution. Upper class contemporaries mentioned high wages predictably in such contexts as the need to lower them, their ruinous effects on upper class interests, or their contribution to too much

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16. Historical Records of New South Wales (hereafter HRNSW) Sydney 1892-1896, Vol. III, p. 509. A letter from a female convict reprinted in the True Britain of 10 November 1798, gives an indication that even small sums laid out on tea, tobacco, thread, needles and snuff during the passage could earn significant profits for the enterprising individual. Wearing apparel sold particularly well, indicating a strong market for second-hand clothes: "I have sold my petticoats at two guineas each, and my long black cloak at ten guineas, which shows that black silk sells well here; the edging that I gave 8d per yard for in England, I got 5s for it here". To put comments on profiteering on alcohol in perspective, it should be noted that this unknown woman made a profit of 750% on her edging.

independence in the working man, leading him to labour only when he had to.[17] No contemporary whose writings have survived bothered his or her head with any thought of how members of the labouring classes actually spent these wages unless there was a context involving "wasteful" and "dissolute" spending on alcohol. This inherent bias has had too much influence on many subsequent historians - 100% of the labouring population could surely not have been drunk 100% of the time - and the question of how most of this first generation of the working class really spent their disposable money has so far received little attention. An attempt to address this question reveals much more about working class interests and preoccupations than was known to the official commentators in contemporary New South Wales. A detailed discussion of wages earned in the colony and working class spending patterns will follow in Chapter 3.

From 1788 to 1810 there was simultaneously a failure of the British Government contract system for the supply of clothing and the rise of private enterprise initiatives worth thousands of pounds annually. During this time there was also evidence of a new development in perceived Government responsibility for the welfare of private individuals of the lower classes. Lastly and most significantly, it will be argued that a completely new interpretation of these years is possible because of the thesis that for many of these individuals, clothing was a highly desirable consumer item which they could and did expect to own. These three points which will be discussed in detail

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17. These ideas were imported directly from England, see E.P. Thompson, op cit., p. 277, "It is a fact well known ... that scarcity, ... promotes industry, and that manufacturers who can subsist on three days work will be idle and drunken the remainder of the week.... The poor in the manufacturing countries will never work any more time in general than is necessary to live and support their weekly debauches ...", quoted from J. Smith, Memories of Wool (1747). In 1818, a magistrate wrote, "Some years ago, the weavers were so extravagantly paid that by working three or four days in the week they could maintain themselves in a comparative state of luxury [they] spent a great portion of their time and money in alehouses, and at home had their tea-tables twice a day provided with a rum bottle and the finest wheaten bread and butter." The most active exponent of the doctrine that high wages were actively bad for members of the labouring class was Dr Andrew Ure who wrote, Philosophy of Manufacturers (1835). See HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 361 in which Dr Ure is quoted as saying that the high wages of cotton-spinners enabled them "to pamper themselves into nervous ailments by a diet too rich and exciting for their indoor occupations." He added that manufacturers "supply in their liberal [sic] wages the pecuniary sinews of contention".

below, give another character to the early settlement and its inhabitants which adds to recent interpretations belying the image of idle, drink-sodden, debt-ridden convicts and emancipists being manipulated by a handful of rapacious officers.

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Before proceeding to discuss and analyze the economic reality of the clothing market in early New South Wales, the drastic dimensions of British Government failure to clothe the convicts on their way to and while in the colony must be fully understood. What was important about this failure was that in New South Wales, Government and governed alike saw it as such. In the colonial environment when convicts went without clothes and suffered accordingly, the responsible officials were aware of their suffering and acknowledged an obligation to end it. This was not the case in England. The poor and certainly the criminal poor continued to suffer physically and socially from inadequate clothing[18] and standards of living in this respect were far below those existing in Port Jackson after the initial ten lean years of settlement. Even during those lean years, there is evidence that although successive governors felt unable to take action to clothe the poor, they were actively and continually petitioning Whitehall on their behalf. In this chapter, we shall see how circumstances in the colony obliged its governing officials to accept greater responsibility for clothing the labouring classes, thus partially contributing to a rise in minimum acceptable standards of living. In Chapter 3, it will be argued that the convict and labouring classes spent money in such a way as to make themselves active agents in raising the minimum living standards until their way of life bettered what existed in England for contemporaries of the same class background.

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18. Mayhew's writings provide detailed background for the clothing resources of the poor in England; for example, see A. Humphreys (ed.), H. Mayhew, Voices of the Poor. Selections from the Morning Chronicle, 'Labour and the Poor' (1849-1857), Frank Cass and Co., London, 1971. For a wide range of sources for the early part of the century, a careful reading of E.P. Thompson, op cit., is illuminating.

To begin with the clothing itself. Government policy was that convicts and ordinary soldiers be provided with slop clothing. (The marines were, of course, also issued with their regimental necessaries or uniform.) Slops were ready-made, ill-fitting clothing theoretically made of durable coarse material such as canvas, duck or osnaburg.[19] Slop clothing was, for the poor in Britain, generally the only means of dressing. The privileges of wearing bespoke - or tailor-made - clothing were not for the working classes. Sometimes people in certain kinds of employment, particularly domestic service, would receive cast-off clothing from the master or mistress either as part-payment in kind for their work, or in appreciation of their services, or as gifts on Boxing Day or some other anniversary.[20] The first step away from absolute poverty was evinced by the possession of another set of clothing, slightly finer, perhaps more ornamental and certainly better fitting than the every day slops worn by agricultural or industrial workers and paupers. The practical consequences of the Industrial Revolution for many of the English working class were that they could no longer take this step.[21]

There was a wide range of differing contemporary opinion on the quality of clothing worn by the convicts of the First Fleet, reflecting the variety of their individual circumstances. There were prisoners with private means and/or supportive families who had access to regular supplies of clothing and additional supplies of food. For older unsuccessful small-time criminals of both sexes who had been some years in the prisons or the hulks, resources for providing themselves with clothing or extra food were very limited indeed. Initiatives were taken by prisoners to improve their personal appearance. The way in which they used limited resources sometimes reflected a concern for material rather than spiritual well-being. Prison regulations had to be

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19. By the mid-nineteenth century, the meaning had broadened to include the cheap ready-made trade in all manner of clothing; see Humphreys, op cit., pp. 111 and 117.

20. See F. Thompson, op cit., pp. 102-104 and 157.

21. See E.P. Thompson, op cit.

drawn up to prevent the ripping up of prayer books and religious tracts for use as curling papers by women convicts in England or as playing cards by men on the voyage out.[22] With no financial means of their own, or assistance from their families, most prisoners were very badly off for clothing. Even before leaving England, Governor Phillip had reported to Under-Secretary Nepean in 1787 that some of the convicts were almost destitute of clothing and Nepean had been made aware that "it will be necessary to supply them with such articles as are needful immediately".[23] That is to say, if the convicts were to make a voyage to Botany Bay in the Governor's care, he preferred them to do so fully dressed. Phillip himself had taken the responsibility of issuing clothing to the convicts who were embarked at Plymouth in the hope that the Navy Board, the authority concerned, would come good with further supplies. His knowledge of the convicts' circumstances did not lead him to be sanguine in his expectations with regard to the rest of the convicts to be embarked:

> ... unless orders are being given for their being washed and cloathed [sic] on their leaving the prison or the hulks, all that we may do will be to no purpose. 24

The women convicts, as Phillip saw them, were particularly badly off:

> The situation in which the magistrates sent the women on board the Lady Penrhyn, stamps them [the magistrates] with infamy ... almost naked, and so very filthy, that nothing but clothing them could have prevented them from perishing, and which could not be done in time to prevent a fever, which is still on board ship ... 25

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22. E. Scandrett, An Illustrated History of Clothes Worn in Australia, Pioneer Design Studio, Sydney, 1978, p. 23, shows a painting, now held in the Rex Nan Kivell collection, of Elizabeth Fry reading the Bible in Women's Prison, Newgate, England, 1823. The notice on the wall behind advises of punishment for injuring, mutilating or defacing Bibles, Prayer Books or other printed books. See also Cunningham, op cit., Vol. II, pp. 280-281.

23. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 280-281. Under-Secretary Nepean to Sir Charles Middleton, 18 April 1787.

24. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 59.

25. ibid.

As there was little or no homogeneity among the convicts in terms of their age, background or economic circumstances,[26] so their clothing varied from near destitution to relative affluence. Surgeon Arthur Bowes reported the disembarkation of the women convicts a week after the Fleet's arrival at Port Jackson: "They were dressed in general very clean, and many of them well dress'd".[27] As the handling of Government supplies of women's clothing was singularly inept and as we know that some of the convicts took their own personal chests of clothing aboard with them, the women described by Bowes were either among those who had private resources or they were very skilful thieves. Bowes complained on the voyage out of the women "thieving each others clothes ... many of them plundering the sailors".[28] Those convicts with private property were not only targets for their fellow prisoners but also for unscrupulous ship's masters. One Henry Cable and his wife made their colonial debut by successfully suing Duncan Sinclair for the contents of a trunk of clothing in the master's keeping which were not returned intact to the Cables on their arrival at Port Jackson.[29] There were other convicts who worked on the voyage out, washing linen and mending or making clothing and they were given payment either in cast-off clothing, food, grog or money.

During the voyage and on arrival in New South Wales, the number and variety of ways in which clothing was to change hands reflected the variety of clothing that

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26. See L.L. Robson, The Convict Settlers of Australia. An Enquiry into the Origin and Character of the Convicts Transported to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1787-1852, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1965.

27. Quoted in R. Rose, This Peculiar Colony, Rigby, Adelaide, 1981, p. 23.

28. Quoted in C. Flower, Duck and Cabbage Tree, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1968, p. 6.

29. J. Cobley, Sydney Cove, 1788, Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1962, pp. 176-177. The subsequent two volumes of Cobley's work, Sydney Cove, 1789-1790, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1963, and Sydney Cove, 1790-91, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1965, will be referred to as volumes II and III respectively.

came out with the convicts[30] and the skills of the first settlers themselves. There were, then, certainly some convicts who were relatively affluent and therefore possessed their own clothes in addition to Government issue. There were also those who were amenable to middle-class work ethics, proved themselves to be industrious and were therefore able either to add to their stock of clothing or their purchasing power by honest means. There were convicts who lived up to their reputation of being light-fingered gentry worthy of transportation to the end of the known world and stole wearing apparel from fellow convicts, soldiers or officers. Their skill in stealing the clothing unremarked in an over-crowded space like a convict transport was only equalled by their acumen in being able to hide it in such confines from determined searchers. Finally, there were those miserable hopeless individuals with no personal resources whatever, totally reliant on Government issue and not even able to keep that.[31] On balance, however, it must be said that given their resources in the country they came from, most of the convicts were poorly clad.[32]

As we have seen, there was a degree of official awareness that the convicts were in the main rather badly off for clothing before the First Fleet even left Britain. While the soldiers had enough for their immediate wants, unlike many of the prisoners, insufficient stores accompanied the First Fleet and there was no adequate provision made for replacement of their clothing. By 1788, Major Ross had written to Under Secretary Stephens:

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30. The extent of this variety appeared whenever the convicts organized theatrical productions; see D. Collins, An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales with Remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners etc of the Native Inhabitants of that Country, T. Cadell, London, 1798, p. 448, described the convict playhouse set up in 1796, the costumes for which were mostly made by the convicts themselves, "... but we understood that some veteran articles from the York theatre [were used]".

31. Cunningham, op cit., Vol. 2, p. 219. At a later date, Cunningham wrote of the necessity of numbering the convicts' clothing, otherwise when it got dirty they would simply throw it overboard and "cooly help themselves to a clean suit from their simpler comrades!"

32. Captain W. Tench, A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay, etc., London, 1789, reprinted Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1961, p. 32 was surprised at the healthy voyage because the travellers were "for the major part a miserable set of convicts, emaciated from confinement, and in want of clothes".

> ... I also beg leave to mention that clothing will be very much wanted for the detachment, they being already entitled to the quantity first sent out. [33]

As with food, so with clothing; there was an officially determined allowance for convicts and soldiers. Phillip had already been unimpressed by the quality of provisions on his initial inspections at Portsmouth.[34] The difference between food and clothing apparent even to bureaucrats in London was that people die anywhere without the former whereas in a temperate climate most of them can survive without the latter. So when opportunities occurred to buy more food, more food was bought. This was not the case with clothing although supplies were equally inadequate. However, in an environment which could not possibly provide clothing, the daily reality of the needs of the majority of a very small community began to be too apparent to be totally dismissed by responsible officials. The Government had transported the convicts to Port Jackson and undertaken to clothe them. It was thus no longer possible to blame the poor en masse for being too improvident to provide for themselves when, firstly, there was no source at hand from which they could do so; secondly, the Government had acknowledged responsibility for the provision of a sufficient allowance of slop clothing; and thirdly, the governing class itself was feeling the want of suitable clothing. Increasingly, individual Governors began to confess an obligation to the convicts in respect of clothing, an obligation which was not perceived to exist as such in respect of convicts in England.

The same factors which caused a diminished allowance of food resulted in an inadequate supply of clothing. The poor quality of initial supplies, loss through inadequate storage - clothes like food being susceptible to rotting when soaked in sea water or subject to mildew in Port Jackson's sub-tropical climate - or accidents, such as the loss of the Guardian store ship, all diminished available supplies. Clothing was even left behind when the First Fleet sailed and on subsequent voyages it was

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33. Cobley, op cit., p. 137.

34. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 58.

deliberately omitted so that less sorely-needed items might be included.[35] And this, despite a gradual increase of appeals from the colony for more clothing. These appeals began in Phillip's first despatch a bare five months after arrival, grew to a crescendo during Governor Hunter's administration and died away to occasional despairing hiccoughs from Governor King. By the end of King's time in the colony, private enterprise had provided a real alternative to Government-issue clothing and the economic possibilities of the colony allowed the convicts to avail themselves of this alternative. Official measures for clothing the convicts were still inadequate by 1810. However, the minimum acceptable standard of living in respect of clothing had advanced to such a point by the time of Governor Macquarie's arrival that he felt he could simply order and pay for the clothing required by the convicts without referring the matter to Whitehall.[36] The costs involved were considerable.[37]

In order to appreciate the extent of official failure to clothe the prisoners of New South Wales, we must first understand how the system was meant to work. Preparations to clothe the convicts of the First Fleet began on 7 September 1786, when contracts were let for the supply of clothing as follows:

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35. The normally understated tone of Phillip's despatches warmed up significantly when he found that the Admiralty had sent out a boat to be assembled in the colony, which vessel was unsuitable for the colonial conditions he had already described. See Historical Records of Australia (hereafter HRA), Sydney, 1914, Series I, Vol. 1. p. 337, Phillip to Dundas, 19 March 1792. In the same despatch he wrote, "The cloathing [sic] which has been received for the use of the convicts is so very slight that most of the people are naked a few weeks after they have been clothed", HRA, Vol. 1, p. 337. He was irate earlier when he found that the Queen, the Albermarle, and the Admiral Barrington contained a lot of copper, iron, lead, and cordage intended for India instead of much needed stores for the colony. Phillip to Grenville, 8 November 1791, in Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 152.

36. HRA, Vol. VII, p. 527, Governor Macquarie to Lord Liverpool, the Government convicts and many of those assigned to settlers "were entirely destitute and unprovided with clothing at the time of my arrival, which circumstance imposed on me the necessity of purchasing slop clothing and cloth to be brought up for that purpose, from such Ships as touched here either from England or India during the first eighteen months after my arrival; as no regular supplies were received earlier from England for the use of the colony, whilst to increase the difficulties the Population, and consequently the expense, were necessarily enlarged by the arrivals of several ships with male and female Convicts from the Mother Country, all of whom were to be victualled and clothed at the expense of the Crown."

37. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 17.

Articles	Number	Cost per article	Articles	Number	Cost per article
		s. d.			s. d.
Woollen jackets	2,720	4 6	Linsey cotton jackets	140	2 2
Woollen drawers	5,440	1 9	Canvas petticoats	280	2 1
Serge petticoats	140	1 10	Handkerchiefs	420	0 10 ½
Hats (men)	1,360	1 6	Caps	280	0 10 ½
Hats (women)	140	1 0			
Check shirts	4,080	2 6		Pairs	
Check frocks	4,080	2 3 ½	Yarn stockings (men's)	2,720	0 11
Trousers	4,080	2 2 ½	Yarn stockings (women's)	280	0 10
Shifts	560	2 10	Yarn stockings (men's)	2,720	0 11
Grey cotton jackets	140	2 6	Yarn stockings (women's)	280	0 11
White cotton jackets	140	2 0	Shoes (men's)	4,080	3 0
Check cotton jackets	280	2 6	Shoes (women's)	420	2 6

Source: HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 368.

As the numbers expected to sail in the transports were 600 men and 180 women as of 13 December 1786, the quantity of clothing listed above seemed just adequate given that the official allowance for a male convict was determined as:

	£	s.	d.
Jackets, 2 @ 4s.6d.		9	0
Woollen Drawers 4 @ 2s.6d.		10	0
Hat 1 @ 2s.6d.		2	6
Shirts 3 @ 3s.		9	0
Worsted Stockings 4 pr @ 1s.		4	0
Frocks 3 @ 2s.3d.		6	9
Trousers 3 @ 2s.3d.		6	9
Shoes 3 @ 4s.6d.		13	6
	£3	1	6

For the female convicts, clothing to the same value was supposed to be provided with shifts, petticoats, caps and handkerchiefs replacing frocks, trousers, hats and shirts.[38] However, there seemed already to have been a miscalculation of numbers in what was

38. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 17.

just the beginning of a series of mishaps concerning the clothing for the convicts which was to mean that many women were to disembark in the Great South Land inadequately clothed.

On paper then, it looked as though the male convicts at any rate would be well-supplied with clothing. However, many factors had not been included in the deliberations of the Navy Board on the subject. Firstly, they had no inkling of the actual state of prisoners' own clothing - or if they did, they made no attempt to allow for this in their calculations. Secondly, they were unaware that the contractors were unable to supply slop clothing of any reasonable quality for the price Government had stipulated.[39] The cost of clothing the convicts of the First Fleet was to come to £ 4,144/11/8[40]- quite a lot of money to spend on 800-odd prisoners to so little effect. Thirdly, the Board was injudicious in its selection of suitable officers to advise the contractors in packing and stowing the clothing on board ship. One Captain Teer was nominated to discharge this responsibility.[41] On arrival in Port Jackson, clothing was found to be damaged beyond repair[42] which did not say much for Captain Teer's expertize in the field. His successors fared no better, as thousands of yards of material were still being written off as useless in 1802[43]. Fourthly, and most

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39. Collins, op cit., p. 242. "These articles [the convict clothing] were supplied by commission; and ... the price of each article ... was fixed too low to admit of [the contractor, Mr Davison's] furnishing them of the quality absolutely necessary for people who were to labour in this country. The osnaburgs in particular had always been complained of; for it was a fact, that the frocks and trowsers [sic] made of them were oftener known to have been worn out within a fortnight, than to have lasted three weeks."

40. HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 388.

41. op cit., p. 367.

42. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 111.

43. Bonwick Transcripts, Series I, Box 12, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Palmer wrote to King on 26 September 1802 that on opening some casks and bales recently arrived by the Perseus he "found a considerable quantity of linens and shifts (being part of the investment sent out by Government for supplying His Majesty's colony in New South Wales) much damaged, apparently by oil of tar". The Naval Agent at Deptford was also blamed by implication by the master of the Perseus for the damage of seventy cases (or 424.3/4 yards) of printed calicos, 14 cases of duck and other material.

astonishingly of all, given the reasonable length of time allowed for the preparations, most of the women's clothing was simply left behind.

Phillip wrote frantically to Nepean on 11 May 1787:

> I must beg of you, my dear sir, to point out to the Navy Board that for women's cloathes I have no resource, and desire them to order that they may be sent down. The agent for the transports who has corresponded with that Board on this subject says he has expected them for some time. Be assured that I shall not wait a single hour for them after it is possible to sail. 44

The clothing did not arrive on time, the fleet sailed the next day and the women's clothing was left behind as Phillip informed both Secretary Stephens in a letter dated 12 May 1787[45] and Under Secretary Nepean on 20 May 1787[46]. To Lord Sydney on 5 June 1787 from Teneriffe he commented that "as for the womens' cloathing [sic] that was left behind, we shall be much distressed".[47] He asked that it might be sent out by the first possible ship - which as it happened did not reach the colony for nearly eighteen months. It is a matter of speculation as to what effect this distress for want of clothing had on the behaviour of the women convicts of the First Fleet. In a letter to England dated 14 November 1788, a woman convict wrote:

> ... the inconveniences since suffered for want of shelter, bedding etc, are not to be imagined by any stranger.... As for the distresses of the women, they are past description ... as they are all totally unprovided with clothes, those who have young children are quite wretched.... 48

Under such circumstances it is little wonder that women prostituted themselves for clothing, or in the despair of constant cold and exposure, with no hope of covering themselves warmly, drank what spirits they could obtain.

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44. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 103.

45. op cit, pp. 103-104.

46. op cit., p. 105.

47. op cit., p. 107.

48. HRNSW, Vol. II, pp. 746-747.

Outside the context of official Government provisions, Lieutenant Ralph Clark's Journal gives a detailed account of the possibilities of making, losing, exchanging or earning clothing on this first voyage to New South Wales. The journal gives evidence as to how the middle class acquired clothing within English economic and social terms of reference while demonstrating the limited range of options open to the poor. It also shows just how valuable a consumer item clothing was even for the middle class. Similar transactions took place on subsequent crossings with the only difference being the knowledge of the scarcity of haberdashery and footwear in the colonies which meant that all manner of people from gentlefolk to convicts took such items with them as speculative investments.[49] This continued until the 1820s in Sydney and the 1850s in Melbourne. Ann Hordern's first impulse on arriving in New South Wales in 1825 was to send a letter home to the family by the same ship which brought her to the colony, requesting £10 worth of haberdashery. This outlay of £10 was the genesis of the great Hordern empire.

A couple of months after leaving England, young Lieutenant Clark decided to have himself made some gloves. Surgeon Arndell had made a present of cotton thread to Clark so he gave it to one of the convict men, together with some white silk thread to make some buttons. Three days later he noted in his Journal, "The convict finished my gloves this afternoon, they fit very well, shall give him thread to make me another pair for I am in great want of them".[50] There are four things to be noted here, apart from Clark's general satisfaction with the fit of his gloves. Firstly, there was general among men and women a much higher level of skill in making of clothing and footwear than there is today.[51] There is no reason to suppose that the convict in question was,

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49. L. Hordern, Children of One Family. The Story of Anthony and Ann Hordern and their Descendants in Australia 1825-1925, Retford Press, Sydney, 1985, p. 23.

50. Lieutenant Ralph Clark, Journal, manuscript microfilmed at CY584 in the Mitchell Library, pp. 27 and 29.

51. Convicts were often issued with material and thread and were responsible for making their own clothes - or getting someone to do it for them if there was a way they could pay for the service, e.g., HRA Vol. II, pp. 81 and 221. HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 670.

say, a tailor - the gloves would have been knitted or knotted in some way and a great many men, women and children knew how to do this.[52] Secondly, it was common to make presents of materials or clothing, especially among the non-convict classes and this continued to be the case well into the Nineteenth Century.[53] The way in which clothing was offered in its raw state as material, pins and needles argues that its intrinsic value as a consumer item was even more important than its social significance when converted into garments. This is also reflected by the dimension of the second-hand clothing market and the number of times a garment changed hands in the course of its useful life. Clothing was, in fact, an investment. It could be converted at any time into ready cash. The English working class did this in pawn shops and more delicate negotiations took place discreetly among middle class men and women. Scarcity of clothing in the colonies exaggerated its value but relative affluence banished the necessity of converting it into currency in pawn shops, no evidence of which can be found in Sydney before 1815. Thirdly, as long as there were materials at hand there was employment opportunity for men and women in making them up; ready-made clothing as we know it today, simply did not exist. Fourthly, such transactions took place successfully on private initiative - the materials and the employment were possible without any planned or unforeseen Government intervention.

While Clark had been wringing his hands and sighing at the enforced separation from his wife (about whom, interestingly, he dreamt a great deal - in his dreams his darling Betsy was clad in a wide variety of garments, most recurringly her black riding habit), it is touching to note, with hindsight, the simplicity of his wants at this stage

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52. F. Thompson, op cit., p. 93. Laura's grandfather would come indoors, "take a stocking out of his pocket and sit down and knit".

53. H. McCrae (ed.), G. McCrae, Journal, William Brooks, Melbourne, 1978, p. 122. On 25 April 1843, Georgiana unpacked a box sent to her by relatives in England and "found a brown merino dress & cape, a straw bonnett [sic] ready trimmed, 2 doz. gloves, an umbrella, cap-ribbons, tapes, cottons, needles & pins, 2 frocks for Lucia, [the baby] from her godmother ..." and on 3 May 1843, Georgiana being in straightened circumstances "went to Mrs Myers to offer some of the gloves, ribbons & artificial flowers for sale 'at prime cost' for ready cash only", p. 123.

of the epic of the First Settlement. Another pair of gloves, forsooth! Not a month after his arrival in the colony he was complaining that the rigour of his duties was such that he had to keep his clothes on day and night.[54] On Thursday 28 February 1788 he noted: "Have not had my cloaths [sic] off since last Saturday - have either had the guard or the picket".[55] His wants were certainly drastically altered by life in the colony. On board ship not long after he had conceived a desire for a new pair of gloves, he was finding the tropical nights a little too warm for his accustomed night-caps (he did have trouble keeping nightcaps on his head as well and fussed about this problem accordingly[56]) so he gave one of the convict men some thread to make him a hairnet[57]. Picket and guard duty were to drive all thoughts of such luxuries out of Lieutenant Clark's carefully clad head, at least momentarily - later when he was to go to Norfolk Island, he was very grateful for a gift of tea and stockings from Captain Campbell.[58]

Clark did not have a high opinion of convict women but nevertheless got one Mrs Hart to make him some trousers which she did to his satisfaction in six days.[59] He was also obliged to have dealings with the women in order to get his linen washed and worried himself silly about it when there was an inclement turn to the weather the day after washing day.[60] Some of his confreres were not as lucky as Clark, who recovered his linen in good order:

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54. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 84.

55. op cit., p. 89.

56. R. Clark, Journal, p. 30.

57. R. Clark, Journal, p. 29. To put Lieut. Clark's nightcap in perspective, it must be noted, however, that the convicts of the Calcutta were provided with nightcaps to the value of 7d. each at a total cost to the British Government of £1/15/-. The women's nightcaps at 1s.3d. were a little dearer, but as there were fewer women to be provided for, the total cost was not exorbitant, viz. £1/5/-, HRA, Vol. IV, p. 4. See also C.M.H. Clark, op cit., p. 81, in which he notes that worsted nightcaps were provided for those men of the First Fleet whose hair it might be necessary to cut off.

58. Cobley, op cit., Vol. II, p. 159.

59. R. Clark, Journal, pp. 29 and 31.

60. op cit., p. 37.

> ... the doctor met with a great loss this afternoon, one of the convict women whom he gave some things to wash for him said that she had lost seven pairs of stockings overboard but that some of the other women have stolen them which is my opinion D----- B------ if they were to lose anything of mine that I gave them to wash I would cut them to pieces. [61]

Clark's hatred and fear of the female convicts who defied all his conventional needs to worship women as goddesses as he did his wife, was to cause him to exercise a sickening physical brutality toward them while he was stationed on Norfolk Island. For all the irritation and sympathy with the doctor's loss - a search was organized below decks the next day - the stockings could not be found.[62] Very soon after arrival the settlers were to find that the impossibility of replacing items of footwear or clothing once lost, damaged or stolen in the colony, was to exaggerate its value enormously.

The rest of the voyage provided unofficial opportunities to acquire things - Clark picked up a "very fine" piece of nankeen at the Cape for four shillings; to lose things - "Captain Meredith informed Major Ross that he could not go on with the men's clothing, as the tailor had lost shears overboard" (a serious loss as the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty had only seen fit to provide the First Fleet with six pairs); to give away things - "gave Williams an old red jacket, being so bad that I could not wear it any more"; to recycle things - "[I] was obliged to cut up one of my shirts for pockets and lining, I could not wear it any longer, it being torn and gone so bad"; and finally, to pay for things - "Drew a quart of rum to give the tailor and the man that cut my hair a glass of grog each"[63] (Clark had had two pairs of breeches made from the piece of nankeen he bought at the Cape). Note that Clark as employer paid in rum rather than cash. If the barber and the tailor had wanted cash they would have had to trade the rum again to get it. Payment in goods rather than currency where possible was already an established practice of the employer class in England and was to be favourably altered by the working class in the early history of the Australian

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61. op cit., p. 51.

62. op cit., p. 52.

63. op cit., p. 78.

colonies. Contrary to the generalized assertion by many historians based on no precise evidence concerning individual preferences,[64] this writer found very little evidence of convicts **soliciting** payment in rum in the very early 1800s. Accounts kept by employers show that where there was a **choice** in payment between alcohol and other luxury goods, convicts sought payment mostly in luxury clothing, tea, sugar and tobacco. What should be stressed is that the interests of the employer class lay in paying in rum which they could value and/or dilute as they chose. A notable historical development for the working class in the colonies was, in fact, its success in obtaining payment, not only **not** in rum but not in kind at all. The fact of such a change in payment from the truck system to payment in cash being desired and won in the colonies - thanks to the greater bargaining power of labour - is impressive testimony to working class understanding and ambition with regard to the price of its labour.

To return to the evidence regarding ways of obtaining clothing, naturally, the variety and flexibility of private transactions under difficult and, indeed, extraordinary conditions was something that the cumbersome evolution of the Government contract system, slightly more streamlined as it was since Pepys' first systematic attack, could not emulate. It is this very variety and flexibility that provides evidence for the greater inherent value of clothing as a consumer item in a society not yet saturated with the material benefits of the Industrial Revolution.

Lieutenant Clark's journal then, showed that there were many possible ways for officers and soldiers,[65] and far fewer options for soldiers and convicts to supplement their wardrobes within the limited context of the voyage from England to Botany Bay, although as with food, the officer class suffered almost as much as the poor through scarcity of clothing during the first years of settlement. The officer/employer class was better off for bedding and once regular communications with England were established, their clothing requirements were readily supplied from home. The only

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64. Most recently Hirst, op cit., pp. 36-37.

65. Cobley, op cit., p.111.

three options for the poor to acquire clothing apparent from Clark's journal were to be given it, to work for it, or to steal it. English social and economic circumstances had severely curtailed the first two and condemned the practice of the third option even unto exile. Such condemnation did not, however, reduce the effectiveness of the option of stealing. As will be shown in Chapter 2, it became the single greatest possible area of initiative in the acquisition of clothing during the early years of the colony. It was replaced astonishingly quickly by the chance to work, an option not effectively available in England but one quickly grasped by people in the colony with tangible results for their wardrobes.

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To return to the officially conceived initiatives for clothing the convicts and soldiers of New South Wales. As has been mentioned already, the system of calling for tender did not necessarily guarantee the supply of clothing as required. Not only was most of the women's clothing left behind, but of the 327 pairs of stockings which made it to Port Jackson, 140 pairs were damaged.[66] So there was not even one spare pair each to issue to the women in the first year after their arrival. Phillip had found by the time the Fleet reached Rio de Janiero,

> With respect to the women's cloathing [sic], it was made of very slight material, most too small, and in general came to pieces in a few weeks.

Later in the same letter to Nepean, he envisaged recycling some sacking in which he had bought bread, "the sacks being strong Russia will be used hereafter in cloathing [sic] the convicts, many of whom are nearly naked."[67] While Phillip was undeniably taking the best possible initiatives in the interests of his charges, these were hardly calculated to flatter the dignity of even the lowest of the low.

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66. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, pp. 111-112.

67. ibid.

Of the clothing which was available in Port Jackson, little or none was suited to the wear and tear of clearing and founding a settlement. The convict clothing was made of such poor material that it disintegrated rapidly. The wearing apparel of free men fared no better:

> ... who is the King? the Queen? the Ministers? what's the whim? Our whim will soon be, to go Naked, for you know, 'When we are at Rome' etc. As for my part I shall soon be obliged to make a Virtue of Necessity for I have torn almost all my Cloaths [sic] to pieces by going into the Woods, and though we do not want for Taylors [sic], we do Woolen Drapers. 68

Worgan's rueful comment underlined what was quickly perceived as a major problem: the absence of materials and equipment with which to mend clothing and footwear. What must rank as the greatest piece of absurdity out of which a Gilbert and a Sullivan could have constructed a riotous rollick had it occurred just a little later in the history of Admiralty initiative, concerned the size of the clothing. That it be left behind was a little inconvenient, it must be admitted; that it be made of such cheap material that it fell apart in a fortnight was trying indeed; but that the contractors should have conceived the convicts and soldiers, occupying as they did a diminutive moral standard in British society, as literally undersized when they were having the slop clothing made up, was the very last word in a long chain of incompetence. Major Ross was already peevish and inclined to let off steam about inadequate conditions of service being experienced by his men. His indignation was heightened when he discovered that:

> As the largest size [of trousers] we have now with us are [sic] too small for some of our men, which has obliged them to take up three pairs to make themselves two out of them, it will remain with their Lordships to order what deductions they may think fit to allow them for this unnecessary expense. 69

Governor Phillip had already written to Nepean - with more forebearance, as was his wont:

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68. Worgan in Rose, op cit., p. 28.

69. HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 412, Major Ross to Secretary Stephens, 10 July 1788.

> A great part of the cloathing [sic], I have sir, already observed was very bad, and a great part of it was too small for people of common size. 70

The possibility of issuing clothing in accordance with the official allowance was diminished by factors such as those discussed above and others such as the policy of burning clothing or jettisoning it if there was bad prison fever or other contagious illness reported on board a transport. The same factors which caused a diminished allowance of food resulted in an inadequate supply of clothing, but to the bureaucrats and administrators of the period some distinctions seem to have been apparent. The colony was supposed to become self-sufficient in food fairly quickly. Despite the pipe dreams about flax production, it was never seriously considered that the colony would become self-sufficient in the intricacies of clothes production in the short term. The interesting difference in official attitudes towards shortages of food and clothing both in Britain and the colony was the grudging acceptance of the reality that the colony was unable to become self-sufficient in food as quickly as had been envisaged and the simultaneous steadfast refusal to admit the consequences of the failure to ensure a supply of adequate clothing. Vessels were officially chartered to go to the Cape of Good Hope, Batavia and to India to obtain provisions but no initiative was taken by Phillip or any subsequent Governor until Macquarie to buy more material or ready-made clothing, even though it was acknowledged officially and unofficially in the colony throughout the 1790s that there was real misery suffered by the convicts without it.

In the most immediate sense, of course, people die without food and even the most hardened bureaucrats of the Home Office or the Treasury could be prevailed upon to accept additional expenditure on rations. However, the consequences of inadequate bedding and clothing for a group of people whose physical well-being was continually being eroded by inadequate food and conditions of work and shelter, were also of some concern to official and unofficial observers in the colony. For people with

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70. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, p. 389.

literally nothing to cover them at night but a scanty collection of rags, the months of June and July at Port Jackson, and even Norfolk Island, were very hard indeed, as were the months of December and January for their contemporaries in London.[71] From Phillip to King, the despatches pleaded an insufficiency of clothing and bedding but no serious official colonial initiative to acquire supplies to make up the regulation issue was ever taken before the arrival of Governor Macquarie. However, circumstances in the colony had changed official perceptions of minimum acceptable standards of living in that there was real concern for the sufferings of the poor in the context of clothing whereas in England this was not the case. As for the supply from England, it continued to be bedevilled by almost inhuman error as described above, with further variations on an already hopeless inefficiency which will be discussed below. Apart from Phillip's hope that the bread sacking could be converted to clothing, the only evidence this writer has found in these early years that official steps were taken to rectify the inadequate supply of wearing apparel was that in September 1788, Phillip did order Captain Hunter to purchase £10 worth of coarse blue and white thread and £10 worth of materials necessary for mending the convicts' shoes when he took the Sirius to the Cape to get additional food supplies.[72] Given the already dire distress of the soldiers and convicts for want of clothing, this was a pathetic concession to the requirements of the struggling settlement.

The system for issuing food and clothing to the convicts did alter throughout the period, mostly to take account of abuse by ships' masters. In general, as far as clothing

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71. Lieutenant R. Clark, Letterbook, Mitchell Library Microfilm No. CY584, 10 July 1788, "I am not surprised at their [the convicts'] dying so fast, they have nothing to lay on but the cold ground, there being no beds come out for them ...", and Collins, op cit., p. 301, July 1793, "The weather of this winter being colder than any that we had before experienced, great exertions were made to clothe all the labouring convicts; and for that purpose the work of the taylors [sic] had for some time been confined to them". The implication is clear; not all convicts evidently had sufficient clothing in the winter of 1793.

72. HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 414. It was not until the advent of Governor Macquarie that a Governor could take it upon himself to order large quantities of slop clothing worth thousands of pounds for the convicts for what seemed to him the good and sufficient reason that there was no clothing in the store. HRA, Vol. 7, p. 527, Macquarie to Liverpool, 9 November 1812.

was concerned, convicts were supposed to receive an issue on leaving England, another on arriving at Port Jackson and from then on annually - or even six monthly when supplies permitted. On 5 February 1788, Mr Miller the commissary, Mr Shortland the agent and Mr Freeman the commissary's clerk, visited the Prince of Wales and the Lady Penrhyn to issue clothes to the convicts. Surgeon Bowes' account is worth quoting in full:

> ...slops of every kind [were issued] to all the women and children on board, previous to their landing tomorrow. One woman, [Ann Smith], who had always behaved amiss during the voyage, upon giving her some slops and at the same time, Mr Miller taking notice of the very indifferent character she bore and how little she merited the slops, throwed 'em down on the deck and would not have anything. 73

This was the first indication that, destitute or not, the convicts had their own feelings about the clothing they were obliged to wear. By the late 1790s, even Governor Hunter was aware that the convicts thought better of themselves than to want to wear slop clothing.[74] Evidence that convicts wanted to and did dress well was provided by members of the higher classes who were somewhat piqued to see them going about the streets more than decently clad.[75] On her second voyage to Australia (1799-1800), Mrs King described the convict section of the ship's company:

> This being Sunday, our ladies dressed out very neat and clean excepting one that calls herself Lady Underhill - she complains very much that she cannot bear the things Government has provided for her, and unfortunately she has but few others. I never saw such a proud creature in all my life, and with all her rags and dirt would you believe she mounts a muslin Turban which is oftener as black as Ink

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73. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 57.

74. HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 78.

75. Bonwick Transcripts, Series II, Box 23, op cit. At a later date in evidence to Commissioner Bigge, a JP, Mr R. Cartwright saw a definite connection between convict status and convict clothing: "I would ... strongly recommend that convicts of every description should, from their first arrival here, wear some badge of distinction and disgrace. All those who may be under the first sentence should be clothed alike. This, I conceive, is the least punishment that ought to be inflicted on those long-coated Gentlemen who on their arrival in New South Wales assume the dress and consequence of persons of high rank and who look down upon their superiors with an art of contempt ..." (my emphasis). Earlier in the history of the colony, people who stole or received stolen goods were made to wear clothing marked accordingly, see Cobley, op cit., Vol. II, p. 57.

> than it is white, then when her Ladyship employs a person to wash it - she wears a black ribbon. 76

However, for the first few years of settlement, the issue was not to be well-clad but to be clad at all. Among the multitude of different reactions to the circumstances was even a piece of black humour which in its own way described a general sentiment. On 14 June 1788, Ann Smith was charged by Mr Smith, the constable, with insolence. He had told her to put out a fire and

> She replied that she would do so, if he would go to the Governor and get her a pair of shoes ... 77

The extreme scarcity of clothing for convicts and soldiers gave rise to a great increase in the volume of theft and also to a proliferation of instances of convicts selling their clothes. Depending on their physiological framework and personal supplies, convicts either began to sell clothes to buy food or to sell food to buy clothes. Because of contemporary upper-class obsession with the lower-class having access to drink, it was assumed and has been assumed by historians into the twentieth century that **the** reason why convicts sold anything was to buy grog. That this was not the case is evidenced by Government Orders on the subject. Trade in both directions was so significant that Collins reported intricate measures to deal with it:

> ... if in future a convict should give information against any person to whom he had sold his clothes the seller should receive them again, be permitted to keep whatever was paid for them, and receive no punishment himself for the sale. 78

The extent of the problem can fairly be measured by the leniency of the punishment. The withholding of clothes as punishment for theft[79] and the issue of extra clothing as an incentive to approved behaviour[80] also indicated the vital importance of clothing

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76. M. Bassett, The Governor's Lady Mrs Phillip Gidley King, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, p. 46. There seemed to be particularly strong feelings about members of the lower orders following the fashions in headdress, see also note 125 below.

77. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 165.

78. Collins, op cit., p. 53.

79. Collins, op cit., p. 47.

80. Cobley, op cit., Vol. II, p. 11; and Rose, op cit., p. 76.

which had the value of currency in those first few years. The available evidence does not permit a conclusive statement to be made about the value of clothing for the majority of the convicts relative to the value they placed on alcohol in the years to 1800. At the same time, however, the volume of clothing thefts indicates a huge demand as does fragmentary evidence of sales and profits on haberdashery and clothing.[81] The quantity of official regulations concerning convict clothing indicates a preoccupation with various aspects of the problem of keeping the right wearing apparel on the right backs, a problem which only existed because of the artificially high value placed on clothing in short supply. For those who owned bespoke clothing, keeping it in their possession was an even greater problem. So much buying and selling of stolen wearing apparel as well as that rightfully offered for sale is ample evidence of the immense economic and social value of clothing in this early period. This trend was to intensify as convicts began to accumulate legitimately-earned income in any form which they began to dispose of on clothing.

As we have seen, the majority of convicts in the colony were barely adequately dressed. Although they were issued clothing on arrival, this was of poor quality and for convicts and soldiers alike there were insufficient replacement stores. Long before the end of 1788, observers were recording the result:

> The distress of the lower classes for clothes was almost equal to their other wants. The stores had been long exhausted and winter was at hand. Nothing more ludicrous can be conceived than the expedients of substituting, shifting, and patching, which ingenuity devised, to eke out wretchedness, and preserve the remains of decency. The superior dexterity of the women was particularly conspicuous. Many a guard have I seen mount, in which the number of soldiers without shoes, exceeded that which had yet preserved remnants of leather. 82

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81. See Chapters 2 and 3.

82. Captain W. Tench, A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson, etc. (London, 1793), reprinted Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1961, p. 166.

The position of the women who had suffered the full rigours of the British Government supply system was one of extreme distress[83] as Phillip had imagined it would be. He did his best both to alert the responsible bureaucrats at home[84] and to apply the strictest economy with what was available at Port Jackson[85] but the amount of clothing at hand could only be stretched so far, and that was not far enough. To exacerbate already existing tensions, Major Ross's complaints about the inadequate clothing provision for the marines contributed their mite, and his success in securing supplies for his men at the expense of the convicts contained the germ of the military/civilian division which was to flourish in the colony:

> And as to those necessaries which were sent out for the use of the settlement, they [the soldiers] have not only had a full proportion, but likewise a considerable part of those articles which were intended for the convicts only, such as shirts, frocks, and shoes, and I believe of the necessary articles sent out for the use of the settlement now remaining the greatest part are in possession of the detachment. 86

The interesting point about Phillip's plaint is not, however, that the military possessed the muscle to get more than its fair share of the available clothing supply, but that in the prevailing social climate it was acceptable for soldiers to wear convict clothing at all. That soldiers of the period were prepared to wear the clothing allotted to criminals to which enormous social stigma was attached on sight by members of the upper classes, indicates very convincingly that there was almost no dividing line at all between the social strata that produced convicts and those that produced soldiers. The fact that the marines did not feel it beneath them to wear convict-issue clothing and went so far as to steal articles thereof, shows as convincingly as a document like Private Easty's journal that there was no more or less acquaintance with brutality or the things of the spirit in either world. Private Easty's laconic recording of the number of lashes he received for various misdemeanours and his indignation at what he

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83. HRNSW, Vol. II, pp. 746-7.

84. See his first despatch, quoted in Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 141.

85. Cobley, op cit, Vol. II, p. 11.

86. op cit., p. 145.

perceived to be unjustified temporal interference with people's status in the hereafter on the part of priests in Rio de Janiero, show him to have the same kinds of concerns as convicts.[87] Occasional surviving letters and fragments written by convicts show that same blend of resignation before trying circumstances and consciousness of their rights which was peculiar to the English labouring classes from whence came convict and soldier alike. As the colony progressed the similar social origins of soldier and convict, the theoretical social distinction between soldier and felon and the actual economic differences between soldier and hard-working prisoner, became fruitful sources of discontent.[88]

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At the end of the chapter there are two tables, the first listing Government supplies of clothing to the colony and the second demonstrating the extent of private enterprise activity exclusive of items brought by individuals as personal speculation.[89] The bar graph at Figure 1 represents an approximation of the volume of incoming private investments in haberdashery and is an impressive testimony to convict social aspirations and economic husbandry. Members of the middle class had almost all their clothing requirements supplied by their families direct from England so their local clothing consumption formed a relatively insignificant factor in the colony's total imports. From Table 1 it can be seen, amongst other things, that issues of slop clothing to convicts were incomplete and irregular, even more so for the women and

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87. J. Easty, Memorandum of the Transactions of a Voyage from England to Botany Bay 1787-1793, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1965.

88. J. Mudie, The Felonry of New South Wales (London 1837), Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1964, pp. 32-5.

89. While it is impossible to estimate the volume of small-scale private enterprise initiatives, there is, however, evidence to show how profitable such small-scale investments were, see above, note 16, and Macarthur Papers, Vol. V, Mitchell Library Manuscript No. 2901, Letters and Accounts from H.H. Macarthur 1810-1829, 24 March 1816, "Since April last I have succeeded in building a Tide Mill which brings me £300 currency per annum. This mill I paid for out of the proceeds of a case of Haberdashery sent out to Maria & by sale of a few cattle for currency, it cost £600 currency". McCrae, op cit., gives evidence of this throughout.

children, than the men. Table 2 shows the haberdashery brought in by private enterprise. By combining the two tables we can see that before 1800 at least the possibility of being completely, if not well clothed for the majority of the people of the colony, was remote. The marked interest in clothing as demonstrated by imports into the colony after 1800 indicates a consumer preference that had been expressed long before that if factors such as the time-lag of shipping and communications are considered. Complete Government issue of clothing to all convicts before 1800 occurred six times in twelve years, namely in August 1789, October 1792, November 1794, December 1795, and in April and December 1796. The rest of the issues were partial - to some men, some women - e.g. the flax-dressers, only - or to all convicts "as the present state of the public store can afford". Given the poor quality of the clothing itself and the absence of consistent supplies from private initiatives, an important consequence of this shortage was that theft of wearing apparel became a significant and ever-present reality in the colony. It was all very well for contemporary observers to inveigh against the absence of morality in the colony and to attribute this to all manner of causes, from too much grog to not enough lawful marriage; the fact that there was literally not enough clothing to go around, and later, not enough nice clothing for everyone, meant that a lot of people were stealing - or buying stolen clothing - simply to keep warm and decently covered. Theft of blankets and bedding was also very common until Governor Macquarie's time.

Exactly the same problems that had occurred initially in supplying the settlement with clothing, continued until the arrival of Macquarie. The clothing of convicts even came under the scrutiny of the all-seeing Commissioner Bigge, who elicited from Major George Druitt, the colony's Chief Engineer, in October 1819 that there had been no recent supply of clothing or footwear from England.[90] It still arrived damaged because of the way it had been packed or stored on board ship or did not arrive at

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90. J. Ritchie (ed.), The Evidence to the Bigge Reports. New South Wales under Governor Macquarie, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1971, p. 15.

all.[91] The Duke of Portland wrote to Hunter telling him of quantities of clothing to be sent by the Buffalo - then added that as it would not fit in the Buffalo, it would be shipped on the Porpoise. It took from March 1798 until October 1799 for the Admiralty to condemn the Porpoise as unseaworthy. During that time two other ships were sent with stores including clothing - the Lady Shore which was lost to mutineers and the Walker. As to the clothing on the Walker, Collins commented dourly that the damage amounted to "much of what had been put on board".[92] A chorus began to arise from Port Jackson and to be ignored and misunderstood by Whitehall.[93] Hunter lacked Macquarie's straightforward approach to administration on the spot. The gentle but firm discouragement from Whitehall to deter Governors from sending for extra supplies, even when the bureaucrats admitted they were necessary and cheaper in India than they were in England,[94] operated on Hunter more strongly than his personal on-the-spot perceptions. So did the incessant stream of detailed instructions telling him how he ought to be accounting for stores.

From December 1795 until July 1799, Hunter wrote with increasing fervour to elicit clothing supplies from England. It was not in him to send to India on his own initiative or buy some cloth from a passing ship with trade goods. Yet neither could he ignore the sufferings of the convicts without adequate clothing. By 1798, after three years without clothing supplies, he almost worked up the courage to exceed his orders, quite a feat for a Naval man:

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91. Cargoes sent out on behalf of private enterprise arrived damaged occasionally (see Macarthur Papers, Vol. V, op cit., Hannibal Macarthur to John Macarthur, 27 November 1812) but this was the exception rather than the rule. Individuals' property also suffered. After her second voyage from England, Mrs King found the contents of her boxes "in a dismal condition", most of her little things spoilt from lying so long wet in the baggage room of the old Porpoise. Ten pounds' worth of calico muslin were lost and she was thereby "a few gowns out of pocket". See Bassett, op cit., pp. 61-62.

92. Collins, op cit., Vol. II, p. 275.

93. HRA, Vol. III, p. 490.

94. HRA, Vol. I, p. 215, Grenville's comments to Phillip on the subject of economy were to be continued by the Duke of Portland and Lord Hobart.

> At the moment, were a ship to arrive here with a cargo of iron, steel, pitch, tar, ... tools for agriculture ... slop cloathing [sic], etc, etc, etc, however averse I am, I should feel myself compelled to purchase whatever might be the expence or let the affairs of the colony stand still ... There is not a store of any kind now in the colony ... The people are, for want of clothing, indecently naked. 95

Perhaps more than any other official, Hunter was aware of the needs, preferences and values concerning wearing apparel held by the convicts he governed.[96] However, he never managed to translate this awareness into anything more active on their behalf than persistant importuning of Whitehall to bestir itself for the convicts. There had been correspondence between Calcutta merchants and Phillip on the supply of slop clothing to the colony[97] and Dundas even wrote to Phillip in a letter dated 19 December 1792, "it will probably be the ultimate determination of His Majesty's servants that the entire supply [of wearing apparel] shall be from Bengal"[98]. That nothing came of this was an indication of the lowly priority of His Majesty's

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95. HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 399, Governor Hunter to Under-Secretary King, 4 June 1798.

96. B.H. Fletcher (ed.), D.D. Mann, The Present Picture of New South Wales (London 1811), John Ferguson, Sydney, 1979. Fletcher argues that a section of this work is in fact Mann's rewriting of Hunter's opinions, evidence and ideas. In the light of Hunter's views in note 115 below, the following would definitely appear to be Hunter's rather than Mann's: "The unfit clothing sent out for the convicts has been a subject of sincere complaint, as being dispatched without any regard to quality or comfort [it should be sent out unmade] for the wearers would feel much greater satisfaction from being allowed to receive it in the piece, that they might suit it to their respective wants, as well as consult their own comforts: Those who might have less leisure than their fellow prisoners, could have their clothing made by the tailors of the different settlements, while the others would be happy to make their own." That an ex-Governor should write in terms of "quality", "comfort", "satisfaction", "suitability", "leisure" and "happiness" in connection with his convict charges and their clothing argues strongly for an awareness on his part of convict preferences in the matter. Hunter went on to become a Vice-Admiral before his death in London in 1821. His naval background and rank would suggest his knowledge of the lower orders to be limited. However, it is testimony to the convicts' social and political awareness that during his tour of duty in New South Wales, they were prepared and able to make such a person as Hunter in such an official position see the issue from their perspective. In the context of food, Hirst, op cit., pp. 48-49 shows that the convicts also had strong personal preferences which they compelled officials to recognize. Far from being degenerate idle beasts, the convicts were in general people with a normally developed sense of dignity which governed their tastes in food and clothing. What was unusual was that in the colony, these preferences were thrust very forcibly on the attention of the employer class.

97. HRA, Vol. I, pp. 357-359.

98. op cit., p. 407.

settlement in New South Wales, but also in the view of this writer, of the yet unprofessional nature of His Majesty's said servants. Changeover of staff, insufficient attention to detail, lack of appropriate decision-making and behind-the-scenes conflicts all contributed to a bureaucrat's nightmare: avoidable wastage of public monies on a large scale. The history of the Government Store and the supply of clothing to the settlement at Port Jackson does not warrant Nairn's assertion that by the 1770s "Britain had a relatively expert establishment of public servants experienced in colonial administration and in the assessment of overseas trading possibilities".[99] The division of duties and powers between Ministries and within each Ministry itself had yet to be streamlined sufficiently to allow relatively simple logistic financial and administrative exercises such as these to take place. Even when the Government stood to make money out of the efficient supply and administration of stores through the opening of a Government store under Governor King, its performance continued to be lamentable. Cannon's description of the mechanisms by which British administrators controlled emigration to Australia at a later date is apt in this context - he said that it was:

> ... practically immobilised in the velvet grip of nonchalant fatalism, a philosophy which by insisting that everything would turn out for the best in the end, ensured that nothing could be achieved without extra-ordinary disorganization and human suffering. 100

Lest it be thought that accounts of human suffering were an exaggeration, let us listen to the voices of no less than four witnesses, beginning and concluding with Hunter:

> Permit me, my Lord, to remind your Grace that we have not now an article of slops in the colony. Your Grace's own private feelings will suggest what I must experience by continual petitions from people nearly naked, expressive of wants which it is not in my power to relieve. 101

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99. G.J. Abbott and N.B. Nairn (eds), Economic Growth of Australia, 1788-1821, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969, "The Selection of Botany Bay", N.B. Nairn, p. 49.

100. M. Cannon, Who's Master? Who's Man? Australia in the Victorian Age, Nelson, Melbourne, 1971, p. 115.

101. HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 346, December, 1795.

Collins:

> The convicts in general had suffered much through want of clothing & bedding. Indeed, during the late harvest, several gangs had been seen labouring in the fields, as free of clothing of any kind as savages of the country. This had made them insolent ... 102

Atkins:

> The convicts are literally naked so much are we neglected at home. 103

Caley:

> At night the generality of prisoners lay down as they rise, without a rag to cover them, except such as they wear in the day. 104

Hunter:

> Suffer me here, my dear sir, to beseach you to recollect that the whole colony are actually naked; that no cloathing [sic] worth mentioning has been received here for more than two years ... the most studied economy has been practis'd to endeavour to cover the nakedness of the people, and at this moment the anxiety which I experience from daily and hourly petitions is excessive. Not a blanket to wrap themselves up during the night, and I fear for the consequences to general health of the settlement. 105

The shortages continued into King's administration after which time the colonists were no longer physically or economically dependent on Government supply. King's expression of the problem inclined to the burlesque:

> Of slops we shall have few or none after the next serving in July. At Norfolk Island they now have none. I, therefore, hope a proportion will be sent as soon as possible, otherwise we shall not only be sans culottes, but sans chemises. 106

Events proved that he was right to see the farcical side:

> Two issues of slops have been made, which has so much reduced the remaining quantity that it has been necessary to use a part of the military cloathing sent by the Coromandel for those at public labour.

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102. Collins, op cit., Vol. II, p. 142, January 1799.

103. R. Atkins, Journal 1792-1810, microfilm of the original FM 3585, Mitchell Library, p. 208, 1 January 1799.

104. HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 882, Caley to Banks, 1 November 1802.

105. op cit., p. 504, Hunter to Under-Secretary King, 1 November 1798. See also Hunter to Portland, 27 July 1799.

106. op cit., p. 781, Governor King to Under-Secretary King, 5 June 1802.

> Such part as may be required by individuals, I have directed the Commissary to sell on the terms prescribed, but, as they are mostly military dresses, they but ill suit the settler ... 107

It is fitting to draw a curtain over the British Government supply of clothing to the convicts of New South Wales on the picture of them at work on the roads in military dress. Soldiers wearing convict issue, settlers wearing soldiers' drill; no wonder observers found it hard to make sense of this upside-down world in which even outward appearances which should have been infallible, were worse than unreliable; they were infuriatingly misleading.

British Government policy was consistent in agreeing that it should be responsible for clothing the felons of New South Wales in this period. It was also consistent in its failure to do so, thus stimulating the primitive beginnings of the clothing industry in New South Wales.[108] Coarse woollen and linen cloth was made locally and as early as 1790 convict women had been set to work making up the cloth which survived the trip from England.[109] Governor Phillip came to realize this was not such a good idea:

> ... there are many little abuses in the cutting out & making up of clothing which cannot be done away with until a proper building is erected for that purpose, and a proper person found to superintend it ... the quantity of cloth immediately necessary when the store ships arrive is now become so very considerable, that I find it impossible (having the clothing to make) to supply the convicts regularly at stated periods. 110

The system was relatively simple in theory, the Navy Board called for tender, and a contract was accepted. The stores were then duly supplied, packed and stowed under the supervision of the Naval Agent at the relevant port. In practice, as we have seen, the colony's wants tested the application of the theory and found it inadequate over a period of more than twenty years. The new social fact to emerge was that governors

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107. op cit., p. 875, Governor King to Hobart, 30 October 1802.

108. Abbott and Nairn, op cit., "The Pastoral Industry", G.J. Abbott, p. 252 and Ritchie, op cit., pp. 15-16.

109. Tench, Narrative, pp. 199 and 259.

110. Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 275.

in the colony came to acknowledge that they were responsible for clothing the poor. By the early 1800s this innovation led to employers providing new clothing or money in lieu twice a year as part of convict labourers' basic entitlement over and above their wages.[111] Colonial conditions forced on successive governors and eventually on employers the recognition that the rags of the poor were a matter of official concern rather than a consequence of their own improvidence.

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In terms of the standard of living, misery, morality or otherwise of the colony and its inhabitants, there was a wide range of conflicting contemporary comment. There was pressure to bias accounts going to England concerning the convicts, not to mention the soldiers, thus reflecting positively or negatively on the administration of the time, according to the political position of the writer. In addition, it must be observed that there are very few societies without a culture related to alcohol and its consumption. England was certainly not lacking in this respect and cultural attitudes towards drink had a strictly class-based content.

Against a background of real shortages of many items and the absence of Government supplied clothing for the three years 1796-1799, a variety of contemporary writers in the colony were describing its inhabitants in order to best reflect on themselves. There was a general agreement that the convicts were totally morally depraved and the settlers not much better, but a variety of rationales lay behind this. To some observers, for instance, gambling was the simple root cause; to others it was gambling for drink that was the problem. For yet others it was women; either not enough of, or too much of under improper circumstances. For others it was an accumulation of previous administrative inefficiency in the colony. And there was

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111. See, for example, Mrs King's Stock Account Book 1807-1832, Mitchell Library Manuscript No. A865-A866. Mrs MacArthur's letters and accounts likewise provide such evidence from as early as 1795. See, for example, HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 511.

another group who blamed the monopoly of trading held by the officers in the early 1790s.

Another interpretation of the period is possible which puts all these in a reasonable perspective. There was a real shortage of Government clothing and supplies in general. There was also a shortage of private investments, and at first, private investments which bought materials for people to clothe themselves. Of all those who commented on the physical misery of the clothing shortage, Collins was the only one to describe a metaphysical one: the people were becoming "insolent". In other words, there was some real lack of dignity felt by the inadequately clothed convicts. When they were emancipated, it was very difficult for them to obtain clothing until private investments brought a sufficient continuing inflow of haberdashery goods. As soon as it was physically possible to buy fine clothing, however, the convicts and emancipists began to do so. What needs to be said about these years is that both patterns of crime (see Chapter 3) and consumption patterns made possible by high wages in the colony, were reflecting the tastes, preferences and interests of many members of the lower classes. This was resulting in discernibly different patterns of behaviour among the convicts and labourers - as early as 1803, for example, The Sydney Gazette was reporting wedding parties in the unsavoury Rocks area with a tone of superior disapproval and condescension - and it was this reality which contributed to the plethora of official complaints about gambling, whoring, etc. which have survived almost unquestioned.[112] In a society unique as was New South Wales, lacking the traditional

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112. Where these myths have been questioned as in Robinson, op cit. in which there is important evidence as to the continuity of family life, there has still been no explicit understanding of the class bias of reporting on the early colony. Robinson has pointed out that one of the factors operating on those describing life in the colony was that they were doing so as the basis of British perceptions and values not necessarily shared by those born in the colony. What she did not remark upon was the class origins or pretensions of the observers which would incline them to make particular judgements of groups of people perceived by them as lower on the social scale whether in England or Australia.

means of keeping the poor in their place,[113] a society which depended immediately on the labour of the poor for its physical survival, the convicts quickly began to acquire the means to assert their preferences. Further, the upper class members of this society came from England where their political, economic and religious ideologies were actively discouraging the amusements of the poor.[114] What needs to be said about the scandalous monopoly held by the officers, for example, is that the members of the lower classes aspired to enter into such a trade relationship at all. This has never been discussed because the prevalent historiography of these early years has been rooted largely on incautious use of upper class sources to answer questions or continue debates posed by those sources and has therefore remained official-centred rather than lower class oriented. Doubtless there were many convicts who were ensnared into debt but even that was a step up the socio-economic scale as they joined debtors of the classes above them. What of those members of the working classes who were not? They were successfully taking part in a consumer relationship which they could never have conceived of entering at all had they remained in England. Thus the poor had taken the opportunity to improve their standard of living and therefore change their way of life for the better. In so doing, they offended upper class British Weltanschauung, thereby provoking that strongly indignant comment before which the historian ought to go very canny indeed.

Before the desperate shortage of clothing prevalent in the colony in the late 1790s, Hunter had written to the Duke of Portland that the convicts hired themselves out when they had finished their Government work, beginning an Australian tradition

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113. Even the law which was barely accessible to the middle class in England because of cost and time factors, was resorted to often and successfully by convicts in New South Wales. See P.J. Byrne, "Women and Criminal Law in Sydney: 1810-1821", Paper given at the third law and history conference, La Trobe University, 20 May 1984 and discussion in Chapter 2.

114. See note 17 above, E.P. Thompson, op cit., pp. 402-408, for a description of Wilberforce's ideas about the connection between moral levity and political sedition among the lower classes; the Methodist proscription of coloured dresses, personal ornaments, card-playing and the theatre; and the growing official concern for fairs as a "general rendezvous for sedition".

of overtime. Hunter specifically noted that convicts could be persuaded to work overtime by payment in kind of spirits or other small luxury items:

> It is not by an extra allowance of the common slop cloathing [sic] or the provision issued from the public store that this labour is to be obtained, for those men, as well as women, who have been some time here, and particularly those whose term is expired, ... aspire to a better kind of dress, and are desirous of indulging [themselves] with their tea and sugar, as well as ... a little tobacco and spirits at times ... (my emphasis) 115

Other evidence of the real social and therefore economic value of clothing was the list of articles to be given as encouragement to people acting as constables at Sydney, Parramatta, Toongabbie and the Hawkesbury districts in 1796:

> First. Each to have an additional suit of cloathing [sic] annually in order to their having at all times a most respectable appearance.
> Second. To have a pint of spirits served to each every Saturday." 116
> (note ordering of incentive)

In the 1790s then, the decade before which detailed evidence of consumer preference is available in the form of store-keepers' ledgers, we see that firstly, people valued nice clothing, or at the very least a respectable appearance; secondly, that in the latter half of the 1790s there was a great shortage of clothing in the colony; thirdly, that a high incidence of crime appeared to contemporary observers as in excess of what could have been expected under the circumstances. In the very early days of the colony, Phillip and Atkins both commented that the convicts were very well behaved and that the crimes they committed were no more than what could be expected from needy people. It is a matter of conjecture whether people in their official position would have reasoned the same way about a similar class of people in England. Figures of crime rates are always amenable to subjective manipulation. As the colony grew so did the vested interests of its various observers, who - among other ways of seeing things and people - recorded as crimes, deeds which would not have been regarded as criminal in England. The crime of "insolence" is interesting in this connotation, for

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115. HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 78, Hunter to Portland, 20 August 1796.

116. HRA, 1914, Vol. III, p. 567.

example.[117] While it would be inappropriate to go to the extreme of running yet another hobby horse in the causes-of-crime stakes, it may safely be said that, given prevalent British values on the moral decency of being correctly covered, shortage of clothing in an economy operating **not on rum but on scarcity,** was a significant shortage and one which directly caused theft and gambling in the years before 1815. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2. Exorbitant profiteering is a normal reaction in times of scarcity and there is evidence that men and women of **all** class backgrounds indulged. Further, there is evidence that at times there was greater profiteering on items of clothing, tea or tobacco, for instance, than on rum.[118] Evidence of high prices of clothing, thread, tea and tobacco shows that many convicts and settlers prized them greatly and were prepared and **able** to pay the prices asked. Contemporaries laboured over the examples of improvident working men and settlers who got themselves into debt by a love of excessive show but there has been little or no emphasis on the hundreds of working class people who indulged themselves with small luxuries and articles of finery **without** getting themselves into debt. Given their total income and the immense quantities of haberdashery, tea, sugar and tobacco consumed in the colony, we must postulate a large group of people who were not habitual hard drinkers, as the convict wage and settlers' living or obtainable credit stretched only so far.

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117. See Cunningham, op cit., p. 63, "Another thing worthy of observation is, that so many offences are cognisable by our magistrates here, which an English bench would not or perhaps could not take notice of, that such may be fairly said to form a full half of those which occur; for instance - insolence, neglect of work, drunkenness, running away, absence without leave, - and so on". While some English magistrates would have done their best to ensure convictions for drunkenness, for example, Cunningham was observing a restriction of civil liberties operating on the convicts which of itself did not necessarily make them criminals by English standards if infringed.

118. HRA, Vol. II, pp. 442-443. Settlers Appeal to Secretary of State. "Out of the Hunter from Bengal:- Rum bought at 8s. p'r gallon, afterwards sold from 20s. to 30s., 40s. & 60s. p'r gallon; tea bought at 10s. p'r lb., afterward sold from 30s., 50s., 60s., 80s., and as high as £8 sterling p'r lb.; sugar bought at 8d. per lb., afterwards sold from 16d. to 3s. p'r lb.; callicoes, gurra shirts, muslins, handkerchiefs, & all other articles of wearing apparel in proportion to the above .... In addition to the above, men's shoes are from 25s. to 40s. p'r pair [normal price of bottom-of-the-range shoes 2s.6d.] ... common hats, 20s. each, value 2s. and 2s.6d. in England; duck frocks, 20s. each [normal price 3s. to 4s]; printed cottons from 6s. to 18s. p'r y'd [normal price of bottom-to-middle-of-the-range cotton prints 1s.3d. to 3s.6d. per yard]."

A discussion of the consequences of British Government failure to provide adequate slop clothing for the convicts must encompass the evidence of their preference in the matter, be it fragmentary. By 1803, there was evidence from Whitehall of British officials' recognition of the physical and social importance of clothing.[119] How far this was the result of Governors' dispatches and returning Governors' observations cannot be known. Thomas Watling who had left the colony by the end of 1800 wrote:

> There is scarce a man without his mistress ... be she ever so dispicable in person or in manners, here she may depend that she will dress and live better and easier than ever she did in the prior part of her prostitution. (my emphasis) 120

Here Watling gave evidence that the naturally assumed British social connection between genteel manners and fine clothing could no longer necessarily be made in the colony.

> Many of the females indeed are the slaves of vanity and pride, and being in the custom of cohabiting with persons in affluent circumstances, never appear in the dress originally given them by the Crown, from such as these the issue is now with held, and they are struck off the victualling list. 121

Chapter 3 will give new evidence permitting the assertion that the "persons in affluent circumstances" were not all officers or gentlemen and that labouring convicts, skilled or not, were buying black silk and expensive sprigged muslin gowns for their women. There is reason to suppose that the above was written by Hunter and was therefore based on observations made before 1800, once again giving clear evidence of convict women's preferences in the matter of clothing. Similar evidence is available for men. In a letter to the Duke of Portland, Hunter explained that the male convicts preferred

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119. HRNSW, Vol. V, p. 431, Hobart to King, 24 February 1803. Hobart inclined to think that the convicts were receiving insufficient clothing for their health and comfort and directed that the allowance be increased in point of quantity. He also advocated the issue of superior quality clothing as a reward for good behaviour.

120. Quoted in M. Fletcher, Costume in Australia, 1788-1901, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1984, p. 25.

121. B.H. Fletcher, The Present Picture of New South Wales. This comment was probably made by Hunter. See notes 96 and 115 above.

trousers to breeches and stockings and that they wanted material sent out instead of ready-made slops, "as the men would prefer fitting themselves" (my emphasis).[122] The convicts wanted to dress well. It took some time for storekeepers, merchants and speculators to realize just how much they wanted to do so and how much credit they could command, but by the turn of the century the rapidly increasing inflow of haberdashery and related goods (see Table 2) and Government strictures concerning the extension of credit to the servants of the Crown, show that the convicts were beginning to fulfil their ambition.[123] The reality of these ambitions was such that the convicts took the available economic opportunities to gratify them. We can never know what proportion did not stop by the pub or drank only moderately, but we cannot fail to acknowledge that there must have been many in these categories. While not denying that some convicts dropped by public houses for a pint or two (of spirits), and a few drank themselves insensible often, the point that must be emphasized is that many did so, not dressed in their slops, but in bespoke clothing, thus demonstrating a superior standard of living which invalidated a lot of hypocritical upper class comments about lower class drinking habits. If a man and his family had sufficient disposable income to clothe themselves well, to eat well **and** to indulge in alcohol as was the case for many in the colonies, it was no longer appropriate to accuse such people of improvidence. Their disposal of surplus income was, in fact, a precise imitation of that of the employer class but with smaller amounts being outlaid on each type of luxury item. There is literary evidence concerning convict dress, firstly, in the form of indignant upper class comment expressing outrage that convicts should be able

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122. HRNSW, Vol. III, p. 217, Hunter to Portland, 10 June 1797.

123. Collins, op cit., Vol. II, p. 97, March 1798, notes that the Governor had tried to dissuade the people from getting into debt because of their craving for luxury items "or by throwing away their money in purchasing at every public auction, rags and trifles for which such exorbitant sums were enacted". He also recorded Hunter's Order concerning the extension of credit to convicts which had been first promulgated in 1788 by Phillip, Vol. II, p. 132, October 1798.

financially and morally to dress so well[124] and secondly, more patronizingly, in the form of disparaging comments on their fashion taste[125]. In the years 1800-1815, detailed evidence comes more satisfyingly perhaps, from accounts with their employers or the store-keepers.

Human wretchedness - like human happiness - is a difficult thing to generalize about. Many writers in the 1790s and early 1800s needed to see misery and attribute causes for it, because of their particular political, moral, and especially economic viewpoint. Still others, being members of a class whose daily concerns had not brought them within sight of real misery in England or Ireland, were consequently greatly shocked by what they could not avoid seeing in Port Jackson. While not denying that

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124. Cunningham, op cit., Vol. II, p. 266, such reactions were to continue into the next generation, see Mrs Charles Meredith, Notes and Sketches of New South Wales during a Residence in that Colony from 1839 to 1844, John Murray, London, 1844, pp. 33, 50-53.

125. Sydney Gazette, letter to the editor, 11 December 1803, "among all the absurdities inherent to our nature, I consider the most contemptible a solicitude of appearing what we are not and which is generally termed Affectation ... on Tuesday last the celebration of the NUPTIAL was held at a house near the lower end of Chapel Row, at which a SELECT party were to 'tea & sup'; and at five o'clock 'Tag Rag & Bobtail' were ushered in but so curiously metamorphosed, so wonderfully disfigured by paints, patches and pomatums, as to be rendered perfectly unrecognisable to their own families. In fact a Cobler impudently balz'd forth in pumps and powder [and] assuming an air of consequence, thought himself entitled to drag into his conversation a thousand observations 'pon his conscience ..." (my emphasis - a member of the lower class and certainly of the convict class was not conceived of as having a conscience, still less honour, and was therefore not expected to use such expressions as "Upon my conscience!" or "Upon my honour!"). It was a serious business, indeed, when the lower orders began to ape their betters. The letter went on to describe an old woman who was "An old Ewe dressed Lamb fashion" and concluded, "I recoiled at the idea of Age in any instance being rendered so truly ridiculous as in the case of this venerable coquet [sic], whose powdered ringlets ... together with her 'petit PARASOL' were the NEC PLUS ULTRA of Absurdity". In the column "Sydney" of the same date there was the editorial comment, "One of the ladies who assisted in Chapel Row at the celebration of nuptials, having frantically ornamented her head A-LA-TOURC, seriously enquired how she looked in a TURBOT!". See also B.H. Fletcher, Present Picture of NSW, p. 44. Mann wrote, "The costliness of the exterior there [in New South Wales], as well as in most other parts of the world, is meant as a mark of superiority; but confers very little grace, & much less virtue, on its wearer. When speaking of the dashing belles who generally frequent the Rocks, who may often be seen of an evening attired in the greatest splendour, & on the following morning are hid from public view with extremely mean attire." Mann here gave evidence that lower class women possessed more than one set of clothing but he managed to put a murky connotation on their wearing habits. Middle and upper class women as a matter of course wore morning gowns around the home which were not intended for public display. They changed into walking clothes if they meant to leave the home or for dining.

sordid, shocking sights of misery were to be seen, we must remember that wretchedness is relative - even to the sufferer. The point has perhaps been laboured that the convicts were scantily and infrequently clothed by Government, but we know that many of them were in desperate straits before they left England. Further, the economic position of the labouring classes in contemporary England was such that they could have been no better off for clothing - or food - and opportunities to get paid work were slender. There is evidence that convicts and settlers in New South Wales compared their situation there to that prevailing in England and were more than satisfied:

> ... our situation here is much better than we was [sic] led to expect from the Accounts we had Received of the Settlement, the Convicts, those I mean who chuse [sic] to apply themselves to Industry are much better off than the labouring People in England few of them being without a Garden, Pigs, Poultry, etc etc. 126

Communication between Port Jackson and the Mother Country astonished the authorities in point of the accurate detail available to outgoing convicts.[127] What, therefore, seemed to middle-class contemporaries - and to us today - as misery attendant on inadequate clothing, while not unreal or perceived by convicts as such, was not unknown in their social experience. What was unknown hitherto, was the possibility of having something better. There is evidence, indeed, that the Irish rural poor, for example, were quite dazzled by the excellence of convict rations and the quality of convict clothing. With no taxation, better quality and more plentiful food[128] and a more secure better-paid labour market, the colony provided conditions

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126. James Lacy, October 1792, quoted in Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 327.

127. Cunningham, op cit., Vol. II, p. 267.

128. Cunningham, op cit., Vol. I, pp. 9-10, "I question much, however, whether many English labourers live better than our convict servant here, whose weekly ration consists of a sufficiency of flour to make four quartern loaves at least; of seven pounds of beef; two ounces of tea, one pound of sugar, and two ounces of tobacco with the occasional substitution of two or three quarts of milk daily for the tea and sugar allowance". Cunningham was inclined to look on the rosy side and his understanding of the ideal situation needs to be balanced by the impressions of, say, A. Harris, Settlers and Convicts, or Recollections of Sixteen Years' Labour in the Australian Backwoods by an Emigrant Mechanic, London, Clowes and Sons, 1847, pp. 330-331, for example. However, Harris also wrote, "My mate and I often used a pound of tea & six pounds of sugar between us in a week". For a discussion of the effects of the British taxation system on the poorer classes, see E.P. Thompson, op cit., p. 304.

for the lower classes to have a disposable income for the first time in more than a generation of their experience. Contrary to upper-class belief that they had little notion of saving, members of the labouring classes managed to make quite considerable savings, evidence of which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Given that for many people, scarcity, non-existent or degrading clothing (such as bread-sacking) was the norm, the question arises as to what extent this created a desire to be more warmly or more fashionably dressed. To answer this, we must admit an economy of scarcity, unevenly reproducing the values, distinctions, and opportunities of the country of origin. That is, the effects of scarcity did not fall on people predictably according to known socio-economic divisions as experienced in England. We must acknowledge that convicts perceived this. We may further admit that they seized the new opportunities extended to them to acquire status and respectability through the purchase and wearing of fine clothing. There was an unbalanced social or class structure combined with a real requirement for skilled and unskilled labour such as had for long not been the case in England.[129] There were faded memories of old England and recent memories of misery and hardship a la Botany Bay. It depended on the standpoint of the individual which set of memories was embroidered into which mythologies. In Port Jackson, the reality of the new settlement meant that Governors and employers were forced to consider convict needs preferences and ambitions

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129. Abbot and Nairn, op cit., "The British Background", R.M. Hartwell, p. 39, "By the turn of the century ... there was widespread belief that those labourers who could support themselves with their own wages were the exception and that the great mass of the labouring population had of necessity to depend on poor relief". Wages were inadequate (pp. 42-3) but work itself was also hard to get. At the same time, there were rising working-class expectations for consumer goods which could not be fulfilled in England (pp. 36 and 41-3). See also, W.C. Wentworth, A Statistical Account of the British Settlements in Australasia, including the colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, London, 1824, 3rd edition, Vol. II, pp. 62-3, "there can be no doubt that the honest and industrious [labouring] man would always be able to provide for himself and his family, not only the mere necessaries of life - a sufficiency of food and clothing, but many comforts besides, which with his utmost endeavours he cannot obtain in England without having recourse to parochial relief...". Wentworth was probably unaware exactly what cold comfort was offered by parochial relief; see E.P. Thompson, op cit., p. 267 for a statement of the Assistant Commissioners of the Poor House concerning their view of the matter.

occasionally.[130] The convicts were not slow to grasp incentives offered or to capitalize on and adapt to the re-assortment of British economic and social reality now operating in Port Jackson.[131]

Convicts in Government gangs and those working for private individuals were supposed to be provided with clothing and they also had the opportunity to work longer hours for additional payment.[132] Such was the colony's thirst for wearing apparel that skilled convict tailors and shoemakers were at a premium and had no difficulty whatever in employing their spare time.[133] By 1803, there is evidence that convicts were spending some of the credit thus earned on bespoke clothing. Their opinion of slop clothing as dignified wearing apparel and their understanding of the social dignity and consequence conferred on the wearer of bespoke clothing could not more clearly

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130. Hunter was quite aware of these, see note 115 above. While many writers of the period spoke of the economic necessity of access to grog in order to pay labourers, this writer was struck by the overwhelming minority who accepted such payment in the account books of such colonial employers as D'Arcy Wentworth, the Macarthur family and Mrs King (whose estate was administered and accounted for by Rowland Hassall).

131. The interesting part played by convicts in creating or exacerbating quarrels among members of the upper class is evidence of their perception of a new social order and is a subject which would bear closer investigation, there being a great deal of evidence concerning such disputes.

132. Bonwick Transcripts, Series II, Box 23, Cartwright (a JP) to Commissioner Bigge undated, shows contemporary upper-class realization of and repugnance for the real economic and social dignity offered by this. Cartwright's comment on the convicts being allowed to work from 3pm to Sunrise for themselves, "I do not know anything more vexatious than this law. It appears to strike at the root of all subordination & decency. I have often been obliged to resort to corporal punishment before I could ... make the convict acknowledge himself to be a Servant." (emphasis in original)

133. Ritchie, op cit., p. 9. Major Druitt's evidence, 27 October 1819, "... we are always glad to get Tailors & Shoemakers off the store, provided the Persons applying are able to maintain & clothe them. Otherwise I refuse, as I know that applications are frequently made for the sole purpose of obtaining a Tailor or shoemaker off the store & by giving him his Liberty, to receive from a convict a small weekly gratuity." Bonwick Transcripts, Series II, Box 23, Mr R. Cartwright, JP, to Hutchinson, 13 June 1820, "should you at any time have a good shoemaker to spare, my large family would be greatly served by having such a man, as the expence of buying shoes is enormous, and I have never been so fortunate to get a good shoemaker since I was a magistrate." It is this and other evidence in the Account Books of Rowland Hassall 1803-4, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number A126 and D'Arcy Wentworth Account Book 1812-1820, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number A1410 which casts some doubt on Dr Robinson's assertion that by 1822 tailors and shoemakers were poorly paid. See Robinson, op cit., pp. 226 and 228.

be expressed than by electing to spend their credit from extra work on superfluous or even luxury clothing. Total volume and value of haberdashery imports has been indicated in Table 2 and Figure 1 and will be discussed in Chapter 3. Given the difficulties of making a living from agriculture, and the absence of many alternative ways of doing so, another way to answer the question, how was all this paid for? (setting aside the economic reality of credit which meant that often it was not)[134] is to undertake an evaluation of the earning capacity of convicts, soldiers and settlers as wage labourers in the context of their total outlays in the colony. This will be done in Chapter 3.

There was something in the air of Port Jackson that gave the members of each social class reason to aspire a notch higher and this was most clearly seen in the patterns of consumption of wearing apparel. That something was opportunity. The fact that this opportunity grew into a myth which became that of "The Working Man's Paradise", "The Lucky Country", should not disguise its reality in these early days. There were sometimes temporary gluts of labour after the arrival of convict transports but these continued to be absorbed by the expanding colony in the years to 1815. Relative to contemporary England, there was unthought of opportunity for the middle-class to grow wealthy by agriculture and trade,[135] undreamt of opportunity for soldiers to get work, acquire land and become settlers whereas their confreres, discharged from the Peninsula Wars could not, and the absolutely extraordinary opportunity for convicts to get paid work. Electing to spend money on clothing is a good indication of the attitude of the spender, not only to his disposable income, but to himself. It has further repercussions for his status in society as he or his consort wears the clothing and is perceived by others around him accordingly. Members of all

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134. B.H. Fletcher, Landed Enterprise, p. 153, the Commissary, John Palmer, struggled for a year to June 1815 to try to recover a debt of £7,439 owing to the Crown, and had collected £39/11/1 when he obtained permission to write off the debt. The debt was a trifling one compared with those of private enterprise in the colony's early slumps.

135. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the profits made by the Macarthurs in their investment in haberdashery for the colony.

three groups saw such opportunity and externalized it by spending relatively large sums of money on wearing apparel. The opportunity that existed in Port Jackson was evidenced by the Sydney gentleman's bill with his tailor for £500-odd and by the convict's with the local tailor for 6/9.[136] That same gentleman, had he stayed in England, could not have expected more than £40 or £50 credit and the convict could never have expected to be paying a tailor's bill at all. The colony was supposed to be a prison. Obviously, in England, prisoners of the lower classes were not in a position to so augment their wardrobes. Indeed, the concept of a wardrobe in any sense, was an alien one - people generally kept their few belongings in chests.

In Britain, incredulity in the face of evidence of the early misery and difficulties of this prison settlement was only equalled by astonishment at the colony's rapid and extraordinary expansion, an expansion made possible by vast human initiative directed to fulfil such simple ambitions as those of the assigned convict which led him to select the lining, the buttons and the material and have a tailor make him a new coat to measure.[137] Both extremes were so incomprehensible in Britain as to begin a dialogue composed of identical misunderstandings and total misapprehensions which has continued to this day. Misery was known in Britain, for example, but it was inconceivable that the upper classes should suffer too and that guests at Government House should have to bring their own bread when invited to dinner;[138] affluence was known in Britain but no one there could actually imagine that a convict labourer might spend over £20 a year on clothing alone, besides what he spent on tea, sugar, tobacco

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136. M.J.E. Steven, Merchant Campbell 1769-1846, A Study in Colonial Trade, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1965, p. 210. Rowland Hassall's Day Sales Book, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number A861. Thomas Lucas paid 6/9 to Mathus the Tailor. More examples will be discussed below in Chapter 3.

137. R. Hassall, Day Sales Book, op cit. David Gardener spent £1/11/- on materials for a new brown coat and 5/6 to Young the Tailor to make it up.

138. This became part of early colonial mythology and was quoted in Cunningham, op cit., p. 112. Interestingly, Cunningham referred not to the early period of extreme hardship under Governor Phillip reported by Mrs MacArthur but to the time of the floods in 1806 which caused another tightening of the colonial belt even unto the freedom of Governor King's dinner table.

and grog. All factors in these social situations were known but their re-combination on opposite sides of similar social equations in the colony produced some profound differences in colonial structures which on the surface appeared the same as their British counterparts. This was to continue to be apparent in the second half of the nineteenth century and was increasingly evident to newly-arrived members of the British upper classes who, while often unable to identify exactly why, felt ill-at-ease in the colonies. People's origins were not so readily defined, their access or "right" to a certain material lifestyle was no longer based on the same assumptions as operated in Britain.[139] Interpretations of the economy of the colony to 1815, which do not consider the small ambitions, the initiatives - great and small - and their contribution to expansion, but which concentrate on the availability, marketing and consumption of alcohol or the export of seal skins or whale oil, must be incomplete because they ignore the combined strength of those simple ambitions which were being fulfilled. Working class consumer tastes and power influenced the colonial economy fifty years before they were to start to become a force in England. The convict who bought himself five new pairs of trousers over six months was not an isolated case.[140] He and his mates buying material for clothing for themselves and their women and children, clothing they could never have hoped to see on other than middle and upper class backs in England except by stealing it, created a quiet economic and social revolution.

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139. In a number of articles, the American Geographer, R. Cole Harris has provided both a general model and specific case examples connecting the availability of cheap land and the absence of markets for agricultural products with the emergence of particular patterns of settlement and lifestyles in colonies of northwestern European settlers. The evidence presented in Part 1 of this thesis provides some data for a re-evaluation of the Australian case along the lines of Professor Cole Harris's model. See "The Simplificiation of Europe Overseas", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 67, No. 4, Dec. 1977; and "The Historical Geography of Northern American Regions", American Behavioral Scientists, Sept-Oct, 1978.

140. George Hall, Journal on board the ship Coromandel, London to Sydney, 12 February to 13 June 1802 and at his property, Litullington Farm, on the Hawkesbury; with notes, memoranda and accounts, 1802-1808, manuscript filmed at the Mitchell Library on CY421, pp. 60-71, Evans bought five pairs of trousers between August 1804 and January 1805 at a total cost of £4/4/- and this was but a fraction of the total he spent on wearing apparel. See Chapter 3, for further detailed discussion.

Much has been written about the type and value of exports during the early years of the colony but similar detailed studies examining imports are wanting. It is perhaps easier to describe and analyse the macro-economic reality that goods must be paid for than to plunge into the blurred edges of social history to investigate at the individual level who bought what, let alone their why's and their how's. The amorphous areas of individuals' expectations and ambitions reach more complex depths that to date have remained unplumbed in this context by historians of early Sydney Town. Studies of the great men of the wool industry or the pioneers of the sealing trade could not be expected to reveal much of the true character of the people of early Sydney. There have so far been no attempts to detail the amount and type of consumption at the individual and domestic household level, to demonstrate how this consumption was paid for, or to quantify the relative desirability of various types of consumer goods. Such an approach would provide concrete evidence of the values and ambitions of the people concerned. In Chapter 2 the existence of particular consumer expectations and their gratification will be demonstrated, albeit sometimes by default. In Chapter 3 an analysis will be undertaken to show the relative desirability of various consumer goods. Thus it will be seen that the ambitions of ordinary men and women were as important in forming the social and economic character of the colony as the business skills and interests of the exceptional few.

Table 1: Government Supplies of Clothing to the Colony of New South Wales 1788-1803

Date Arrived	Ship	Amount Sent	Amount Damaged	Date of Issue	Population
Jan. 1788	First Fleet	2,780 woollen jackets 5,440 drawers		Feb. 1788 to women Aug. 1789 slops to convicts, remainder of shoes to soldiers	1,024
Dec. 1789	Guardian	(lost)			
June 1790	Justinian (2nd Fleet)			July 1790, 1 blanket and 1 rug to convicts 3. Aug. 1790, 1 pr of shoes to convicts	Dec. 1790 2,058
Aug. 1791	Matilda				Nov. 1791, 2,666
July 1792	Britannia	12 months' clothing and rations, i.e. 41 cases and 3 bales of clothing and 60 bales of bedding	1/3 totally destroyed and several bales of cloth much injured.	Oct. 1792 full issue of slops to men and women.	Oct. 1792, 3,001
Jan. 1793	Bellona		68 bales raven duck (value 6,636/0/9) (quantity 13, 148 yards) 527 yds brown cloth, 335 hammocks, 13 rugs		May 1793 3,016

Date Arrived	Ship	Amount Sent	Amount Damaged	Date of Issue	Population
June 1793	Speedy	5,000 pairs men's shoes, 1,400 pairs women's shoes, 1,500 men's hats, 700 women's hats, 1,400 shifts, 700 jackets, 1,400 caps, 750 suits of clothes, 5,000 shirts, 600 caps, 5,000 pairs stockings, 1,400 pairs women's stockings, 2,000 beds and bolsters, 700 check neck handkerchiefs			
Aug. 1793	Boddingtons	17 bales and 5 cases			3,106
Sept. 1793	Resolution	1,750 suits clothing, 1,800 jackets, 1,900 caps, 700 women's jackets, 1,400 petticoats, 20 suits better clothes.	403 jackets, 194 pr. breeches, 121 waistcoats, 9 petticoats	Feb. 1794 a frock, shirt and trousers to men convicts only. Shoes very scarce	
June 1794	Speedy	Clothes for NSW Corps		Nov. 1794 full issue of slops to convicts	Dec. 1794 3,452 June 1795 3,497
				Issue of slops to men and women Dec. 1795. Hunter says no slops now in store	
				April 1796 "a very liberal allowance of slops" issued to men and women convicts	

Date Arrived	Ship	Amount Sent	Amount Damaged	Date of Issue	Population
Nov. 1796	Sylph	men's - 5,000 jackets, 2,500 waistcoats, 2,500 pr. breeches, 2,500 shirts, 2,500 caps, 2,500 hats, 5,000 prs shoes, 5,000 prs stockings women's - 700 jackets, 1,400 petticoats, 1,400 shifts, 700 hats, 1,400 pr shoes, 1,400 pr stockings. children's - 857½ yds narrow cloth, 504 yds white linen		Dec. 1796 full issue to men, women and children July 1797 full issue to men only. Oct. 1797 to women and children "such slop cloathing [sic] as the present state of the public store can afford" March 1798 "A few slops were served to the male convicts ... they being nearly naked (material and thread 2½ yds duck, ¼lb of thread, i.e. convicts to make them up) the store being unable to supply them with clothing" "After this issue the store will be destitute of every article of clothing" April 1798 to the women "the few remaining slops which the store can afford" May 1799 issue of as much blue gurrah and thread as will make a frock, a pair of trousers. June-July 1799 issue to men of the public working gangs of Sydney, Parramatta and Hawkesbury. Dec. 1799 "A Frock, Shirt and a pr. of Trowzers [sic]"	4,106
1798	Lady Shore	(lost to mutineers)			
Nov. 1799	Walker		"much of what had been on board"	Dec. 1799 "some slop cloathing [sic] to the convicts"	Dec. 1799 5,100
Jan. 1800	Friendship				
Feb. 1800	Minerva			Feb. 1800 blankets and a complete suit of clothing.	

Date Arrived	Ship	Amount Sent	Amount Damaged	Date of Issue	Population
Sept. 1800	Survey				4,942
Nov. 1800	Royal Admiral	10,000 shirts, 14,000 shoes, 10,031 hats, 1,600 blankets, 1,600 hammocks		Nov. 1800 to men	
Feb. 1801	Anne	101 blue jackets, 8 waistcoats, 100 shirts, 116 shoes, 5 hats, 96 pr of stockings, 8 cloth caps, 31 sets men's clothing, 94 pr striped trousers, 9 women's jackets, 36 shifts, 36 petticoats, 36 caps, 7 prs women's shoes, 15 handkerchiefs, 10 sets children clothing, 51.3/4 lbs thread		Sept. 1801 to convict men, free men on the stores and women at flax-work and some children. June 1802 "to those prisoners who labour for the Govt."	
1802	Arthur Atlas Coromandel Perseus	) £10,377/11/- supplied by) A. Davison	Printed calico 20 pcs containing 424.3/4 yds 50/- per pc; wearing apparel; 12 pcs 29/6 Duck 14 pcs 55/-		
	Cato	£48/11/7 linen, flannel etc. supplied Thos. Roberts 400 blue jackets, 400 blue waistcoats, 400 pairs duck trousers, 1,200 check shirts, 800 prs stockings, 400 woollen caps, 400 prs shoes. £2,512/10 worth of wearing apparel supplied Thos. Courtney			

Date Arrived	Ship	Amount Sent	Amount Damaged	Date of Issue	Population
1803	Calcutta	£608 worth for 400 convicts £1,095/19/7 blue cloth supplied Finch & Co. £158/11/11 calico etc. supplied J. Wilkinson.		May 1803 to male convicts Feb. 1804 to men. Aug. 1804 "to prisoners victualled from the public store" July 1805 to men and women at public labour "as no general or partial issue of cloathing [sic] can be made to the Prisoners until a further supply arrives, they are recommended to take the greatest care of what they will receive"	

Source: D. Collins, An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales with Remarks on the Disposition, Customs, Manners etc. of the Native Inhabitants of that Country, T. Cadell, London, 1798; Historical Records of New South Wales, facsimile reprint, 1978; Historical Records of Australia, Sydney, 1914 Series I; Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Register.

Table 2
Haberdashery and Related Goods
Brought as Private Investments to New South Wales 1790-1811

	Ship	From	General Cargo
June 1790	Lady Juliana	London	The master opened a temporary shop in which millinery, perfumery and haberdashery were sold.
March 1794	Arthur	Bengal	Coarse calico.
Dec. 1795	Experiment	Bengal	Large variety of India goods, muslins, calicos, chintzes.
April 1796	Susan	Rhode Island	Broad cloth.
Aug. 1796	Grand Turk	Boston	Broad cloth.
Nov. 1799	Walker	London	3 boxes hats; 3 doz. pr. stockings; 6 doz. prs. men's and 6 doz. prs. women's shoes.
Jan. 1800	Swallow	London	"many elegant articles of dress from Bond Street and other fashionable repositories of the metropolis." (D.Collins)
	Thynne	Calcutta	40 bales cloth; 500 prs. of shoes.
	Minerva	Cork	6 pieces Irish linen; 2 trunks shoes; 1 box hair powder.
Feb. 1800	Hunter	Calcutta	53 bales and trunks containing muslins.
	Rebecca	Calcutta	Calico, gurrah shirts, muslin, handkerchiefs "and all other articles of wearing apparel". (D.Collins) Value near £ 20,000 sterling.
	Friendship	Cork	1 case hats; 2 boxes ladies' dresses; 1 trunk men's clothing, 4 trunks haberdashery; 4 bales men's shirts; 1 case and bale broad cloth; 4 trunks and 1 case boots and shoes; 1 bale cashmere; 1 bale nankeens.
Feb. 1801	Annie		Plain and fancy bonnets; black mode and silk cloaks; threads; tapes and silk twist; pins and needles; thread lace; gents' boots.
April 1801	Speedy	London	6 trunks haberdashery.
May 1801	Bell Savage	Boston	5 bales blue cloth.

(Not all Customs Returns were detailed and other sources do not necessarily provide complete information.)

	Ship	From	General Cargo
Dec. 1801	Minorca	London	5 cases hats; 2 cases superfine cloths, quiltings etc.; 1 case gloves; 1 case ladies' shoes; 1 case boots 60 pr.; 12 doz. handkerchiefs; 6 cases printed muslins; 5 doz. shawls; 1 case sheetings; 2 cases men's and women's shoes 400 pr.; 1 case haberdashery; 2 cases ladies' bonnets.
	Nile	London	2 cases hats; 3 doz. pr. stockings.
	Canada	London	3 cases shoes; 2 doz. hats; 1 chest haberdashery; 1 case linen; small quantity silk; 1 roll green table cloths.
	Caroline	Boston	9 boxes fine hats; coarse hats; 154 pr. men's shoes.
Feb. 1802	Margaret	Coast of Peru	49 bales cloths; 1 trunk threads; 1 bale fans; 2.1/2 packages Tortoise shells.
June 1802	Coromandel	England	2 cases calicoes and dimities; parcel ribbons; 2 cases shoes; 1 case cotton and worsted hose; 2 cases linens.
	Hercules	Ireland	1 trunk haberdashery; 1 trunk cottons; 1 bundle slops and wearing apparel; 1 trunk boots and shoes.
July 1802	Atlas		1 bale cloth; 1 trunk thread; 2 casks leather; 3 trunks shoes; 4 boxes linen; 1 box tabinet; 2 trunks shoes; 5 cases and 4 trunks hats; 2 trunks shoes; gents' fine beaver hats; gents' strong hats; boot legs and soles; boys' and girls' shoes; shoe thread; broad cloths; second cloths; waistcoat patterns; ready made clothes; Irish cloths; Irish shirts, plain and frilled; white satin bordered shawls; numerous fancy shawls; bordered handkerchiefs; jaconet muslin; dimities; punjums; printed cottons; sewing silk; nankeens; silk handkerchiefs; threads; tapes and bobbins; silk and cotton laces; thread laces; shirt moulds and wires; women's black worsted hose; ribbons; silk twists; pins and needles; thimbles.
	Fanny		3 cases hats; 1 case hosiery; 5 trunks shoes; 4 boxes slops; 1 case hats; 4 packages duck; 2 bales cotton cloths; 1 chest slops.
Aug. 1802	Perseus		3 trunks cotton; 2 chests slops; 1 parcel ribbon; 1 trunk stockings; 2 boxes hats.

	Ship	From	General Cargo
Oct. 1802	Alexander		3 trunks, 1 box, 1 bale haberdashery; 4 trunks shoes and boots; 6 trunks 4 bales woollen drapery; 1 trunk gloves; 1 case perfumery; 3 trunks hosiery; 11 cases hats; 1 trunk millinery.
Oct. 1802	Atlas		hats; haberdashery; shoes and boots; shawls and muslins; pins and needles; dimities; ribbons.
Feb. 1803	Castle of Good Hope		chintz; handkerchiefs; blue gurrahs; frocks; trousers; soldiers' plain and frilled shirts and other piece goods.
March 1803	Bridgewater	London	3 trunks shoes; 4 bales men's clothing; 4 bales Russian duck; 2 cases Irish linen; 2 bales leather; 2 chests slops; 1 box jewellry; 500 yds ribbon; 270 yds calamanco; 14 doz. black silk handkerchiefs; quantity waistcoat pcs; shoes; pins; needles.
March 1803	Venus (Whaler)		Stay and other tape; silk and twist; metal buttons.
April 1803	Cato		2 trunks dimities and cottons; 3 cases haberdashery; 1 trunk perfumery; 2 cases hats; 3 trunks wearing apparel; 3 chests slops. (The advertisement in the Sydney Gazette listed the following: men's white linen shirts, frilled; worsted pantaloons and breeches; leather breeches; canvas trousers; shoes of various qualities [men's and women's and children's]; boots; great coats; felt, plaited and fine hats; men's stockings of various qualities; Irish linen; fancy and furniture chintzes; pullicat handkerchiefs; threads, tapes, needles and pins; men's beaver gloves; women's gloves and mits; Norwich shawls; ribbons; men's beaver hats.)
May 1803	Rolla		1 bale osnaburg; 1 bale shirting; 1 trunk thread; 2 trunks hosiery; 4 trunks wearing apparel; 6 boxes hats. (The advertisement in the Sydney Gazette listed the following: ladies' cotton hose; gents' plain and ribbed hose; ladies' and gents' tan, beaver and other gloves; ladies' Spanish and Moroccan shoes; ladies' embroidered sandals; men's fine and stout shoes; shirts, plain and frilled; shirts, striped Norwich cotton; swansdown waistcoats; blue cloth jackets; Russia duck trousers and red flannel shirts; guernsey frocks and scarlet and fawn caps; threads, tapes and bobbins; shirt and other button moulds; pins, needles and thimbles.)
July 1803	Albion		1 box hats.

	Ship	From	General Cargo
July 1803	L'Adele		1,000 pcs cloth of Brittany; 700 pcs check; 1 bale gurrah.
	Mersey		The advertisement in the Sydney Gazette listed the following: chintzes; coarse and fine shirts; dungarees and checks; superfine blue nankeen; small palempous; bandanna handkerchiefs of various colours, etc.
Sept. 1803	Dart	London	1 trunk shoes and boots.
Dec. 1803	Betsey	Madras	180 pr. county shoes; 62 bales piece goods; 2 bales shirting; 2 small packages piece goods.
Jan. 1804	Harrington	Kings Island	10 bales piece goods.
	Mary		8 bales piece goods; 5 trunks haberdashery; 5 cases hats; 2 barrels shoes.
April 1804	Mersey	Bengal	250 bolts canvas, 22 bales and 1 box piece goods - R. Campbell; 11 bales piece goods - Capt Wilson; 1 bale piece goods - mates.
May 1804	Coromandel	England	1 trunk trousers checks etc.; 1 trunk shoes; 4 cases hats; 1 trunk clothing.
	Fair Ann	Manila	1 bale cloth.
June 1804	Lady Barlow	Calcutta	42 bales piece goods; 5 boxes nankeens; 5 bales dungaree; 2 trunks long cloth; 200 bolts canvas; 2 bales piece goods; 1 case shoes - mates.
	Experiment	England	1 case hats; 1 case boots and shoes; 2 cases haberdashery; 5 trunks cloth; 2 cases perfumery; 4 bales cloth; 3 boxes hats; 2 trunks shoes; 1 trunk hosiery - mates.
Oct. 1804	Myrtle		30 bolts bengal canvas, 16 bales piece goods.
Oct. 1804	Swift		27 packages cloth.
Dec. 1804	Aeolus		6 bales cotton.
April 1805	Favourite		men's clothing; muslinets; boots and shoes.

	Ship	General Cargo
June 1805	Argo	80 yds broadcloth; 40 gents' beaver hats; 30 girls' and boys' beaver hats; 72 pr ladies' Spanish leather shoes; 8 prs coloured kid shoes; 25 doz. prs ladies' and gents' silk and cotton hose; cambric handkerchiefs; plain and printed shawls; gents' shoes; diaper cloths; Irish linens; brown ticking; check and blue linen; printed linens and German linens (advertised as the residue of the dry goods imported on the Argo.)
Feb. 1806	Tellicherry	2 trunks hosiery and perfumery; some hats.
	Star	buttons; printed linens; flannels; woollen cloths; hosiery; hats; perfumery; boots and shoes.
April 1806	William Pitt	1 case plated ware; 2 cases leather; 1 box shoe tools; 1 case haberdashery; 2 trunks hosiery; 1 box muslin; 1 box Irish linen; 2 cases hats; 1 trunk boots and shoes.
July 1806	Fortune	4 cases hats; 2 trunks boots and shoes; 12 packages cloth; 1 bale slops; 1 case plated ware; 1 case jewellery; 1 case perfumery; 2 cases ladies' straw hats; 2 boxes hats.
Aug. 1806	Elizabeth	3 cases men's hats; 1 box shoes; 1 bale cottons; 5 casks slops; packages cloth; 5 cases and 2 casks hats; 2 cases hosiery; 2 cases hats; 1 cask shoes; 2 parcels pins and needles; 2 trunks perfumery; 1 trunk shoes.
	Sinclair	2 boxes haberdashery.
	Allsion	70 cases hollands; 1 case hollands; 21 trunks, 3 cases, 2 boxes haberdashery; 16 bales, 1 cask slops; 15 boxes, 2 casks hats; 13 trunks, 2 casks shoes; 2 cases perfumery.
	Alexander	1 trunk boots and shoes; 1 trunk hosiery; a bale flannels.
Oct. 1806	St Anna	13 pcs striped cotton; 24 veils.
Feb. 1807	General Wellesley	13 trunks, 2 bales piece goods.
March 1807	Dart	6 bales, 1 case slops; 1 bale woollens; 1 bale printed cotton; 1 box millinery.

	Ship	General Cargo
April 1807	Parramatta	2 casks slops.
	Brothers	4 packages woollen cloths and kerseymeres; 1 bale slops; 1 box millinery; 1 package haberdashery; 1 box leather and shoemakers' tools [all the private property of Mr J. Blaxland].
	Hannah Sally	1 trunk, 7 boxes silks and nankeens; 2 boxes shoes.
Nov. 1807	Jenny	1 package haberdashery.
March 1808	Harrington	60 rolls silk, 10 doz. shirts; 700 nankeen jackets; 800 pr. men's shoes; 535 pr. ladies' shoes; 15 boxes and packages containing 2,000 pcs nankeen and other cloth.
June 1808	Dundee	blue cloth; Bengal and long cloth; chintz; palampores and handkerchiefs; millinery.
	Favourite	nankeens; silk stockings; dimity; muslin; baftan; long cloth; bandanna handkerchiefs; India prints; pcs silk; ladies' and gents' shoes [ad. I. Nichols]; shawls; bonnets; veils; gloves; chintz.
July 1808	Cumberland	Welsh flannel; cotton handkerchiefs; Carlisle checks; hosiery; britannias; superfine tamboured veils; calimancos; ounce thread; tapes and bobbins; gilt buttons; ladies' slippers; embroidered sandals; ladies' green cloth; black, blue and corbeau superfine cloths; black velvet; strong velveteens and corduroys; black velvet ribbon; satin and hair ribbon; black mode; printed quilting; fancy woollen cords and swansdown for waistcoating; fustian; olive calicos; a few parasols.
	Lady Sinclair	English chintzes; prints; cambrics; muslins; shawls; handkerchiefs; ginghams; check and striped cotton shirting; Irish linen shirting; French cambrics for frills; English dimities; fine white calico; white cotton stockings; ladies' Spanish leather shoes; velvet and coloured shoes; children's shoes; blue trousers; ribbon; thread; tape; bobbins; gloves; feathers; flowers; hair nets; buttons; ginghams; nankeens; red bird's eye and common handkerchiefs; white izars; shawls; palampores; flowered, spotted, plain and striped muslins; gloves; night caps; cambric muslin; gents' handkerchiefs; etc.
Oct. 1808	Hebe	500 pcs brown and white nankeen; 14 doz. silk handkerchiefs; 16 ladies' muslin dresses; 32 habit shirts; 147 prs gents' gloves.

	Ship	General Cargo
Oct. 1808	Star	slop clothing; superfine broad cloth; kerseymere; Manchester goods; gents' and ladies' silk and cotton hose; gents' dress shoes and boots; ladies' fancy shoes; gloves; shawls; muslins; jaconets; dimity etc.; jewellery.
Nov. 1808	Speke	slops; superfine blue cloth; bath coating; superfine black and mixed cloths; Welsh flannel; coloured kerseymere; gilt buttons; plated buttons and button moulds; tailor's and other thimbles; fine Holland tape, narrow and broad; thread; silk; gents' shoes; muslin handkerchiefs; ladies' elegant quilted hankerchiefs; ladies' and gents' gloves; children's stockings.
Dec. 1808	Admiral Gambier	muslins; muslin handkerchiefs; boots; black flannel; coloured thread; cotton stockings; shawls; sewing silks; ladies' and gents' gloves.
Jan. 1809	Aeolus	brown corduroys; black and blue calimancos; worsted hose; button moulds; coloured thread, tape and bobbins.
	Duke of Portland	ladies' hats and bonnets; ribbons and all kinds of millinery; ladies' and gents' hose; calimancos; damask; diaper; huckaback; perfumery; kerseymere; boot legs, soles and heels.
Feb. 1809	Spring Grove	large shawls; cloths and kerseymeres; slops; printed cambric; long lawn; toilinets; marseilles; cottons and muslins; silks and modes; ribbons; ladies' dresses; corduroy, velvet and velveteen chip and beaver hats and bonnets; plain and trimmed sarsenet bonnets; children's hats; frocks; ready-made linen and caps; ladies' and gents' shoes and gloves; boots; men's and boys' fine hats; fine French cambric; decker, worked and book muslins; black and coloured silk; florentines; long cloth; coloured Persians; cotton and silk hose; dimity and Irish linen; thread; bandanna' pulicat and cambric handkerchiefs; nankeens; waistcoats; Irish and cotton shirts; duck trousers; flannels; perfume; jewellery.
March 1809	Hibernia	(Remains of cargo to be auctioned at T. Reiley's) - 22½ bags stockings; 2 pcs silk and cotton coth; 28 pcs worked muslin; 12 pcs plain muslin; ladies' and children's shoes; silk stockings; etc.

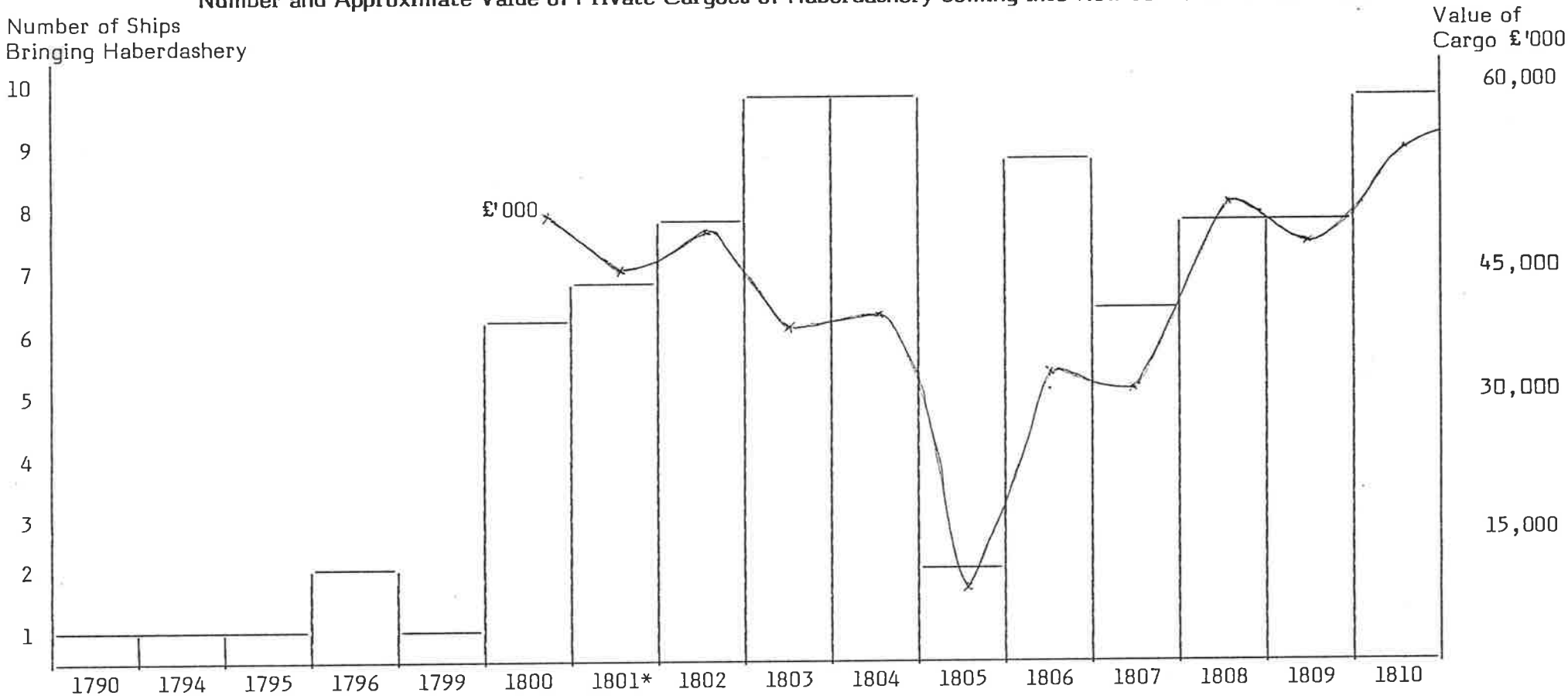
	Ship	General Cargo
April 1809	Sydney Cove	printed cambric; long cloths; superfine ladies' dresses; black, japan, mull and jaconet muslins; cambric; pelisse velvets, colored; ladies', gents' and children's beaver hats and bonnets; ladies' Spanish leather shoes; ladies' and gents' silk and cotton gloves; check and calico and Irish linen; lace trimmings for dresses; striped cotton and flannel for shirts; stockings; slops; superfine and other cloths; Navy blues; black, green and brown cloths; mode cloaks; black and white lace veils; black and coloured silk and other handkerchiefs; shawls; ginghams; dimities; cambric buttons; shirt buttons.
July 1809	Atlanta	printed and striped cottons; printed jean; checks, white calico; dimity; cambric muslin; muslin shawls; worked muslins; velveteens; cotton sheeting; haberdashery; hosiery; brown holland; Irish linens; long lawns; ducks; woollen cloths; blankets and flannels; calimancos; barrateens; figured sarsenets; black and coloured silk handkerchiefs; hats; shoes.
Aug. 1809	Indispensable	5 cases men's, women's and children's superfine hats; millinery; ladies' bonnets, caps and fancy dresses; haberdashery; threads; tapes; bobbins; ribbons; slop clothing; boys' ready made dresses to fit 3-9 years; men's velveteen jackets.
	Mary Ann(e)	linen and woollen drapery; hosiery; shoes and boots; silks and velvets; corduroy; velveteen; gents' and boys' hats.
	Boyd	ladies' and gets' shoes and boots; jewellery; soldiers' shirts; shoes, soles and heels; Russian duck; blacking and heel balls; carpenters' tools.
Jan. 1810	Marian	61 bales, 5 trunks, 3 boxes piece goods; 3 boxes haberdashery; looking glass.
	Union	4 bales, 1 trunk piece goods; 5 trunks boots, shoes, leather, etc.
	Experiment	6 bales piece goods.
March 1810	Ann	4 packages dressed leather; 10 trunks and cases haberdashery; hats and shoes; 3 bales cloth; 1 bale osnaburg.
Feb. 1810	Venus	37 bales, 1 chest piece goods; 7 trunks boots and shoes.

	Ship	General Cargo
March 1810	Simon Cock	67 trunks and cases haberdashery, boots, shoes, piece goods, hats, gloves, etc; 12 bales slops and canvas.
Aug. 1810	Hunter	14 bales piece goods; 4 trunks bandannas and piece goods.
Sept. 1810	Canada	5 cases hats; 10 trunks prints.
Oct. 1810	Mary and Sally	1 case nankeen; 1 box silks; 4 boxes silk hats; 6 bales patria paper; shirts and marmadoys.
	Frederick	7 casks, 2 bales slops.
Dec. 1810	Indian	4 cases hats; 2 boxes pins and umbrellas; 3 cases perfumery; 2 bales cloth; 10 packages shoes and hardware.
Oct. 1811	Argo	3 bales piece goods.
	Ruby	1 chest palempores; 6 shawls; 10 pcs Madras handkerchiefs.
	Admiral Gambier	3 bales slops; 13 cases haberdashery; 3 bales slops.
Nov. 1811	Mangalore	31 bales piece goods.
		(returns for 1811 incomplete)

Source: D. Collins, An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales with Remarks on the Disposition, Customs, Manners etc. of the Native Inhabitants of that Country, T. Cadell, London, 1798; Historical Records of New South Wales, facsimile reprint, 1978; Historical Records of Australia, Series I, Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1914; Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Register.

Figure 1[141]

Number and Approximate Value of Private Cargoes of Haberdashery coming into New South Wales 1790-1810



*Customs statistics incomplete

141. The valuation of incoming haberdashery cargoes is necessarily very rough because much of the information describing them gives no indication of quantities and also because prices of all items varied enormously according to the state of the market for those items in New South Wales at the time of their arrival. Insofar as it was possible to put a monetary value on the cargoes for which sufficient information exists, this was done using the accounts of the cargoes of the Harrington. the Spring Grove, and the Isabella as a guideline as well as information as to prices in the Sydney Gazette. At all times, the lowest valuation was put on the goods, rather than that obtaining in times of scarcity. Further work needs to be done on these figures both to determine their absolute value more precisely and their value relative to incoming cargoes of other luxury items. A comparison with the value of haberdashery consumed by a town of similar size in England would also be illuminating.

CHAPTER 2

CRIME IN THE COLONY
OR NOT ENOUGH CLOTHES TO GO AROUND

SYNOPSIS

High incidence of theft of clothing indicative of its value. Convict possession of property in clothing leads to convict participation in formation of colonial legal precedent as equals as much as victims of the upper classes. The trials of washing day. Advertising as a means of recovering stolen property, and as an indication of the great social and economic importance of clothing. Frequent incidence of violence in clothing robberies as a testimony of its value. Means evolved by colonial society to protect itself againt theft of property. Theft of convict clothing.

The number of instances of theft of clothing reported in the Sydney Gazette during the years to 1815 - either in the form of court reports or as notices offering rewards for its recovery - exceeds any one other type of theft. So striking is it in terms of frequency and in terms of the invasion of private property by thieves in search of clothing, it is impossible to consider the issue without asking the obvious question, why should this be so? In this chapter a number of possible answers and their implications will be considered. One reason why so much clothing was stolen from private homes or lodgings was that initially there were few shops in Sydney and those open for business were general stores containing little or no ready-made clothing. Another was quite simply that people wanted nice clothing themselves but still could not afford to buy it. From detailed evidence in court reports, it would appear that only a very small hard core of professionally organized criminals was involved in stealing clothing and material for re-sale on a busy second-hand market and this latter was not a major factor. A third reason was that clothing - apart from bedding and tools - was the sole moveable luxury item of property in most homes. The best two explanations of this phenomenon were concurrent yet contradictory, viz. a shortage of clothing and a poverty of consumer expectation which created a strong market for second-hand clothing and, secondly, a rising lower class consumption of clothing that meant there was more clothing accessible in the community for thieves to steal. This second point raises the interesting issue of personal and community consciousness of the value of property and the need to secure it. This can be shown to be a learnt cultural pre-occupation among a class which had not had to consider the problem in recent memory, as its members had not lately possessed anything worth stealing.[1] A

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1. The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Register, see editorial comment on the thefts of clothing from Joseph Prosser (8 April 1804) and Joseph Hatton (30 December 1804). In the Prosser case, the editor noted that the theft "should itself operate as a caution against every species of negligence and inadvertency that may be attended with such calamitous consequences". It was all very well to advise the poor ignorant labouring man to be cautious, but when people carrying bundles of clothing in the streets and on the highways were being assaulted and robbed of them, a little more than caution was needed to protect such property.

consideration of theft of clothing must also encompass an understanding of its social and economic value as an article of consumption. It will be argued that clothing was the first non-ingestible article of consumption to percolate down through society as a result of the Industrial Revolution. As such, it had a much greater second-hand value than it does today[2] and people had a greater personal physical relationship to their clothing, having been closely involved in its making, mending, alterations or re-making[3]. This last factor became very important in cases involving stolen clothing, witnesses recognizing even individual buttons[4], garments when they had been re-made, or dyed, or stolen material when it had been made up into an article of clothing[5].

Clothes - and to an even greater extent - material, were not only easily stolen, they were easily concealed and readily transformed for re-sale on the second-hand clothes market. Reports of stolen property, together with lists of property willed in deceased estates, provide evidence that slightly wealthier people bought large quantities of material in bolts for future use and as a kind of security. Material as such could

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2. The stress on fashion today causes the opposite to be the case: value is attached to clothing primarily because it is recognizable as new or in fashion. At times in the early history of Sydney and Melbourne, a second-hand garment could be worth more than its original value. This does not mean that people were not interested in fashion, rather that considerations of fashion for men and women were less dominant than they are today for a number of reasons.

3. Sydney Gazette, 22 June 1806. Mrs Pearce recognized "a pair of pockets which she minutely described, and in the work of which were some very peculiar marks". The prisoner, Elizabeth Fielding "called several witnesses to prove that the pockets sworn to were made by herself, but their testimony was insufficient to controvert that of Mrs Pearce, which described minutely the very quality of the thread with which they had been sewed".

4. See the case of Mr H. Macquarie's stolen clothing below.

5. Sydney Gazette, 22 January 1804, the case of Charles Crump, a private soldier who stole some material out of bales on board the Harrington, some of which was subsequently recognised even though it was made up, and, Sydney Gazette, 22 June 1806, Archibald Galloway was able to swear to a piece of cloth that had been given by the thief, P. McDermot, as a present to Eleanor Tyrrell. The cloth was "very remarkable", and O'Brien (one of three charged with breaking and entering Galloway's) cautioned her to put it out of the way. Another of the prisoners charged, Owen McMahon, came to take back some of the things from Tyrrell, "observing the things were too remarkable for her to have" and saying that he would give her something else.

be bartered or it could even be returned to the store to discharge a debt.[6] A bolt of cloth or a piece of material had a solid exchange value which at times for some people in the community during these years, equalled or exceeded the value of rum. Governors of the time, Hunter and King and others such as the merchant Robert Campbell claimed that as employers they were disadvantaged when they could not pay in rum. It is an argument of this thesis that where they had a choice, there is relatively little evidence of employees being paid in rum and a great deal of evidence of their soliciting payment in material, thread and other haberdashery items. Without doubt there were many labourers who wanted payment in rum but there has as yet been no thorough examination of the preferences of others in the community. Those who did accept the work ethic entered the consumer stakes and after kitchen utensils or tools of trade, clothes were their first acquisitions, as will be shown in Chapter 3.

For the working class in England, second-hand clothing was an accepted fact of life. There were a number of legitimate sources of second-hand clothing which operated also in the colony of New South Wales. Interestingly, there was one source of second-hand clothing prevalent in England for which no evidence could be found in the colony before 1815: pawnshops. This is important because it shows that there were fewer economic pressures operating on the working class in New South Wales, the like of which were still forcing people of similar backgrounds in England to pawn their clothing at the end of the century. Clothing was an important part of deceased estates and unless specifically otherwise willed, was sold on behalf of or by the inheritors of those estates either to second-hand clothing dealers or to private individuals.[7]

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6. See the Account Book of William Mansell, 1809-1812, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number A2111, in which various customers brought the following items to the store to discharge debts: superfine cloth; 5 pairs of shoes; 10 pieces of nankeen; 6 pieces handkerchiefs; a bonnet and a gown; shirts, etc.

7. Sydney Gazette, 24 April 1803, David Bevan auctioned the effects of William Cox, the list of which - primarily clothing and haberdashery - illustrates the extent of property held in material by wealthy people or businessmen in the colony. For other examples, see also Sydney Gazette, 6 July 1806, "A quantity of excellent wearing apparel, the property of the late Mr. John Miurhead, deceased, found numerous bidders", and Sydney Gazette, 30 March 1807, Bevan auctioned "The following wearing apparel and other property of the late Mrs. J. Dundas deceased".

Clothing was also passed through the extended family or re-made for younger members of the family. As well, second-hand clothing was brought from England for sale in the colony[8] and it had a very good resale value. This continued to be the case in Melbourne in the 1840s and 1850s[9]. It was certainly the case in England, even into the 1870s, that many members of the agricultural and industrial working class could never hope to own new clothing - even slop clothing - and had to content themselves with the purchase of a new ribbon, piece of lace, buttons or buckles - all of which items were in consequence proportionately valued by their owners.[10] Against this background of fairly low expectations in terms of sartorial ambition, two factors operated to facilitate clothing thefts in the colony: a ready social acceptance of second-hand clothing as being the norm from which already working class people were aspiring to graduate, and secondly, the economic possibility for people lower on the social scale to own more and finer clothing. A survey of reported thefts shows a large percentage of them being of property belonging to people of the lower or the convict classes. Very early in the history of the colony - theft of clothing had already been a problem on the first voyage from England[11] - Governor Phillip had to appoint a special clerk to the weekly market to record all goods arriving at the market in an attempt to prevent ready disposal of stolen goods[12]. As the property of the early colonists was

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8. Sydney Gazette, 8 May and 18 November 1804, John Waldron's advertisements for men's second-hand clothing.

9. Mrs Charles Clacy, A Lady's Visit to the Gold Diggings of Australia in 1852-53. Written on the Spot, London, Hurst and Blackett, 1853, p. 22. "Imagine boots, & they very second rate ones, at four pounds a pair" and p. 102, William sold a frock coat to a fellow who admired it, "I charged ... four guineas, and walked into town in my shirt sleeves; soon colonized, eh?"

10. F. Thompson, op cit., pp. 102-104; English folk song, "Johnny's so long at the fair"; Sydney Gazette, 26 November 1803, a reward was offered for the return of one gold sleeve button.

11. See the discussion of Lieut. Clark's Journal in Chapter 1. And was to be so again, see G. Hall, op cit., p. 23, 18 May 1803, "Capt. Kemp had his trunk taken up out of the hold yesterday when to his surprise and mortification his chest had been broken open and many valuable things were found in the coal hole but still a great many missing." 19 May "... a general search made in the Cabbin [sic] for Mr Kemps clothes but none found."

12. Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 254. Collins noted this.

limited and as clothing constituted a greater proportion of consumer items in an individual's property, the lower he or she was on the economic scale[13], the variety and number of thefts of wearing apparel and the rewards offered for stolen clothing provide interesting evidence of its proliferation among the convict and working classes.

Reports of court proceedings in the Sydney Gazette and, earlier, the minutes of proceedings of the Bench of Magistrates at Sydney, testify to the amount of property in clothing held by members of the convict and labouring classes. The unusual fact about these cases is the high proportion of them involving convicts both as plaintiff and defendant and the existence of cases brought by convicts against members of the middle class. This is not to be explained only by the dominance of the convict class in the total population; after all, in an English town of similar size, the population also consisted of the squire and several landed families, a few professional men and their families, tradesmen and shopkeepers and then a majority of agricultural and/or industrial workers. What is unusual about the Sydney cases is the proportion of them involving only convicts and the value of the property in dispute. In England, the law had evolved to protect property. Since property was increasingly the concern of the middle and upper classes in the years 1790-1850, this obviously meant that the law was perceived by all classes as operating on behalf of middle and upper class interests. In England, therefore, cases involving disputed or stolen property normally followed the pattern that a shopkeeper or a member of the middle or upper class accused a member of the working class of stealing the clothing. It was almost axiomatic at a time when pawn shops were full of second-hand clothing, that wearing apparel and bedding being the sole moveable property of members of the working classes, they could not be stealing it from each other. Their coats and their petticoats were either on their backs

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13. Evidence for this assertion can be gleaned from an examination of burglary notices in combination with a study of wills and notices of sale of the effects of deceased estates. Wealthier people had furniture and household accessories and the wealthiest also had jewellery, carriages and other equestrian trappings to bequeath; poorer people had their clothing and perhaps a few utensils or tools.

or in the pawn shops; the point has already been made that in England, rural and industrial workers only had one set of clothes.[14]

In point of language and sympathy, a judge or a magistrate could better hear someone of his own class, so unintentionally or otherwise he found himself listening to the person whose language was closer to his own understanding. In New South Wales the problem was that very often neither of the litigants nor any of the witnesses spoke a form of language anywhere near the understanding of the magistrates. So they were obliged to try to cross considerable class barriers in an attempt to penetrate the facts of a case, decipher them and make a judgement. Richard Atkins wrote of his difficulties:

> I find it requires a great deal of patience and perseverance to persist in doing what I think I am bound to do in my Judicial capacity ... to execute justice impartially.... The difficulties, almost insurmountable, of getting at truth among a sett [sic] of people used to every species of vice and Newgate chicanery is [sic] amazing; nothing but perseverance with a firm resolution of getting at it, if attainable can operate. 15

To give an example of what Atkins and magistrates in the colony had to deal with in terms of complexity of evidence, reversal of roles in court from the normal English pattern and confusion in both plaintiff and defendent about the property in dispute, it is worth noting some of the cases which came before the Bench in Sydney in the 1790s.

It was quite often the case in the early history of the colony that convicts or ex-convicts took each other to court in disputes over property - almost always clothing - in which it was eventually established that both sides were in fact well aware of whose was what and the court generally dismissed these cases as "too trifling to bear any

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14. See Chapter 1. See also E.P. Thompson, op cit., pp. 286-289. The Select Committee on Emigration (1827) "was given evidence of conditions in some districts of Lancashire which read like an anticipation of the Irish potato famine.... The evidence came from West Houghton, where half of the 5,000 inhabitants were "'totally destitute of bedding and nearly so of clothes"'. A manufacturer giving evidence to another committee in 1835 could not "recollect an instance but one, where any weaver of mine has bought a new jacket for many years". See also Humphreys, op cit., throughout, for evidence of the daily deprivations suffered by the poor as a consequence of having insufficient clothing.

15. Atkins, op cit., p. 21.

serious construct".[16] Before going on to discuss why the cases were brought before the court at all, two illustrations of this type of case must be shown. In 1789, James Campbell was charged with stealing a shirt belonging to one McDeed. Campbell claimed that the shirt was one which Mr White (the surgeon) had got for him to replace one which had been used by an Aborigine. Mr White confirmed Campbell's statement and he was discharged.[17] Similarly, in January 1799, Anne Wilson, the commissary's housekeeper, charged Mr Alt's housekeeper with having stolen two odd stockings but there was "more of Rancour, Malice than any strict regard to justice" in the matter and the case was dismissed.[18] In both these cases, the immediate question arising is why did the plaintiff bring them to court? These and many other similar examples[19] show two things; firstly, that the working class people in question had property in clothing which they valued, and secondly, that they were using the machinery of the law in the context of this property to further personal differences. Neither of these were economic, legal or social possibilities for people of a similar background in England and there were definite social repurcussions of both these points in the colony as decisions involving convicts as both plaintiffs and defendants began forming legal precedent.

A second unusual feature of colonial litigation involving disputes over clothing was the existence of cases in which convicts sued members of the middle class. The example in which Henry Kable successfully sued Duncan Campbell has already been quoted in Chapter 1. Another such case came before the Bench in Sydney in January 1797. Hudson, a shoemaker, complained that Captain Wilkinson had refused to pay him

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16. Minutes and Proceedings of the Bench of Magistrates at Sydney 8 Dec. 1798-5 Mar 1800, NSW State Archives, Number COD77, the case of Anne Wilson, 11 January 1799.

17. Cobley, op cit., Vol. II, p. 81.

18. Minutes and Proceedings, op cit., the case of Anne Wilson, 11 January 1799.

19. See, for example, Minutes and Proceedings, op cit., Francis Tyrall v. James Lacy, 28 December 1798, regarding a shirt and a handkerchief, and the case of William Davis v. John Randall heard the same day regarding a waistcoat bought second-hand at a cost of sixteen shillings.

for a pair of boots. Captain Wilkinson alleged that Hudson had stolen some of the leather he had been given to make the boots. Shoemakers were called to give evidence for both sides who all said that there had been the normal wastage of cuttings and "the matter was compromised by Captain Wilkinson's agreeing to pay for the Boots".[20] Two points need to be made about this case. Firstly, in England, tradespeople bore the cost of middle class credit as a matter of course and many a butcher, tailor, grocer or hatter had customers whose accounts were outstanding for months, if not years.[21] Adburgham wrote in this context that "Peers were particularly hazardous customers, since they were ... [immune] from arrest for debt".[22] In the colony, if a shoemaker wanted to recoup the cost of his own labour at his own convenience rather than that of his patron, he could conceive of the option of taking his unwilling client to court. The second point which follows from this is that the fact of Hudson's having won his case must have been widely known in a small isolated colony noted both for its avidity for gossip and its relative dearth of scandalous subject matter. The repercussions of his having won the case for other tradespeople - particularly the shoemakers called as witnesses - and their patrons in the colony, can only be surmized; that there were none is unlikely.

A third feature of colonial cases was their apparent complexity, the wheels within wheels of working class experience of life which they revealed. It is argued that this complexity was the result of differences in class language, culture and perception rather than an inherent difficulty. It is difficult to exaggerate the social significance of these differences in class language and perceptions in the England of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In a column entitled "Town Talk and Table Talk" published regularly in the Illustrated London News of half a century later, we

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20. Minutes and Proceedings, op cit., the case of Hudson v. Captain Wilkinson of 5 January 1799.

21. W.M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, Becky and her Captain Rawlings decamped leaving many such accounts unpaid.

22. A. Adburgham, Shopping in Style. London from the Restoration to Edwardian Elegance, Thames and Hudson, Great Britain, 1979, p. 42.

see that these differences were not a jot diminished. A short story in which a member of the lower orders begrimed himself in particularly disgusting circumstances to help a member of the "Guv'nor" class was thus prefaced:

> A little incident ... throws a glimmer of light upon one of the thousand modes of livelihood pursued by certain members of the class who compose that half of the world which proverbially gets its living by means unknown to the other half. 23

These differences were brought to light in the colony by the unusual facts of members of the lower class owning material possessions normally the prerogative of the classes above them and of their using social institutions, such as the law, as active equals if not aggressors rather than as the helpless wretched recipients of its operations they had been so recently in England. In the colony, one "half" of the world was suddenly being forced to look at how the other "half" got its living. In July 1799 Alexander Major was sentenced to one hundred lashes for drunkenness and abusive language. He said that "if his Corporal Punishment was remitted he could make some Discovery of a part of the property which had been stolen from Mr. Dole". Major said that he had seen a new silk handkerchief by the side of the bed by accident on a visit to John Wild. Wild "voluntarily confessed that he had in his possession at home three new silk handkerchiefs, an apron made out of a shirt, two pairs of Cotton Stockings & an old silk handkerchief". John Wild said that he bought the things for two pounds from Joseph Wild who had asked three pounds for them. Joseph Wild said his dog had found the things under a rock near Cockle Bay one day when they were out shooting. From Alexander Major's free use of his tongue in his cups via some silk handkerchiefs to the activities of a dog near Cockle Bay is indeed a long chain but not one impossible to unravel.[24]

What made such cases difficult for colonial magistrates in these early years was that a lot of their personal frames of reference in terms of working class experience and reality were irrelevant in the colonial context. In the England they had known, for

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23. Illustrated London News, 17 August 1850.

24. Minutes and Proceedings, op cit., 23 July 1799.

example, the upper classes were constructing ethics of work and leisure such that it was not the norm for members of the lower classes to have the leisure or the means to go shooting. Shooting parties were the prerogative of the upper classes.[25] In the England left so recently by all protagonists, members of the working class simply did not have two pounds put by, let alone earmarked for frivolous spending on silk handkerchiefs. It will be shown below that there is overwhelming evidence from various sources to indicate that in the colony it was quite common for a member of the working classes to spend three or four times more than he needed to obtain luxury items of clothing. It was these sorts of discrepancies between the reality of England and the reality of the colony that contributed to the sorts of complexities perceived as such by magistrates. It was no longer so evident when a witness was lying in such a case; the colonial reality meant that he could have been speaking the truth. The greater leisure and economic independence of the working classes in the colony allowed them types of social freedom which meant that magistrates had to listen carefully to their evidence in order to unravel some justice from the matters at hand. Furthermore this greater economic independence and leisure expressed in terms of clothing as property to be stolen, disputed and recovered, gave the working classes of New South Wales a very different social character and dignity from that ascribed to them by their middle class contemporaries and many subsequent historians. Mrs Ann Hordern, who arrived in Sydney in February 1825 when decent clothing for the overwhelming majority of people in the colony was the norm,[26] was shocked at the

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25. See Cobley, op cit., p. 140, 14 May 1788. When Worgan, the First Fleet Surgeon indulged himself with a shooting excursion, it took on the colours of a ramble in Arcadie as Gainsborough might have depicted it, "had a most delightful excursion today with Captain Hunter & Lieutenant Bradley ... [on our return] to the place where we landed, and after regaling ourselves with a cold kangaroo pie, and a plum pudding, a bottle of wine, etc, all which comforts we brought from the ships with us, we returned." Similar accounts of Vice-Regal excursions bespattered the columns of the Sydney Gazette couched in flowery graciousness and providing a marked contrast to the tongue-in-cheek tone of pique used to describe the amusements of the lower orders (see note 125, Chapter 1).

26. Hordern, op cit., p. 23.

condition of the English working classes, when she returned home.[27] Such was her indignation and the state of her own amour-propre earned by her successes in Sydney and Melbourne, that she conceived it as her right and her duty to correspond with the Earl of Shaftesbury on the matter.[28] Mrs Hordern was formed in a society created as much by the legal initiatives of McDeed, Wilson and Hudson, the purchasing power of John Wild and the sporting inclinations of Joseph Wild, as the genetic innovations of John Macarthur and Samuel Marsden.

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Turning to the mechanics of clothing theft, the time clothing was most vulnerable to theft - apart from the obvious prime occasions, night time[29] or in the absence of the owner - seemed to be washing day. We have already noted an instance in which some stockings allegedly went missing overboard while in the hands of the laundress.[30] Worn by women under petticoats and shifts, stockings were not readily detectable items of clothing and those stockings were never found. A strong suspicion was attached to the women convicts, however. The laundress in this case - and others in future similar cases in the colony - was not necessarily guilty or even party to such thefts, but if her vigilance slipped at all, her charge - or a desirable article thereof -

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27. Hordern, op cit., p. 46.

28. ibid.

29. Cobley, op cit., Vol. II, pp. 134-136, Governor Phillip instituted a night watch of twelve convict men and in a letter to Lord Sydney, 1 February 1790, he observed that nothing had been stolen at night for three months, thanks to the watch. However, Phillip's scheme foundered on Major Ross's delicacy, which could not stomach the thought of convicts stopping soldiers and questioning them on any suspicious nocturnal activities. This letter, along with much other evidence, shows soldiers to have been as guilty as convicts of committing any type of crime including stealing, receiving or selling clothing.

30. See Chapter 1.

disappeared out of the tub or off the line - or even from the basket on its way back to its owner.[31]

On 19 February 1788, Mary Jackson was charged with detaining a shirt, a pair of trousers, a new frock[32] and a pair of stockings, the property of Edward Deane, a seaman, from the Lady Penrhyn. Deane said he gave the wearing apparel to Jackson on the 12 February to wash, "some soap to wash [it] with, and a pound of tea for her trouble". A pound of tea was a very handsome reward indeed for the trouble of washing four items of clothing, representing as it did then more than a man's wage for a week's work. When Deane came on shore on 16 February, she said that the clothing had been lost and that she would not give it back.[33] Men were sent to force her to give up the clothing but she had already cut up the frock and she alleged that Deane had given her the shirt. She alleged that Deane had told her she could have the frock for a shirt, if she would bleach it (presumably to prevent its being readily recognized as Government issue), and the trousers to mend her stays. She told him that in return she would mend whatever he wanted mended. She alleged that Deane had asked her for a canvas petticoat which would make him a good pair of trousers. Further, she said that he gave her the stockings in exchange for a pair of her own warm ones that he had worn in the cold weather. Lastly she said that Deane often asked her to go on

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31. Sydney Gazette, 31 August 1806, John Stephens was charged with having stolen some linen apparel from D. Wentworth's garden on "the 7th of June last" (1806). "In support of the charge Mrs. M. Ainsley deposed, that on the day stated she had laid the articles enumerated in the indictment to bleach, & in the evening discovered that they had been stolen ... sometime afterwards [she had] received information of the things being in [Stephens'] box at his own place of residence; whereupon she applied for a search warrant, & the whole of the property was found in his possession".

32. M. Fletcher, op cit., p. 29. "The frock, a type of coat previously worn only in the country became universally popular, as it had a certain informality that was in the taste of the time, brought about by social change." In other words, against the background of the French Revolution, English gentlefolk felt it possible, if a little risque at first, to play at dressing up like peasants.

33. There were other examples of women who would rather suffer severe punishment than reveal where they had hidden an item of clothing; see HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 636, King's Norfolk Island Journal, 29 August 1789, "At 1 p.m. punished Ann Coombs, female convict, with one hundred lashes for stealing two checque [sic] shirts from Francis Mee, private marine, which she hid & refused to produce them."

board, one night bringing a hat and a greatcoat to take her off in disguise, but she refused to go with him. In consequence of this refusal, Deane came to demand his things from her. Jackson was reprimanded for not giving the clothes up when ordered to do so by Major Ross, but as Deane had cohabited with her on the passage, giving her the articles and demanding them only on her refusal to go on board ship with him, she was discharged.[34]

This case has been quoted in full for a number of reasons. Clearly it is not a straightforward case of theft of wearing apparel at the laundry. It is in fact a good example of the physical exteriorization of male-female relationships[35] and one of many cases in which the courts or magistrates concerned showed a degree of real sympathy for the woman's case, even to the extent of acquitting her or securing her the return of disputed property[36]. If men were going to give women their washing, they had to be able to trust them. Lieutenant Clark, as we have seen in Chapter 1, found this a source of worry. If men had personal relations of any kind with the women to whom they entrusted their clothing, such relations were better cordial than otherwise. The most interesting aspect of the evidence in the Jackson-Deane case, is that which shows the versatility of the clothing itself and the level of skill in the community for making, re-making, mending or virtually re-designing clothing. Such skill was not confined to women and is a logical concomitant of an age before the mass retail of ready-made clothing and footwear. There was some division of skills on a sex-role basis; sales of shoemakers' tools in the colony found ready buyers and most of

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34. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 80.

35. Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 72. The case of William Smith who cohabited with Ann Bryan and after a quarrel took some shoes back from her box which he had previously given her is another good example. See also Minutes and Proceedings, op cit., 13 April 1799, the case of Thomas Grainger v. Margaret Clarke. In general, as far as this writer has read the evidence for this period, there is a remarkable tendency on behalf of the magistrates to give women and their evidence a fair and reasonable hearing. For one interesting explanation of this see Byrne, op cit.

36. Cobley, op cit., vol I, p. 130, Case Stewart v. Hopley; and Minutes and Proceedings, op cit., William Riley v. Mary Dourand, 5 January 1799.

them were men.[37] Boys in England, and to a lesser extent in the colony, were taught shoemaking in orphanages and other charitable institutions.[38] The upper class patrons of such institutions felt that shoemaking and tailoring for boys and needlework for girls were suitable occupations for the children of the poor. Even the harsh realities of carving out a new settlement in the Australian bush could not quite quench the vanities of aspiring hearts. The convict woman, Mary Jackson, was interested enough in her own appearance to want to wear stays and skilled enough with a needle to be able to convert a pair of trousers to what she felt to be the more worthy purpose of keeping her stays in trim service. There were many cases involving disputes between men and women over clothing and the other noticeable point about these was the readiness with which clothing for the one sex could be converted to suitable wearing apparel for the opposite sex, in an era when there were apparently great differences between the clothing of men and women. There were also disputes over possession of clothing between people of the same sex and what was interesting about them was the high degree of accuracy in naming the suspect, reflecting both the size of the community and the nature of relationships between people.

To return to a couple of more straightforward thefts of clothing in that vulnerable state between dirty and clean, laundresses were open to charges of theft because theirs was a skill which was exercised on a valuable commodity. Given the state of the settlement at Port Jackson and the number of thefts of linen while it was being washed, dried, ironed or returned to its owner, it is evident that, in order to

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37. Sales by auction by John Howe at Windsor farm, 1 January to 29 June 1811, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number C197. At an auction of the effects of Andrew Thompson, sixty-nine lots of leather, soles, or shoemakers' tools were bid for. See also the numbers of lots of shoe-making gear on sale in the Sydney Gazette, for example, during the year 1807.

38. Robinson, op cit., established that parents of the first generation of native born children took great care to place them in a trade or if they were on the land, to keep them at home and instruct them in the ways of farming. This was possible in an economic environment far more favourable to the working classes.

keep her character[39], a laundress had to secure her premises much as a jeweller did a little later in the history of the colony.

> At one o'Clock on Friday morning the 6th instant, an Out-house belonging to Mrs Cummings, laundress, was broken into & robbed of divers articles of wet linen. 40

> A Complaint was exhibited by Ann Fox against R. Hempton, to whose charge, she had committed some washed linen, upon going from home, until she should return, a part of which, viz two shirts valued at 16s had been stolen. 41

> The week before last a quantity of wet linen was stolen out of the garden of Wm. Chapman near the wharf, which had been hung to dry [sic]; diligent search & enquiry were made after the articles, which were numerous, but to no purpose, until [2 April], when some part of it was found [in a boat on Garden Island]. 42

There are two interesting aspects in the Fox/Hempton case. Firstly, finding that Fox was determined to make a complaint against him to the magistrates, Hempton tried to make her accept six bushels of wheat in compensation. A bushel of wheat was worth ten shillings at this time.[43] So Hempton was offering Fox nearly four times the value of the shirts. Secondly, the Bench decided to order the prisoner to pay the exact amount of the loss as a fine "in order to discourage as much as possible a mode of private adjustment too frequently resorted to".[44] Here is evidence that people were accustomed to reaching mutual agreement in cases involving theft without needing or wanting to involve the machinery of the law. In an economy operating even partially by barter, mechanisms for concluding mutually profitable transactions were more

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39. Sydney Gazette, 16 September 1805, "Character is as essential in civil society as is morality to true Religion. As we are studious of preserving it, so must we expect to rank in the esteem of the world, and though credit may be impaired and even annihilated by misfortune, yet it may maintain its independence amid surrounding difficulties ... Upon character depends every social comfort to the subordinate; it forms his very treasure, bereft of which he must be 'poor indeed'".

40. Sydney Gazette, 15 May 1803.

41. Sydney Gazette, 22 January 1804.

42. Sydney Gazette, 2 April 1803.

43. Sydney Gazette, 4 September 1803.

44. Sydney Gazette, 2 April 1803.

highly developed and involved different orders of knowledge of others' characters[45] and different communicating skills. In this case Hempton could never have hoped that Ann Fox would fail to notice the missing shirts. Perhaps he judged that six bushels of wheat would be sufficient compensation for the loss of the shirts and possible loss of her character vis à vis their owner; in any case, his gamble did not come off.

Women who took in washing were also excellent witnesses in cases involving stolen wearing apparel and often recognized clothing reported as stolen in another customer's wash or being worn by someone other than its owner. Mrs Clayfield, Sergeant William Clayfield's wife, did Mr Brown's washing on board the Borrowdale before its departure from England. Sergeant Clayfield thought he saw a missing shirt being used as a bed gown by Elizabeth Mason and when his wife saw the shirt, she recognized Mr Brown's mark. Accused of the theft, Elizabeth Mason said she had bought the shirt for three pints of rum from Elizabeth Clark. She later told Clayfield that she would return the shirt and give him an extra one if he would say nothing of the matter, but to no avail. She was committed for trial by the criminal court.[46] As an article of barter, clothing was immensely valuable and much coveted. In this instance a shirt was considered worth three pints of rum. Among others, a pair of trousers went for 3½ lbs of rice[47], two women agreed to sleep the night with two

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45. In delivering judgements, magistrates and judges commented on character and knowledge of others' characters and circumstances as a factor in criminal cases. In the case of Michael Cassidy charged with receiving, known to be stolen, five pairs of shoes, "The Judge-Advocate expressed the deepest regret that a man who had for a length of time supported a fair character, should at length plunge himself into crime ... [his crime was all the worse as] he had received from an unthinking boy a property which it was not possible he should honestly become possessed of: he knew the boy, and was consequently too thoroughly acquainted with his means to be unwillingly imposed on". Sydney Gazette, 22 June 1805. See also the lengthy quotation of the judgement in an English court taken from an English paper in which the judge discoursed on the moral and legal responsibility of employers to give characters to servants, Sydney Gazette, 18 September 1808. For a wry judicial comment on the value of character in an embezzlement case at a later period, see H. Mayhew et al., London Characters: Illustrations of the Humour, Pathos, and Peculiarities of London Life, London, Chatto and Windus, 1874, pp. 11-12.

46. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 202.

47. Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 93.

corporals in return for a shirt each[48], and Hempton thought two shirts could be made away with in exchange for six bushels of wheat. There were also other cases in which, like Hempton and Mason, people caught stealing clothes offered valuable bribes for concealing their misdemeanour.[49] The shortage of clothing and the volume of theft meant that the authorities were very harsh when punishing proven offenders.

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In a small community, washerwomen were not the only ones to recognize an article of clothing on the wrong back. From the earliest issues of the Sydney Gazette many detailed advertisements offering rewards for stolen clothing achieved high rates of success by publicizing the loss of particular items. Where the thieves could not organize a well-known receiver[50] - punishments for receivers of stolen clothing were from the earliest days of the colony as heavy, if not heavier than for the theft[51] -

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48. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 262. Perhaps an isolated case but an interesting one in view of the debate concerning women as prostitutes in the early colony. See M. Dixon, The Real Matilda. Women and Identity in Australia 1788-1975, Pelican Books, Melbourne, 1976; M. Perrot, A Tolerable Good Success. Economic opportunities for women in New South Wales 1788-1830, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1983, p. 83; and K. Alford, Production or Reproduction? An Economic History of Women in Australia, 1788-1850, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1984; Robinson, op cit., p. 17.

49. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I. On 6 September 1788, T. Martin was accused of stealing a pair of trousers from J. Ferguson. Ferguson said that he saw Martin enter his hut. Later, Martin took Ferguson to the place where he had hidden the trousers and offered him a frock or a pair of trousers if he would not complain.

50. In small communities, specialists in this field were quickly recognized and in the planning stages of robberies as re-created in evidence before magistrates, the earliest detail to be assured before further steps could be taken was the organization of a receiver. See the evidence quoted concerning the robbery at Elizabeth Jones' place in the Rocks, Sydney Gazette, 26 May 1805. See also Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, p. 160, a convict, John Kelly, became known on the voyage out as a receiver of stolen clothing. He paid for it in food.

51. Cobley, op cit., Vol. II, p. 8 on 23 January 1789, T. Prior was given 300 lashes for buying a shirt, a pair of trousers and a pair of shoes from William Radford and a pair of shoes from J. Trace. J. Trace got 50 lashes for selling the shoes and Radford was pardoned because he informed. The back-to-front approach of this judgement continued throughout the period, the authorities conceiving that this would be an effective deterrent. The increasing volume of theft of clothing did not prove their solution to be a workable one.

they used often to bury it in gardens or under the floors of huts, to secrete it in the roofs of huts, and very commonly in and around the Rocks area. When searches were organized for stolen wearing apparel, sometimes even involving Aboriginal expertize, old caches long-since buried and already disintegrating were occasionally discovered. The searchers had to be very sharp-eyed and quick-witted. Great coats were found concealed in a sack of bran and there was one instance of a watch being discovered in a pumpkin. The knowledge that detailed descriptions of stolen garments had been published in the Sydney Gazette, and the fact that the garment itself might be sufficiently distinctive to draw comment, acted as a deterrent to some buyers. An example of an advertisement for such a garment down to the detail of ink spots on the shirt sleeves was when I. Smith, overseer at the hospital, advertised a one guinea reward for the return of a fine Irish linen shirt or five guineas leading to the conviction of the thief if it had been stolen.[52] In some cases the thieves or the receivers were able to re-make the clothing - certainly they were able to disguise rolls of material. They were equivalent to $50 or $100 bills today in the sense that unless there was some extraordinarily distinctive feature of the material, or that one happens to have noticed the number on the bill, both could pass equally readily as an easy anonymous cash form. In general, because people - men as well as women - were more intimately involved with their own clothing from the selection of all its component parts - buttons, thread, linings, tapes, cloth, etc. - to every alteration, patch or darn, mishap or sign of wear and tear - it was as easy for them to give detailed descriptions of the missing items as to recognize any that were recovered. One of the most detailed advertisements of a burglary was that given for Sergeant Rickett's property on 22 May 1808 in the Sydney Gazette. Some examples of the detail given were of

> two gown pieces, seven yards in each piece; an olive ground, with red round spotted edge, with small white specks round the red, and small white specks in the ground, with a black stalk to the red; the other blue, black and white checqur'd [sic] with four black specks between

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52. Sydney Gazette, 6 April 1806.

> the bars ... a red cross bar silk handkerchief hemm'd with pink silk ... a gold handkerchief pin, the top of the head oval, with a cross with three points over the bar like the tongue of a hat buckle, from the top to the bottom gradually narrow, about an inch long, a neat polished heart in the middle, the rest of the work not polished, the shank about three inches long, mended with silver ...

A reward of £3 was offered for recovery of this property, a considerable one for a sergeant in the British Army at the time - which may have been claimed by Mr Austen the jeweller, as on 29 May 1808, the Sydney Gazette reported that one John Carney (who was eventually found not guilty) was before the magistrates for the Rickett's burglary.

> An advertisement in last week's Gazette which gave notice of the robbery, enumerated among the articles stolen a gold breast pin, which being minutely described and falling under the observation of Mr Austen, jeweller, he gave immediate information of a pin, accurately answering the description, having been purchased by him some days before of a woman of the name of Rosetta Garaty ... 53

The report of the trial of George and William Rouse in the Court of Criminal Jurisdiction in 1820 is an excellent example of the above generalizations. The Rouses were charged with breaking and entering the premises of Governor Macquarie's Aide, himself called Macquarie. J. Richards and T. Carpenter were charged as accessories for receiving. Some of the clothing and parts thereof were recovered and Macquarie identified some buttons "as there is a bruise on one from my having trodden on [it]" and the waistcoats "from the make and the stuff they are made of - I brought them from India". One Charles Linton who lived near the Rouses on the Rocks looked after the swag of clothing for a few days after the robbery, a considerable quantity, being the entire contents of Macquarie's chest. Linton became nervous and told Rouse that "if he did not fetch them away I would throw them on the rocks". As compensation for his part in the robbery, Linton and a fellow-lodger, John Neale, who was also involved, were given a part of the swag. George Rouse gave Linton two coats, one partly ripped up "saying it would make me and Neale a Jacket for minding the things till he called for them". John Neale said in his evidence that "Linton gave me a yellow handkerchief

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53. Sydney Gazette, 22 and 29 May 1808.

to change with Thomas Rushton for another handkerchief nine or ten days after we looked into the kegs". Linton also alleged that he heard Rouse say "that he should plant the other things (in two kegs or casks, only one of which had yet been opened) in the Garden". The only evidence we have concerning the financial position of any of the people involved in the case so far is that John Neale had been paid fifty shillings the night before he was taken up for the robbery for work done on one of Campbell's ships.

The problem remained; how to dispose of the clothing. The evidence does not give details of how John Richards came to be involved, and whether or not he was a known receiver, but evidence was given in his defence as to his good character. Richards approached Thomas Ward, a convict hairdresser, and showed him the gold epaulettes off Macquarie's coat, asking Ward whether he knew someone who wanted to buy them. Ward said that he did not and also that at the time he thought they were Mr Macquarie's epaulettes which he had seen advertised as stolen and which he had seen Mr Macquarie wear in the barracks when he was a servant there. Richards told Ward that "he had some genteel things that would suit me and I agreed to call in the Evening". Carpenter also came that night to look at the things. Ward alleged that Carpenter "said that his Old Woman ... would be very angry if he had not a shirt - and he took one himself". Ward said in evidence that

> I told the prisoners that I did not want the things because I expected the long brown coat was Mr. Macquarie's from having repeatedly seen him riding and walking in the street.

After they had a drink together, Carpenter allegedly said to Ward:

> Tom why don't you nap that Swag - I said because neither I had no money and believe it would be a hanging job if it were found out ...

George and William Rouse were found guilty and sentenced to death and Richards and Carpenter were sentenced to fourteen years at Newcastle.[54]

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54. Bonwick Transcripts, Box 23, 2 August 1820.

Given the difficulties of disposing of stolen clothing[55], and the fact that increasing quantities of materials for making wearing apparel as well as ready-made clothing were coming into the colony from 1802 onwards, the number of thefts of clothing testify to its economic value and social desirability. While instances of shop-lifting began after the establishment of general stores in Port Jackson in the early 1800s (there were no permanent shops in the 1790s, masters of vessels occupied huts temporarily to sell off their private speculations) theft of clothing as such from shops was rare, there being little ready-made clothing for sale. The exception was shoes which were easy targets for theft. Most of the big Sydney store owners, Lord, the Packers, Mansell and Chapman, were robbed at some time or other as were Rowland Hassall and Andrew Thompson at Parramatta, but the main brunt of theft of clothing was borne by private individuals. Although private enterprise activity ended the physical shortage of clothing, and although there was a group of convicts and emancipists who availed themselves of the opportunity to earn money which many of them spent on clothing, the early history of the colony was one of recurrent scarcity and glut of every commodity. When there was no clothing for sale or being issued from the Government Store, the only way to obtain some was to barter for it or to steal it. The degree of Government control of minimum living standards through social welfare was as yet limited and the working class social experience of disposable income and what to do with it in terms of banking or investment was in general as yet undeveloped.[56] Not only were many newly-arrived convicts still badly off for clothing, but so were those who had been emancipated and could not work for whatever physical or psychological reasons. Such people became potential thieves of clothing or illegal

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55. See also the report of the case referred to in note 5 above in which C. Crump and J. Gregory were indicted for having stolen (Crump) and received (Gregory) some chintz and calico. Crump had difficulty getting the price he was asking for the material. From the evidence given in this case, it appears that customers would bargain for what they thought was a just price in the light of their knowledge of reasonable profit at any point in the wholesale or retail chain, regardless of whether or not they knew whether the stuff was stolen.

56. Steven, op cit., p. 260 and S.J. Butlin, Foundations of the Australian Monetary System 1788-1851, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1968, p. 414.

buyers of Government issue slops, either to cover themselves or to sell for food and drink. Buyers of second-hand clothes could be found among settlers temporarily on hard times in country areas. Very early in the history of the colony, the opening of a footpath to Parramatta was bemoaned precisely because it would then become almost impossible to keep a check on stolen property.[57]

The advertisements in the Sydney Gazette for the recovery of stolen clothing also provide detailed evidence of the extent of the victims' wardrobes. The house of Joseph Prosser "a labouring inhabitant of the Rocks" was broken into on the night of 29 March 1804, and the notice below appeared in the paper on 1 April:

> STOLEN ... the following Articles of Wearing Apparel, which are requested to be stopped if offered for Sale, together with the Person or Persons by whom tendered, and Information thereof made to a Magistrate:-
>
> A Black Mode Cloak
> A ditto ditto Scarf
> A striped Cotton and a Dark do. Gown
> A new Punjum Petticoat
> 1 Pair of White Cotton and 1 ditto Black Worsted Women's Stockings
> 4 caps, one laced, 1 shirt and 2 shifts
> 1 Black Mode Bonnet and 1 laced bonnet
> 2 Remnants of Ribband, pink and straw coloured.
> And sundry other Articles. 58

It is obvious that Mrs Prosser's wardrobe - or chest as was more probably the case - was the immediate target. It is also obvious that Mrs Prosser's chest contained more than the bare minimum of clothing as the list contains four separate possible outfits. A conservative valuing of the list excluding the "sundry other articles" would come to between £9 and £10. Black silk cloaks were selling at between £2 and £2/12/6 in June 1803 and prices for the other articles were taken from the Gazette in the twelve months June 1803 to June 1804.[59] An editorial comment in the Gazette described the robbery as "peculiarly criminal and distressing" because it had deprived the Prossers of their all. But their all was not insignificant - a black fashionable silk cloak with

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57. Collins, op cit., Vol. I, p. 197.

58. Sydney Gazette, 1 April 1804.

59. Sydney Gazette, 19 June 1803.

matching scarf and lace-trimmed bonnet to cover a selection of gowns and shifts when walking out was no mean attire for a labourer's wife. Mrs Prosser was getting on in years[60] so her husband was not likely to have been a young man. An outstanding feature of the harshness of social conditions for the working class in England was the deprivations suffered by the very old and the very young. Apart from the pangs of her rheumatism, old Mrs Prosser was certainly not suffering as well the indignities of being poorly clad until that fateful autumn day. The editorial continued with advice to the public to guard "against every species of negligence & inadvertency"[61] which could result in their being similarly despoiled, advice which was in vain in the climate of Sydney Town as almost every issue of its paper contained court news of someone being indicted for robbery, news of a robbery, or rewards offered for recovery of stolen clothing. An example of a good haul from the house of Joseph Hatton, a settler at Kissing Point at the end of December 1804, gives similar evidence as to the amount of property possessed by a settler and his family in wearing apparel:

> Three womens gowns, two light coloured and one dark cotton; Four women's petticoats, one white cotton one long cloth one blue plain calimanco and one flannel. Two girls blue striped calimanco petticoats & one round dress. Six womens caps five ribbands [sic] of different colours, Three muslin handkerchiefs, two half handkerchiefs, one cravat one plaid Bonnet, nine pair men and women stockings.
>
> Three shirts, two linen, one long cloth ruffled, one nankeen waistcoat, three pocket handkerchiefs, two bird's eye ditto, one sprigged muslin apron.
>
> Two boys frilled shirts and one dress, one pair pantaloons, a pair of duck Trowsers [sic] and waistcoat, one shawl flowered at two of the corners, one pair of white cotton gloves, one ditto Mittens.
>
> Three Womens & two girls shifts, three womens jackets and two cotton aprons striped, one child's cotton round-about with many other articles. 62

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60. Sydney Gazette, 8 April 1804. The editorial described Mrs Prosser as "an aged woman, deprived by a rheumatic affliction of the use of both hands".

61. op cit.

62. Sydney Gazette, 30 December 1804. Other examples of property expressed in terms of clothes or material are the notices of burglary at Peter Hodge's house on 7 August 1808, Mary Skinner's, 24 July 1808 and H. William's, 6 July 1806.

The number of cases involving stolen wearing apparel in which one or more of the people involved gave the Rocks as their address is interesting. The Rocks was known as a slum area of ill-repute and many harrowing descriptions of the degrading poverty, drunkenness and degeneracy prevailing there were given by contemporaries. Many convicted robbers or receivers came from the Rocks and there are numerous instances of people who lived in the Rocks buying clothing from the receivers. Most interestingly, however, we should note the numbers of people who were robbed of clothing from their homes in the Rocks, the amount and type of clothing stolen, and the reward offered, if any. The case of Joseph Prosser has been quoted at length and the view offered that Mrs Prosser was very respectably clad for the wife of a labouring man of the Rocks. Elizabeth Jones' house on the Rocks was robbed of "property in cash and good wearing apparel".[63] On 19 July 1807 an impressive list of clothing was advertised as having been stolen from Elizabeth Crouch in the Rocks. She was prepared to offer a reward of ten guineas for its recovery.[64] At a time when many agricultural labourers and domestic servants in England were earning barely £20 a year and some of that paid in kind,[65] ten guineas was a handsome reward for an inhabitant of a gruesome slum area to be offering to get her clothes back. One cannot help contrasting the length and quality of the list - Goodwife Crouch lost, among other things, a black silk gown, a white tamboured[66] open gown and a dark muslin sprigged gown[67] - with the report in the Sydney Gazette, of 14 July 1805 concerning the collapse of two houses at Mile End, New Town, England.

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63. Sydney Gazette, 26 May 1805.

64. Sydney Gazette, 19 July 1807.

65. Abbott and Nairn, op cit., R.M. Hartwell, "The British Background", p. 36.

66. M. Fletcher, op cit., p. 196. "Tambouring is a type of embroidery worked with the fabric held in a round frame using a special hook to make a chain stitch. It was used extensively in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century to decorate men's waistcoats and women's dresses. The work ranged from fairly coarse and simple to extraordinary fineness and elaboration."

67. A muslin sprigged gown would have cost between £4 and £5 in the colony at this time, as would a black silk gown.

> When the accident happened, nearly all the people were in bed, consequently when they were taken from the ruins they were entirely naked, and had not a rag to put on, except what they obtained from the humanity of their neighbours. 68

Reports of buildings collapsing, trains crashing and other harrowing accidents were a feature of English journalism throughout the nineteenth century. In the absence of multi-storey buildings and thronging vehicular traffic, the Sydney Gazette continued the tradition with horrific details of such accidents as the more rural nature of life in the colony afforded: burnings, snake bites, runaway horses, wayward axes and deaths by drowning being some of the more common traumas reported. It would appear that at the time, however, the slums of Sydney Town had the edge over their English counterparts. It is not suggested that all the people living in the Rocks were as well off as Elizabeth Crouch but the balance of the evidence does suggest that while there were undoubtedly instances of wretchedness and misery, people like the Prossers provided a reasonable indication of an average standard of living insofar as any such generalization can be made. The carpenter, John Neale, who was involved in the case of Mr H. Macquarie's stolen property and who lived in the Rocks, had just been paid fifty shillings. A carpenter who wanted to work could earn over eighty pounds a year in the colony.[69] and whatever John Neale's motives for being involved in this particular robbery at this particular time, immediate poverty could not have been one of them.

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One way of aiming at an understanding of the relative economic and social value of clothing is by a study of advertisements offering consumer goods for sale. Advertisements for clothing and accessories exceed all other advertisements for

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68. Sydney Gazette, 14 July 1805.

69. Account Book of D'Arcy Wentworth, op cit. Evans the Carpenter worked for Wentworth from January to October 1813 and earned £76/18/6 during that time. He was not the only carpenter employed by Wentworth that year.

material property such as furniture, books or livestock.[70] Another way of arriving at an understanding of the relative value of clothing is by a study of the rewards offered for lost or stolen wearing apparel and a comparison of these with the rewards offered for other valuable property such as livestock. Firstly some rewards offered for missing clothing, all quoted from the Sydney Gazette, of the date given,

14 October 1803	£2	for 2 yds. of snuff-coloured mixture cloth
25 April 1805	5 gns	for 2 greatcoats
30 March 1806	10s.	for a man's hat
26 June 1808	5 gns	for 10 pieces of Company's nankeen and 8 yds of coarse check.
17 March 1810	£1	an olive-coloured flushing coat.
26 February 1804	£10	for a big robbery of clothing and haberdashery from Rowland Hassell's place (Hassell was a storekeeper)
7 August 1808	20 gns	for a big robbery at Peter Hodge's place
21 August 1808	50 gns	for a big robbery at Sergeant Packer's place (the Packers had a haberdashery business)
9 October 1808	£100	for a big robbery from Simeon Lord's warehouse

In the case of all garments, the rewards offered were as much as or more than what might be regarded today as a reasonable price for a second-hand item given a certain amount of undeniable depreciation. This reflected the shortage of clothing, the personal value it had for its owner and its economic replacement value. In some cases, however, such as that of the olive-coloured flushing coat, the wording of the advertisement suggested what one might suspect to have occurred sometimes: that relatively large rewards in themselves could provide an incentive to theft. The coat in question was part of the property of Sarah Packer, one of a small group of very tough businesswomen in the colony, as evidenced by their outlasting several husbands while continuing and diversifying their business interests. Mrs Packer declared that, "No

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70. See Figure 7, Chapter 3.

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greater Reward will be offered", in contrast to Isaac Nichols, for example, who had lost the two greatcoats earlier in 1805 and increased the reward over three advertisements. Anyone who had Mrs Packer's coat in the expectation that she would offer a greater reward in her anxiety to recover it, reckoned without her shrewd experience of Sydney Town.

In the same year (1806) that ten shillings reward was offered for the recovery of a man's hat, twenty shillings was offered in July for news of six lost, stolen or strayed pigs. A new superfine man's beaver hat could be worth at most £3/10/- in the colony. The floods of the Hawkesbury in March destroyed many pigs and necessitated their wholesale slaughtering[71] so in that year pigs could be expected to have been more valuable than the £2 per head set on the Government stock by Governor King[72]. Furthermore, a live hog on the hoof - unless in times of drought - could not be said to depreciate in the same way as a dead beaver on a man's head. Supposing the hat in question to have been at the top of the price range, in offering a ten shilling reward, its owner was offering 14% of its value when new. Supposing the pigs to have been worth £2 each, their owner was offering 8% of their value; if as is more likely, they were worth £3 each, the twenty shilling reward constituted 5% of their value. In today's terms, of course, it is impossible that one should in any way consider the value of a man's hat and a pig on anything like equal terms. But stock was also regarded as valuable and many colonial observers were horrified at the prices obtained for livestock in this early period in New South Wales. In the same month - July 1806 - two pounds sterling was offered for news of fourteen ewes and two wethers or if the animals were held after the appearance of the notice, five guineas was offered. Sheep were worth £2 a head according to King.[73] So again the percentage of their value as

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71. B.H. Fletcher, Landed Enterprise, p. 45.

72. ibid., see also his note 20, p. 46. King estimated that each government horse was worth £80, each cow £38, and each sheep and hog £2. There was talk in the colony that Government stock was worth less than that held by private individuals because it was not as well cared for.

73. ibid.

reward offered was far less at 5% than what was commonly being offered for clothing. On 17 August 1806 a reward of five guineas was offered by a settler called Davelin at Rose Hill for some articles of clothing listed which could not have been worth more than five or six pounds at the most when new. On 3 August 1806 a reward of one guinea was offered for two strayed bullocks. Again, the value placed on clothing relative to livestock which was a highly valued and essential part of the economy of the colony in this early period, is remarkable. To give a few more examples, in October 1806 five pounds was offered for the recovery of an eight year old English cow and calf, in March 1811 two pounds was offered for two strayed horses and one pound for a strayed mare in foal, and in June 1811 ten guineas was offered for some wearing apparel stolen from a private house. The reward of twenty guineas offered by Charles Hook for one of Robert Campbell's mares which had been shot dead near Isaac Nichol's farm is atypical. It is the only reward of that order for livestock offered during the period and reflects more the shock at "so inhuman an act" and perhaps a little the character of the advertiser.[74] A last comparison, not with livestock but with an essential hand-made article, valued at the time as it is today, a saddle. In October 1806 a reward of five pounds was offered for any information about a new saddle which had been stolen. New saddles could be bought in the colony for up to forty pounds so the relative value placed on the saddle by its owner to that of Isaac Nichols for his greatcoats, for example, shows the saddle to be have been perceived as worth comparatively more than pigs, bullocks, cows or horses, but still less than greatcoats.

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74. Sydney Gazette, 22 June 1811. Steven, op cit. Steven depicts Hook as a timorous vacillating character who lacked the decisive courage required by businessmen in the difficult period preceding Sydney's first big slump and who was unequal to the responsibility of managing Campbell's affairs while he was in England as a witness for Bligh.

We have seen that clothing was extraordinarily vulnerable to theft and that in proportion to its perceived economic and social value, people were very anxious to retrieve their property and advertised accordingly. Before going on to a discussion of the ways in which society dealt with theft of such highly valued consumer articles, a closer examination of some accounts of robberies will be undertaken to show the degree of risk thieves were prepared to take in stealing clothes and the extent to which they were even prepared to resort to violence. It will be argued that there was a connection between such risk and violence and the value of the property in question. Increasingly from about 1805 onwards, reports of stolen wearing apparel describe its being taken from chests together with specified amounts of cash or bills. Chests being the equivalent of today's wardrobes and the habit of banking or investment as we know it being as yet a foreign one to people of the lower classes, such reports provide evidence of wealth not only in clothing but in savings. As such they disprove contemporary middle class assertions that the labouring classes had little or no understanding of the value of money and the benefits of saving. They also testify to the earning power of labour in the colony as the value of the stolen clothing plus the bills or money stolen from chests was generally greater than £10. Obviously, personal chests were the immediate target of thieves breaking and entering whether or not they had inside information as to the contents. What attests to the value of material or clothing apart from the frequency of robbery, is that people were even assaulted in the streets, on the roads or outnumbered by three or four thieves in their own homes.

One of the early examples of assault with intent to rob occurred, as would be expected, in the period of the greatest scarcity of clothing in the colony. Collins quotes the case of a woman who in March 1796 was stopped at night in the street and a piece of calico forcibly taken from her.[75] In December 1805 James Cox and I. Eirs were brought before the Bench and accused of violently assaulting a woman and taking from her sundry articles of wearing apparel. As reported in the Sydney Gazette, they

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75. Collins, op cit., Vol. I, p. 467.

were sentenced to three years' Government labour.[76] In the local column of the same issue, there was news of a robbery at the Wrights' house at Parramatta. Only Mrs Wright was home:

> who immediately gave the alarm - but they had the temerity to persist until they were compelled to consult their own security, and in the precipitancy of their flight left the major part of their collected spoil behind. 77

This was not an isolated example. Homes were broken into by two or more men while the owners were at home. In May 1806 the Pearce family of Seven Hills were robbed of their clothing while they were at home by a gang of three men. One man stood over Mr Pearce while he was sitting by his fireside and when he attempted to get up, the man threatened to blow his brains out. Meanwhile Mrs Pearce

> went to the door of the bedroom, and there seeing a man employed in ransacking her boxes, she entreated them [sic] to spare her cloathing [sic] and content themselves with all the grain or whatsoever else they pleased: but in reply to this request she was commanded to be silent, though she pointed to six bushels of wheat, none of which they took. 78

All these cases and others like them illustrate very clearly the value of clothing as a desirable consumer item with a ready resale value great enough for people to take such risks to steal it. Even with the difficulties of disposing of stolen haberdashery and wearing apparel, enhanced as we have seen by the detailed reward notices following many burglaries, people were still prepared to risk breaking and entering and even assaulting their victims to obtain clothing. When given the choice of wheat, a totally anonymous item, they still preferred clothing. This is a clear indication of the perceived value of even second-hand clothing at this time. The advertisements for clothing on sale in the colony, coupled with burglary notices, show it to have occupied a similar place in the economic and social life of the colony as, say, electronic equipment today; that is, it constituted the single most widely desired luxury consumer item.

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76. Sydney Gazette, 5 January 1806.

77. ibid.

78. Sydney Gazette, 18 May 1806.

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With this in mind, we may ask the question, how did society protect itself against theft of property such as clothing or haberdashery? One method has already been referred to: that of advertising for stolen goods. A second was to institute a type of constabulary. Early in the history of the colony, Governor Phillip discovered the need for a police force and a constabulary of some kind was in action throughout the period. Its members showed a great deal of acumen in tracking down stolen property[79] and were often assisted by the victim's suppositions concerning the robbery, or alerted by the notice in the paper[80]. Apart from the use of the general public or specific individuals to keep property secure, English society had a finely developed notion of "character" which was quite tangible in this context.[81] Significant are the verbs associated with "character". It was something to be given, to be borne, to be supported and certainly not to be lost. An individual was responsible to herself and to the community to deal with others on the basis of their known character while continuing to behave in a manner consistent with her own. This in turn meant that a certain degree of information about other people and their affairs was deemed obligatory. In judgements reflecting the prevailing accepted notions on this matter, judges or magistrates could and did modify or aggravate their decisions according to corporate knowledge presented as evidence by witnesses of the accuseds' characters. The

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79. In the Sydney Gazette, 23 March 1871, D'Arcy Wentworth, Superintendent of Police, had the following notice inserted: "Stopped on a suspicious Person now in Custody, a small quantity of Blue Cloth, and several striped and white shirts - Also, a Blue Jacket and Pair of Duck Trowsers [sic] - Any Person having lost such Articles, are [sic] desired to apply at my office ...".

80. Sydney Gazette, 27 July 1806. Joseph Moreton told John Russell, constable at Castle Hill, that he had some little property to dispose of. Russell found the articles to answer the description of "the list advertised" in the Sydney Gazette as stolen. Russell was an energetic and successful constable - see the full report of the case in the Sydney Gazette, 26 October 1806.

81. See notes 39 and 45 above and W.C. Wentworth, op cit., Vol. II, p. 63 in which he said that a good character was worth more in Australia than in England "because it is more difficult to be met with".

preservation of one's character and accurate knowledge of others' was essential in the business world for access to credit at all levels.[82] In the Sydney Gazette in 1808, there was a report of a customer who said he would take some articles if the shopkeeper would take wheat - a standard form of exchange in the colony at the time. On the shopkeeper's agreeing, the customer began to select his purchases. A third party came in to the shop who knew the customer and drew the shopkeeper aside to tell him that his client was totally uncreditworthy and would not be able to repay him with anything, least of all wheat. The Sydney Gazette set itself up through the selection of such stories, apocryphal or not, as well as editorial comment, as the spokesheet for status quo values as they were meant to operate. Failure to act on one's knowledge of someone's character deepened one's crime in the eyes of the law and in business took one down a short road to bankruptcy. The difference between English and colonial society on this point was that in England, the character of members of the working or convict classes was of very limited consequence and interest, and almost insignificant socially, legally and financially. In the colony, legal judgements and economic activity as they touched these classes showed them to be, relatively, of increasing importance. It should be noted here that the element of religious piety in assessing the character of anyone in the colony was a very minor one indeed, the flocks following the lead of their shepherds and attending more to their material than their spiritual concerns.[83]

To deal with theft then, British society transplanted to New South Wales used newspaper advertising, a nascent police force, corporate social pressure to make people conform to such a type as would give them a good character, and lastly, of course, the range of punishments offered by the English penal code. Once again, the

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82. Sydney Gazette, 11 September 1808. See also Sydney Gazette, 30 September 1804, evidence in the trial of Fergus Gallaghan.

83. W.C. Wentworth, op cit., "Mr. Marsden's reverence for the Lord's day was not such as to induce him to permit a windmill of his, which stands in full view of the very sanctuary where he officiates, to suspend even during church time its profitable gyrations".

degree of punishment inflicted on those proven guilty[84] of stealing clothing reflects in its severity on the value attached by that society to property and indirectly, to the work ethics which led to its acquisition. Again, the difference between British and colonial society was that a wider cross-section of colonial society owned property and therefore made a real contribution to the process of judicial decisions and their social basis. A number of people were sentenced to death in the colony for stealing clothes; retransportation to Newcastle for seven or fourteen years - or for life - was common as were any number of lashes up to 5,000. In order to put these sentences in the context operating on their contemporary givers, it must be understood that the clothing in question - even a handkerchief which was an important and useful item of clothing that could be worth up to eighteen shillings, or nearly two weeks' wages - was a highly valued consumer item which retained its value in a way it does not today. As such, the colony's judges and its newspaper did their best to protect it. It is difficult to assess how effective these various measures were. Theft of clothing remained at a constant high throughout the period, rather as theft of television sets or video equipment does today, but there were indications that fear of being caught with over-notorious garments[85] in concert with opportunities to get steady work had some effect in reducing this form of crime.

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84. Despite the arguments of A.G.L. Shaw, Heroes and Villains in History Sydney University Press, Sydney 1966 and C.H. Currey, The Brothers Bent, Sydney University Press, Sydney 1968, the courts of early New South Wales showed an interest in justice or its technicalities and niceties. This was shown when they gave verdicts of insufficient evidence in cases involving stolen clothing even when some of it was found in the possession of an individual or in circumstances pointing equally directly to someone's guilt. For example, see the case of Wm. Watkin, 19 July 1791 in Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, p. 92; Wm Thompson and John Creswell, Sydney Gazette, 22 June 1806, or Dowdan and Keenan, Sydney Gazette, 31 August 1806 or James Driver, Sydney Gazette, 14 September 1806, or John Carney in the Ricketts case, Sydney Gazette, 22 May 1808. A middle class contemporary saw this as a demonstration of the ease with which criminals could manipulate the Australian courts. "It was no very extraordinary spectacle ... to see ... receivers of stolen goods driving up to court to receive sentence in their carriages with livery servants", Cunningham, op cit., pp. 320-330.

85. See the case of George and William Rouse, discussed in Chapter 1.

A separate area of crime related to clothing was that concerning convict clothing. From the earliest days of the colony, official issues of slop clothing were accompanied by Government orders forbidding their sale. Well might Governor after Governor promise dire consequences to the seller and even more so at times, the buyer. Scarcity of clothing, particularly in the 1790s, meant that even the meanest, least desirable form of apparel had a ready market in the prevailing conditions of hardship. Convicts used to exchange their slops and were practised in all sorts of deceptions to get more than their official handout even in the most wretched circumstances.[86] After the arrival of the Second Fleet, the Reverend Johnson wrote that

> Some would complain they had no jackets, shirts or trowsers [sic], and begged that I would intercede for them. Some by this means have had two, three, four - nay one man not less than six different slops given him, which he would take an opportunity to sell to others, and then make the same complaints and entreaties.... No sooner would the breath be out of any of their bodies than others would watch them, strip [them] entirely naked.... In the night time, which at this time is very cold, and especially this would be felt in the tents, where they had nothing but grass to lay on and a blanket amongst four of them, he that was the strongest of the four would take the whole blanket to himself and leave the rest quite naked. [87]

The convicts nevertheless showed initiative in availing themselves of all market opportunities; Collins recorded some convicts selling their clothing and blankets to the lascars of the Shah Hormuzear who found Sydney's climate very chilly even in February.[88] Apart from the unfortunate lascars, settlers and soldiers also bought convict clothing. It cannot be assumed that convicts sold clothing only to buy grog as this was just one of many possible motivations. A more common reason would have been to buy food and sometimes it could have been sold to buy better quality clothing. Hardship such as that suffered for want of clothing by the convicts of the Second Fleet would enhance their consciousness of its value in Sydney, whether to sellers or buyers. Convicts were not the only group who realized the value of clothing. Soldiers,

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86. Collins, op cit., Vol. I, p. 171.

87. HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, pp. 388-389; Johnson to Thornton, undated, probably July-August 1790.

88. Collins, op cit., Vol. I, p. 27.

too, gambled or sold their clothes and were punished accordingly.[89] They also spent their clothing allowance on drink.[90] When discussing alcoholism in the early years of the colony, few writers have distinguished between soldiers and convicts. There were strong military traditions concerning allowances of grog to both private soldiers and officers[91] and these prompted Major Ross to ascertain supplies before leaving for Port Jackson[92]. While the point has been made already that many of the soldiers and convicts came from similar class backgrounds,[93] it was also true that long serving private soldiers were brought to particular drinking habits by their very profession[94]. For this reason some distinctions should be made between convicts and soldiers when generalizations are made about their consumer preferences. Contemporaries made such distinctions. Surgeon Superintendent Kent wrote to Nepean from the Boddingtons that the soldiers "are a very troublesome sett [sic], and require more looking after than the convicts".[95] However, the strength of the convict taint as perceived by the British[96] has proven greater than the reality of British soldiers' drinking habits in the judgement of posterity.

The origin of the distinctive marking or colour of convict issue was not to distinguish them as criminals, but to distinguish the clothing itself in such a way that it

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89. Collins, op cit., Vol. II, p. 20, the case of Thomas Ibdin and Vol. III, p. 94.

90. Atkins, op cit., p. 171, 6 June 1794, "There never was such a scene of drunkenness as at Sydney, among the Soldiers in particular who have received their clothing money in Liquor, Tea & Sugar, but a great part in the first article".

91. See R. Clark, Letterbook, 10 May 1787, Clark to Lieutenant Bedlake.

92. For the correspondence between Governor Phillip and Under-Secretary Nepean and a memorial from the Marines on this point, see HRNSW, Vol. I, Pt 2, pp. 101-102.

93. See Chapter 1.

94. See note 27, Chapter 3 for an example of other professions in which the employer class implicitly encouraged the habit of spending money on drink, thereby creating a drinking ethos in that profession. There is evidence that some soldiers in early Sydney resented having to take their pay in kind.

95. HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 7.

96. For an interesting discussion on the difference between British and colonial values in this and other respects, see Robinson, op cit., pp. 7-17.

would be recognizable.[97] Again, the problem of preventing the convicts from selling their clothes which persisted until Macquarie's time, highlights their economic and social value in the sense that even as poor quality, regulation Government issue, such coarse, badly fitting clothing could find a buyer whose economic position and social pretensions did not prevent him from wearing convict clothing even if only while working in his first few years in the colony. Some Government orders concerning the issue of slop clothing contained the rider, "No person will be allowed to go off the Stores until three months after the slops are served". Slop clothing had a definite value and the Government equated that with a minimum of three months' work.[98] In the Sydney Gazette of 1 May 1803, the value of a suit of slop clothes was set out as follows:

	£	s	d
A blue, green or red Kersey Jacket		13	6
A shirt or frock		4	9
Hat		4	2
A pair of shoes		6	8
A pair of stockings		2	10
A pair of trousers		12	6
Total	£2	4	5

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that all the circumstances surrounding the theft of clothing indicate more about its value than pointing to an endemic dishonesty inherent in the population of Port Jackson. In fact, alongside notices of robberies in the Sydney Gazette were inserted found notices concerning the same eminently forgettable items, the loss of which plagues people today: parasols, handkerchiefs, hats,

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97. Cobley, op cit., Vol. III, pp. 159-160. Governor Phillip suggested to Nepean that there should be different coloured stripes woven into the convict clothing, 18 November 1791. Dundas replied to this on 15 November 1793, see HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 63. Later, Cunningham found it best to number individual suits of clothing issued; see Cunningham, op cit., Vol. II, p. 219.

98. Sydney Gazette, 1 May 1803.

pocket watches[99], etc., testifying to a general community concern for others' property. There were undoubtedly dishonest people and professional thieves in the colony, but a study of the theft of clothing from the aspects discussed above: frequency, resale value, large rewards for recovery, violence, socio-economic class of victims, and punishment also shows it to have been a desirable and highly valued consumer item coveted and owned by a wide cross-section of the colony from the Macarthurs and the Marsdens to the Pearces and the Prossers.

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99. For example, Sydney Gazette, 12 May 1805, "Lately found on the Parramatta Road, a small green parasol - the owner may have it by applying to George Howe ... & defraying the advertisement".

CHAPTER 3

AT THE STORE

SYNOPSIS

Upper class censure of working class attempts to enjoy luxury articles of consumption in England. Discussion of new evidence to show that most colonial working class people generally spent their money on clothing, tea, sugar and tobacco. Shopping a male rather than female province in the early nineteenth century. Details of colonial consumption patterns as evidenced by expenditure at general stores. Wages and mode of payment in the colony. Consumption by individual emancipated convicts. Colonial upper classes sent to England for most of their clothing. Consumption by working men as evidenced by their employers' accounts. Important economic role played by convicts in asserting their consumer preferences. Volume and value of private enterprise catering to colonial preference for haberdashery and clothing. Advertisements as evidence of consumer interest in clothing. High profits from importing clothing.

There are ten known sets of accounts or ledgers covering the years to 1815, all held in the Mitchell Library. These are Thomas Abbott's Account book 1788-1811, Rowland Hassall's Day Sales Book, 1803-1804, William Mansell's Account Book 1809-1812, Hassall's Accounts 1802-1804, George Hall's Journal and Accounts 1802-1808, D'Arcy Wentworth's Account Book 1812-1820, John Macarthur's Accounts 1806-1832, Mrs Macarthur's Accounts 1811-1848, and John Howe's Sales by Auction 1811. The Day Book of a Sydney Merchant 1805-1806 contains records of transactions involving people on Norfolk Island and has not therefore been considered for the purposes of this chapter. These records provide a comprehensive source for a study of consumer patterns in the colony, containing as they do a large sample of consumers of all backgrounds. Supplementary evidence to the accounts and day books listed above can be found in the letter books of David Collins, Rowland Hassall, Hannibal Macarthur, Charles Hook and Elizabeth Macarthur and in the Sydney Gazette.

A clear picture which emerges from a detailed examination of these sources is one showing a wide cross-section of the population of the colony spending more consistently on haberdashery, material for clothing, tea, sugar and tobacco than on alcohol during this time. In so doing, people in the colony were continuing an old-established pattern of consumer spending dating from the seventeenth century in England, the more noticeable in New South Wales because of the conspicuous imbalance in the population towards the working and criminal classes. The increase of consumer items such as cushions, bed and window curtains in the houses of the poor and the fact that wage labourers and poor husbandmen were buying cottons, woollens, linens, silks, beer, crockery, cutlery and toys in England from the 1680s has been carefully documented in a superlative study of the activities of chapmen or peddlers in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[1] Working class pur-

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1. M. Spufford, The Great Reclothing of Rural England, Hambledon Press, London, 1984.

chasing power declined in the period 1788 to 1810 in England[2]. It remained true, however, that the cloth and clothing trades were second in importance only to the food trades, at least to the 1850s in England[3] and that there was a larger working class demand for clothing than any other manufactured commodity at that time[4].

Before undertaking a detailed discussion of the evidence contained in the surviving account books covering Sydney and Parramatta to 1820, it is worth noting that the rise of working class consumption of luxuries in England was accompanied continuously by critical upper class comment with a heavy moral undertone. This was, of course, particularly evident with reference to working class indulgence in alcoholic drinks,[5] but can be seen equally clearly as any other luxury came within the reach of members of the lower classes.[6] After the introduction of tea in the early 1700s, consumption increased steadily throughout the eighteenth century although "there were kill-joys who complained that the habit of tea-drinking was as demoralizing to the working classes as gin-drinking had been earlier".[7] Tallymen were criticized because they caused "earnings which ought to be expended in the purchase of useful and

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2. E.M. Carus-Wilson (ed.), Essays in Economic History, Edward Arnold Ltd, London, 1962, Vol. II, p. 178.

3. D. Alexander, Retailing in England During the Industrial Revolution, Athlone Press, Bristol, 1970, pp. 82, 99-100. See also p. 146 for an interesting discussion of the reasons why members of the working classes tended to spend money on cloth and clothing rather than kitchenware, furniture and fittings.

4. Alexander, op cit., p. 82 and pp. 92-100.

5. Carus-Wilson, op cit., Vol. II, pp. 180-181. It was not until the twentieth century that expenditure on alcohol in any form was acceptable as an essential ingredient in a basic standard of living index.

6. An intangible luxury which had eventually to come within the reaches of the working class for a number of reasons, was credit. Attitudes to debtors from various class backgrounds owing various amounts differed greatly. A middle class household ran on credit as a matter of course. Working class households relying on credit were quickly labelled "improvident" if they fell behind with their commitments. Alexander, op cit., p. 184, makes the point that by providing credit to the working class, English tradesmen and shopkeepers extended "a valuable, if imperfect, social service".

7. Adburgham, Shopping in Style., p. 65.

durable garments" to be "thrown into the bags of these panderers to vanity".[8] There was the clear implication of moral opprobrium for those members of the lower orders who aspired to any form of ornamentation which could be a source of pride or pleasure to the wearer. "Steam prints" were bad (they were pretty and fashionable); "useful prints" were good (they were time-honoured patterns and colours with no pretension towards fashion). These observations provide evidence of the sorts of upper class attitudes which, translated into terms of minimum acceptable wages, put pressure on members of the working class as effectively as sumptuary laws had checked the aspirations of the upper middle class earlier in English history. This type of criticism implied that working class people ought to be happy - if not grateful - to be warmly dressed and that any ambition to decorate their clothing with however trifling or impractical a piece of ribbon, lace, button or buckle, was somehow reprehensible or indicative of moral laxness on their part. Similarly, they should be content with water, or at the most milk, and not presume to add a few leaves of that morally disturbing drink, tea, to their boiling water.

> Being the other day at the grocer's, I could not forbear looking earnestly and with some degree of indignation at a ragged and greasy creature who came into the shop with two children following her and in as dismal a plight as their mother, asking for a penny worth of tea and a halfpenny worth of sugar ... [9]

The very thought that members of the working classes should enjoy the effects of gin as a gentleman his bumper of port wine, unleashed torrents of moralizing cant from wide sections of upper and, more particularly, middle class interests. Certainly the effects of gin on an individual who indulged excessively were disastrous, but it should be remembered that the respectable upper class disease, gout, was no more than the consequence of being drunk too often on other forms of alcohol.

Indignation cloaked in morality tinged the writings of members of the upper classes when they perceived that the lower orders had access to sufficient resources

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8. "The Clothier and Draper" 1859, quoted in Alexander, op cit., pp. 82-83.

9. Charles Deering Notthingham, Vetus et Nova (1751) quoted in D. Davis, A History of Shopping, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, London, 1966, p. 202.

to emulate them in any way. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century in England before the benefits of the economic reality of the need to ensure continuing profit percolated down to the poor. Until then, wages were not generally high enough to allow for some disposable income to buy the things and thus form a market which would keep the industrialists and owner class in general in the style which they had established by paying starvation wages. The House that Jack built near Sydney Cove provided a temporary relocation of luxurious living such that members of the working class could enjoy some of its fruits at a time when their contemporaries in England could not. There were myths about drink-sodden settlers eternally in debt and failing to profit from Government generosity and wisdom through some intrinsic moral inadequacy. These myths are in no way reflected in the buying habits of Hassall's, Mansell's or Abbott's customers or of George Hall's employees. This is not to say that there were no perpetually drunken layabouts in the colony. However, the evidence points to their being a minority then as now, in England as in Australia.

There are other debates about the harshness or otherwise of the penal colony of New South Wales. This chapter provides concrete evidence of the everyday workings of the colony's economy as it touched the lives of the majority of the settlers: the convicts. Thus Dr Hirst's claim

> that this society's freedoms were well established from the earliest times and ... the making of a free society had been going on almost since the day it began. [10]

is upheld by the massive testimony of the spending habits of convicts in early New South Wales contained in the accounts of its storekeepers. At the same time, this writer cannot agree with Dr Neal that "the ideology of formal freedom [had] profound effects on day-to-day life in New South Wales,"[11] at least before 1820, nor that the absence of a representative legislature was "sorely felt" by the majority of convicts in

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10. J.B. Hirst, "Or None of the Above: A Reply", Historical Studies, Vol. 22, No. 89, October 1987, p. 519.

11. D. Neal, "Free Society, Penal Colony, Slave Society, Prison", Historical Studies, Vol. 22, No. 89, October 1987, p. 506.

New South Wales.[12] Dr Neal quite rightly pointed out that the human factors "feelings, emotions, dignity, social, cultural and family ties, love of place and so on" are those most readily omitted in debates on transporation.[13] He himself, in falling into the error that political representation in the sense he understands it - or, indeed any sense at all - was widely desired by the David Gardeners, the Sarah Alkins, the Ralph Wiggins, also fails to consider the human factors. The new and important contribution of this thesis to scholarship of the period is that by laborious totalling of the consumer habits of hundreds of convicts and ex-convicts, authoritative assertions about human factors in early New South Wales can be made. The weight of this precise economic evidence would tend to support Dr Hirst's interpretation of New South Wales in ways difficult to refute.

The majority of the working class population took part in the economic system as soon as they were given the chance by charging for their labour and spending its fruits on luxuries. In so doing they provoked a change in the grounds though not the nature of upper class criticism. If and when working class people did manage to get reasonable wages for their labour, they were then criticized for spending what they earned rather than saving for investment. Contemporaries could not see the great revolutionary economic fact that by placing real value on the price of labour, the poor could become a market which would ensure the employer class greater profit. The reality of colonial life showed this to be true even though the very people who were making money out of the respectable consumption patterns of the lower classes continued to single out and comment on the cases of obvious misery. The profits made by the Macarthurs from two particular cargos of haberdashery and clothing (discussed later in this chapter) illustrate what everyone at the time in the colony knew, that large, quick and certain profit attended the smallest investment skilfully laid out in haberdashery or related lines. This continued to be the case in the 1840s in Melbourne

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12. Neal, op cit., p. 516.

13. Neal, op cit., p. 505.

(though it lacked the notoriety attached to profits made by selling grog). Cunningham reported not only on the fashion tastes of women in Sydney but on the highly profitable activity of catering to them:

> The keeping of a fashionable repository for ladies' dresses has ... been hitherto a most gainful occupation here; and one active individual who flourished in this line has lately returned to England with a fortune which I never heard calculated at less than twelve thousand pounds, all acquired in about six short years. 14

This could only be the case because wage labour in the colony earned a disposable income, thus winning an important freedom and one perceived by convicts and ex-convicts as such, economic independence.[15] This economic independence distinguished the convicts and emancipists of early New South Wales alike from free labourers in England and slaves in the West Indies.

Thomas Abbott's accounts contain very sparse entries for the period before 1799 and their mode of entry seems to indicate that as he remembered an old debt he recorded it.[16] Possibly he had made more detailed records for the 1790s and these have not survived. His women customers included better-known figures such as Mrs Mann, Mrs Lawson, Mrs Hook, Mrs Broughton and Mrs Ann Grant, as well as more elusive personalities such as Sarah Atkins who was prepared and able to spend £1/10/- on the hire of a horse and chaise on 28 August 1809. An interesting fact about his female clientele, as was the case for other shopkeepers in the colony at this time, was that they numbered 31 out of 210 customers in the period 1788 to 1811 or, expressed as a percentage, constituted 14 per cent of his customers. This reflects a vastly different division of the labour and responsibility of shopping than is the case nowadays.

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14. Cunningham, op cit., Vol. I, p. 54.

15. Dr Neal quite incorrectly infers that convict labour in the colony was unpaid. See Historical Studies, Vol. 22, p. 508. To acknowledge the reality that it was at all times paid and sometimes well paid, at least before 1815 (crucial years to Dr Hirst's argument) would, of course, invalidate much of Dr Neal's argument.

16. Thomas Abbott's Account Book 1788-1811, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number B771.

Parallel evidence exists in letters of families like the Macarthurs[17] and the Pipers[18] to show that men were a great deal more au fait with the intricacies of all aspects of shopping than is generally the case today and could be trusted as well with delicate commissions for bonnet trimmings or gloves as with the major tasks of laying in long-term provisions for households. The account books give ample evidence that this pattern was also prevalent among the working classes and is too widespread to be dismissed as a result of the imbalance between the sexes in the early history of the colony. The trend for men to take a greater part in those aspects of shopping which are considered as female bastions today, has been noted in earlier periods of English history by other scholars.[19] Its origins can be explained by such factors as restrictions on women's movements because of ideas of moral propriety; physical dangers or difficulties such as long distances or roads unsafe because of human agents or the effects of bad weather, wear and tear and poor upkeep; the habit among the upper classes of sending servants to the shops - the day the Pepys' maid was off, they had to sneak out after dark to buy some meat for dinner because it would not have done to be seen shopping for such household necessities - buying imported lace for oneself was

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17. H. King, Elizabeth Macarthur and Her World, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1980, p. 109. John was the family's London agent. All their clothes and most of their household goods, blue cloth and brass buttons for the servants' livery, slop clothing for the convicts, etc. were imported. Though Mrs Macarthur did make occasional purchases at the local store, these seem to have been of a one off nature such as the two hammers she sent to Mr Hassall's for on 14 October 1803. An insight into Elizabeth's views on the subject of shopping comes from a letter to her son dated 7 June 1824 and quoted on pp. 109-110. "It is of consequence that what we have for our personal use should be appropriate and of superior quality. We wear things out and therefore wear them long. We have no opportunity for changing them often.... At this distance from the Mother Country mere articles of show are ridiculous. Our household linen and clothes I contend should be of good quality ... in the object of package and freight [good quality things would] cost no more than trash.... The last cambric muslins we were greatly deceived in. Your sisters made them up into dresses, they washed to pieces immediately - injured we suppose in bleaching." In 1828 James was shopping for the family, buying everything from cases of bonnets, collars, ribbons, gloves and stockings for his mother and sisters to tooth brushes for his father (p. 140).

18. M. Barnard Eldershaw, The Life and Times of Captain John Piper, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1973, pp. 182 and 184. John Piper wrote from their country property to his father in Sydney including shopping lists containing, among other things, requests for such obviously personal and specialized items as gloves, stays and a "hat for Andrewina to go to Church in".

19. Spufford, op cit., p. 21, note 65.

acceptable, getting the groceries oneself was beyond the pale;[20] and the fact that until 1882 in married households, men were the sole legal property owners and ultimately responsible for all financial matters. A combination of these factors meant that the role of marketing and shopping was one for either domestic servants or male members of the household. Abbott's male clients continuing this English pattern in Sydney included people such as Hibbs (a soldier), Captain Kemp, Henry Kable, Alexander Riley, William Field (a settler on the Hawkesbury), Mr Underwood, Mr Mansell, Mr S. Lord, Andrew Thompson, Reuben Euther (Lord's apprentice), James Larra, Captain Piper and other colonial notables and nobodies.

A closer examination of the nobodies' accounts establishes a clear pattern which is revealed by all the account books of the period: a great, one might say with little exaggeration, inordinate expenditure on wearing apparel. Murphy the charcoal burner spent more than £9 on clothing between 1807 and 1808. William Field the settler spent £2/10/- on a hat when he could have bought an adequate covering for his head for 7/6d. which would surely not have disgraced him in the wilds of the Hawkesbury district.[21] Reuben Euther, whose concern for his appearance reflected a desire to ape his counterparts in England[22], spent £17/3/- on material, handkerchiefs, stockings, shoes and buttons so that he might not disgrace his master's counter. Entries for haberdashery items in Abbott's account book are generally for very small sums but they were so remarkably frequent that it seemed an interesting exercise to total all money spent on haberdashery and related goods. The results can only be described as astonishing and are shown relative to expenditure on tobacco, tea, sugar and spirits by Abbott's 210 customers in Figure 2.

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20. Adburgham, Shopping in Style, p. 12.

21. The hats issued with convict clothing were worth 4/2.

22. See Adburgham, Shopping in Style., pp. 42-43 for some amusing examples of drapers' assistants' prattle and toilette.

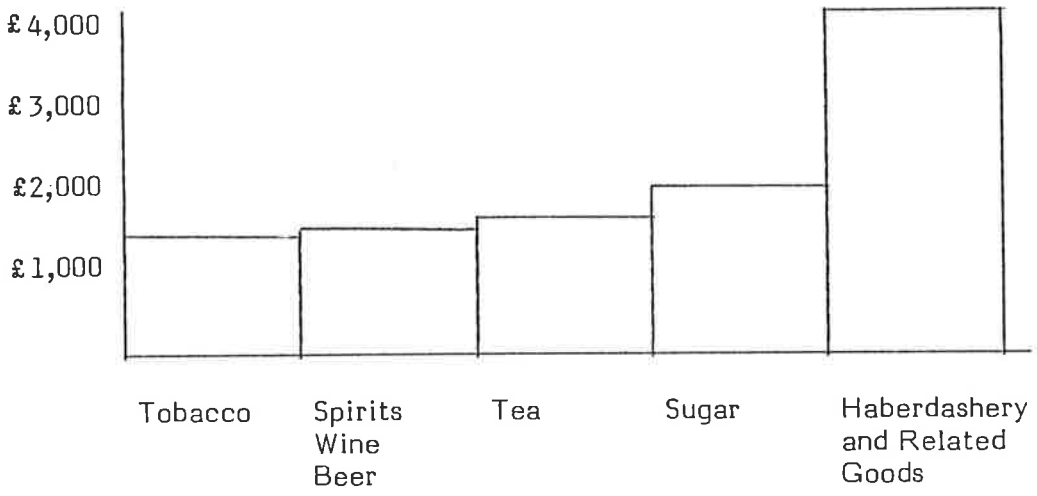


Figure 2
Consumer Patterns in the Colony - Abbott's Store 1788-1811[23]

It could be argued that it was the nature of Abbott's business as a general store which meant that, firstly, relatively large amounts were spent on tobacco, tea and sugar compared with alcohol, and secondly, that a preponderance of his business was transacted in the haberdashery lines. This is precisely the point. This was the time in which the contemporary, and thus to a great extent, subsequent preoccupation was with the inequities of a monopolistic system made possible by shameless profiteering on the part of the seller and/or dissolute depravity on the part of the buyer, the whole geared to the distribution and consumption of alcohol.[24] Yet Abbott's was one of several general stores operating in the colony with a reasonable turnover, given the extent and social composition of the population, and doing business along roughly the

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23. The figures for this table were compiled from Abbott's Account Book as follows:

Tobacco	1788-1811	210 customers	£548/14/1
	1806-1811	197 customers	£548/3/1
Tea	1788-1811	210 customers	£1,549/13/3
	1806-1811	197 customers	£1,506/17/9
Sugar	1788-1811	210 customers	£1,624/5/7
	1806-1811	197 customers	£1,239/16/7
Spirits, Wine Beer	1788-1811	210 customers	£1,422/19/2
	1806-1811	193 customers	£1,401/3/8
Haberdashery	1788-1811	210 customers	£4,036/16/8
	1806-1811	194 customers	£3,893/13/5
	1807-1811	190 customers	£3,794/5/11

24. Butlin, op cit., pp. 19-20.

same lines. In addition to such general stores, there were certainly public houses, records of which have not survived but which might be expected to show an inverse pattern figuring the same commodities as those illustrated in Figure 2 above. Public houses in the early days of the colony, particularly in country areas, also did a thriving trade in flour, tea, sugar, slops, shoes, thread and some fancier articles of haberdashery. There were parallels with the English truck system,[25] pub owners sometimes being criticized for taking advantage of their monopoly situation. At the same time, however, advertisements in the Sydney Gazette provide evidence concerning businesses which dealt exclusively or almost exclusively in haberdashery lines of a more specialist nature than those kept by Abbott. These will be discussed later in this chapter. Taken together with the surviving account books and surviving information on the breakdown of cargoes coming into the colony from the lists kept by the Naval Officer, they provide overwhelming evidence of an immense consumption of clothing in the colony relative to the numbers and social class of its population.

A similar pattern emerges from an examination of William Mansell's ledger. Of his 245 customers in the period 1809 to 1812, sixteen, or a little over 6 per cent, were women. Of these women, three were big businesswomen by colonial standards: Mrs Bull, Mrs Mack and Sophia Lett. They bought alcohol in bulk for the purpose of doing further business on their own behalf and were thus not typical female domestic consumers. Like Abbott, Mansell had clients ranging from the celebrated to the nonentities, but unlike Abbott, he sold liquor wholesale to customers in quantities which clearly could not have been consumed by a normal domestic family, even in a colony rumoured as depraved in this respect as New South Wales. Thus when Mansell sold Mrs

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25. In England payment was often given in kind. While this may sometimes have been advantageous to workers if the goods given them were justly valued in saving them the expense of travelling to shop, it was very often the case that the system operated to their detriment. Employers gave inferior quality goods and put their own value on them, quickly evolving the rationale that the workers were too improvident to be trusted with their pay in cash. The Oxford dictionary quotes the example, "The very paupers used to be 'trucked', the inspectors ... gave the paupers their relief in kind" (1871). The potential for the corruption of this system in the interests of those giving out payment was one readily embraced by many employers.

Bull £655/3/3 of gin, wine and brandy in 1811, we must postulate Mrs Bull herself doing business with this grog rather than drinking herself to death. Similarly, he sold £268/16/- worth of grog to Sophia Lett between April and October 1810 and on 1 May 1810 he sold John Birch 200 gallons of Jamaica Rum. This was either used for payment of wages, general trading purposes, or for sale in public houses, legal or illegal. Mansell's total liquor sales for the period were £7,205/10/4 but the total bought by his ten largest customers for grog was £3,843/13/8. For this reason, it is worth illustrating the relative amounts spent by all his 245 clients on liquor compared again with tea, sugar, tobacco and haberdashery, as well as subtracting his ten largest buyers of grog (See Figures 3 and 3.1). The only comparable large private sales of haberdashery were one bale of slops worth £192/8/3 to Thomas Gilberthorpe and one case of hats worth £118 which did not distort the pattern appreciably.

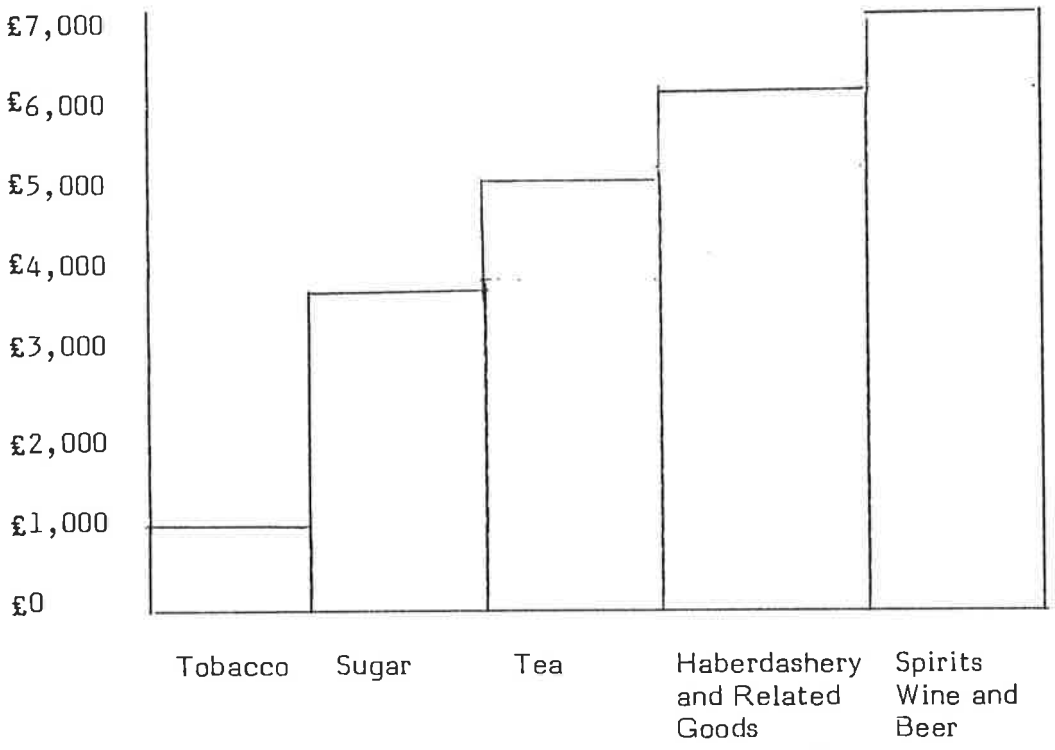


Figure 3
Consumer Patterns in the Colony: Mansell's Store 1809-1812[26]

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26. The figures for these tables were compiled from Mansell's Account Book, op cit., as follows: tobacco £861/-/-; sugar £3,673/14/5; tea £5,091/9/10; haberdashery £6,076/12/11; beer, wine and spirits £7,205/10/4.

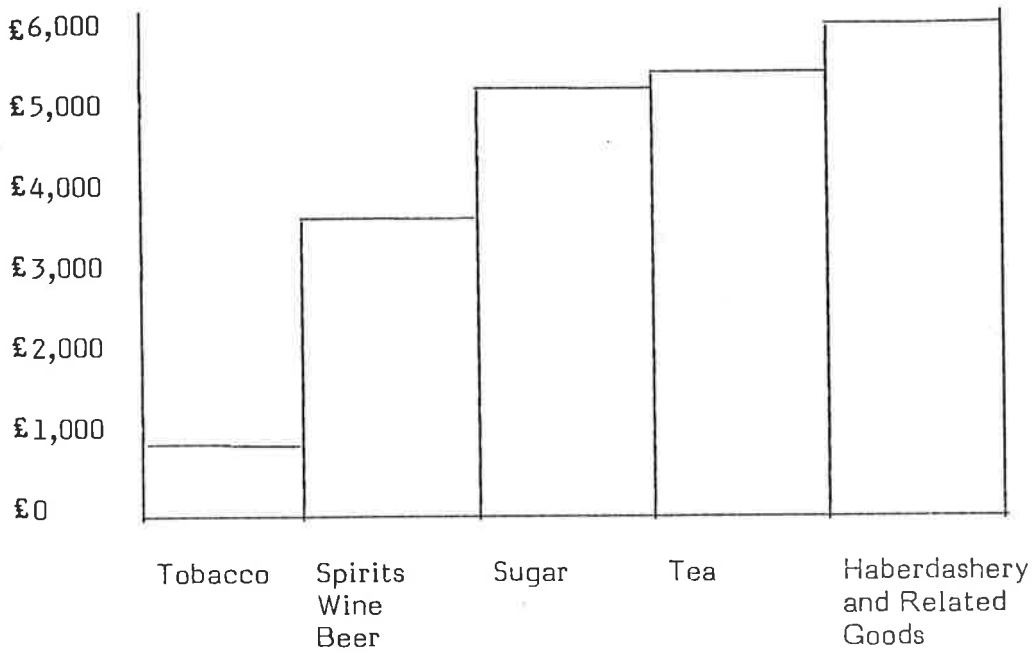


Figure 3.1
Consumer Patterns in the Colony:
Mansell's Sales without his Ten Largest Liquor Clients

Mansell's volume of trade was greater than Abbott's but the distribution of sales was similar. Taken singly, any page out of their ledgers or out of Rowland Hassall's Day Sales Book (Hassall did not sell grog so the same comparison could not be made, though it is worth noting that he managed to do good business all the same) shows spending on haberdashery or related goods but almost always to a fairly small monetary value. For example, a typical page could have the following entries set down against several accounts and disbursed among entries for tea, soap, sugar, etc.:

	s.	d.
1 yd ribbon and 25 needles	1	7
1 oz thread	1	1
2 yd ribbon		8
1 yd fine cotton print	4	6
1 yd duck	3	6
1 pr women's shoes	10	0

making the relatively small sum of £1/1/4. Entries for alcohol appear far less frequently and tend to be more often larger amounts than small and the least amount

spent, say on a bottle of wine or a pint of rum, is invariably greater than most single entries of haberdashery items. It is only when all sales are totalled that the astonishing truth is revealed that these little nothings add up to very big money.

By the mid-nineteenth century in England, Hyam Brothers and Moses and Sons were the pioneering firms in ready-made clothing. Some ready-made clothing was being sold in general stores in the colony, reflecting the pattern in England. Catering for the British working class market, such firms sold shoes at 8d. a pair, shirts for 1s., handkerchiefs for 1d. or $1\frac{1}{2}$d. and coats for 2s. reaching annual turnovers of between £400,000 and £500,000.[27] It should be noted that in and around Sydney Town, labourers were spending more than ten times as much on similar articles of clothing at a slightly earlier date and more than that again in contemporary Melbourne. The drapery and linen trades had always been profitable[28] and it is suggested that business people in the colony were well aware that certain profits could be derived from investment in haberdashery lines, uncomplicated by Government intervention and regulation. The moral dilemmas surrounding the sale of fripperies like buttons and ribbons to the working classes in Sydney to 1815 were not quite as strong as those surrounding the sale or distribution of alcohol, although several governors lamented that the lower orders were throwing away the fruits of their toil on useless fallals.[29]

To sell over £6,000 worth of haberdashery and related lines in three years, Mansell, as a businessman, must have devoted considerable attention to careful buying and he must have insisted on secure packaging in the knowledge that there was a definite market for these wares in the colony. Similarly, Abbott, with his sales of

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27. Alexander, op cit., p. 108.

28. Adburgham, Shopping in Style, p. 13, "In the Elizabethan times, only the two richest retail traders, the goldsmiths and the silk mercers, had shops in Cheapside ... by the Seventeenth Century more traders had edged their way in, but only the most prosperous retailers, linen drapers and lacemen could afford the high rents".

29. Governor Phillip was angry when he found cases containing unnecessary articles such as "ribbons and fancy millinery" for private trade taking up valuable space in the few incoming ships in 1791. See M. Fletcher, op cit., p. 25. And Governor Hunter was displeased that the lower orders were throwing away their money on baubles and rags, Collins, op cit., v. II, p. 97.

£3,794 in the years 1807 to 1811 was supplying what he knew to be a sure market along with business people such as Ann Grant, Rowland Hassall, Sergeant and Mrs Packer, Elizabeth and John Driver, David Bevan, Simeon Lord, Andrew Thompson, John Waldron, Edward Wills, William Baker, John Connell and Campbell and Company, to cite only some of the merchants doing business partly or wholly in cloth, clothing and related goods in the colony at this time. Ordering haberdashery and arranging for its selection and packing so that it arrived in the colony undamaged and sufficiently alluring from the point of view of fashion, was a complex affair involving long time lags and the possibility of sudden glut - as did the supply of most other articles of trade in the colony at this time. Fashion was not such a vital consideration or, more accurately, began to operate under different pressures from those of the London world quite early in the history of the colony[30]. It certainly still had to be borne in mind, however. For the professional general storekeeper, rather than the occasional speculator with a trunk or even a one-off cargo of haberdashery for sale, there was a great deal of specialist expertize involved in getting goods onto and off the counter.

* * * * * *

Before proceeding to give examples of the profits possible in the haberdashery and drapery lines, we must examine the evidence on wages derived from these accounts, and most conclusively, on what these wages were spent. George Hall's accounts, Mrs King's Stock Book (kept by Rowland Hassall) and D'Arcy Wentworth's Account Book provide the most detailed evidence concerning wages in the colony. The convict labourers on Mrs King's farm were paid £15 a year plus an allowance of £3 for slops and bedding, either in money or in kind. They were also given their shoes and

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30. Eldershaw, op cit., p. 151, "... the silks and muslins of the Orient were so common as to be despised and the 'pure merinos' imported everything from England". See also Cunningham, op cit., Vol. I, p. 53, "Instead, however, of sighing after China crapes and India muslins, like the English beauties, our Sydney belles languish after nothing but what comes with the name of "London" stamped upon it: the products of the Eastern loom being here too common, too cheap, and too durable for them ..." (my emphasis).

- a revolutionary circumstance for labour - the opportunity to work paid overtime. If they chose not to avail themselves of this, their annual wages, including slops, bedding and shoes, but exclusive of extra gifts such as at Christmas time or at Mrs King's direct request (on 24 February 1816 Hassall noted that he had given the men £1 each as he had been instructed to do by Mrs King) were worth £18/13/- or £18/11/- depending on the price of shoes. Almost all the men working on Mrs King's farm did take the opportunity to do extra work and the following shows a range of possible earnings for a year's extra labour from the highest to the lowest:

Thomas Condor	May 1807-June 1808	£20/11/2.3/4
	(he also had a one-third share in £2/1/8 for threshing 100 bushels of corn June 1807)	
Thomas Perry	June 1808-December 1809	£10/5/9
George Perry	June 1808-December 1809	£6/17/-
Laughlan Monican	1808	£1/3/4
James Everet		£1/4/2

All this money was paid in cash and there is no evidence as to how it was spent. Hassall himself earned £50 a year for administering and accounting for Mrs King's estate. The records he kept show that an unskilled convict labourer could earn as much as £40 a year if so inclined.

George Hall's accounts provide similar evidence but are more interesting for the details on how overtime earnings were spent and will be discussed below. The most detailed evidence on wages comes from D'Arcy Wentworth's Account Book, 1812-1820. From these accounts we can glean evidence concerning mode of payment and total amounts earned but nothing as to how wages were spent. The overwhelming majority of payments were made in cash. A sample was taken of twenty-five employees, a well-digger, a carpenter, a washerwoman, two servant women, some soldiers who did horse-breaking as well as digging and clearing stumps, some sawyers, some tailors, a saddler and some general labourers. Of 349 payments made to twenty-five people, 305 were in cash (87 per cent), nineteen in rum (5 per cent), eight were in tobacco (2 per cent),

eight were in tea (2 per cent), four were in pork and sugar respectively (2 per cent) and the rest were in wheat, corn or shingling nails (2 per cent). Perhaps Wentworth was an atypical employer in paying such a large percentage of wages in cash, but it must be remembered that strategies for mode and place of payment to the disadvantage of the working classes had already been developed in England[31] and were therefore not new to working class experience. What was new was that for much of the early history of the colony, labour shortages meant that there were limits to the degree to which employers could impose their conditions on labour. Indeed, in the 1790s, Hunter published Government and General Orders listing **maximum** wages to be paid for various kinds of labouring jobs with punishment devolving upon the employer who **exceeded** them[32] - a state of affairs bordering on the unique in the history of the working class and certainly very favourable in comparison with that in England during and just after the Napoleonic Wars.

Some examples of wages paid by Wentworth to various employees will give an indication of the value of labour in the colony. The lowest paid male employee was Thompson the gardener who earned £16/10/6 in 1815; the "old man" who cut the grass for Wentworth's stock earned £62/0/10 in 1813; from February to December 1814, Pat Murphy cut the grass earning £35/7/6 and from January to October 1815, he earned £28/5/6. In keeping with the utilitarian values of the early colony, cutting grass for the animals was worth more than the arguably more specialized work of manicuring the grounds of what had pretensions to be a gentleman's residence. Working wood brought good money; Nott the sawyer earned £68/13/- from May to December 1813 just working for Wentworth, and Pool the sawyer took home £28/10/- in the months

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31. Humphreys, op cit., pp. 106-108, a tailor explains to Mayhew the system of paying tailors at pubs and making them wait and calling for extra work three times a day to keep the unemployed there so that they invariably start shouting each other to a drink or two. See also E.P. Thompson, op cit., p. 244, "... seamen and water-side workers were subject to peculiar extortions, often at the hands of publicans - for example, the Thames coal-whippers who - until a Protective Act in 1843 - could only gain employment through the publicans who, in their turn, would only employ men who consumed up to fifty percent of their wages in the public house."

32. HRNSW, Vol. III, pp. 189, 196, 204, 298 and Vol. IV, p. 223.

July to September 1814.[33] Women were less well paid, despite the scarcity of serving maids who could be trusted to keep their place and a civil tongue in their head; Mary Boyce, the servant woman, earned £15/10/- between January and October 1815. Evidence for the assertion that skilled craftsmen could do well in the colony comes from Murphy the stonemason's earnings - £31 between October and December 1815 - and those of Evans the carpenter who took home £78/18/6 from January to October 1813.

Some earnings are more difficult to isolate. For example, there was a soldier called King who, with a party of comrades, was clearing and burning off timber and digging up stumps which earned the party £37/13/6 from September 1813 to January 1814. Not knowing how many men were in King's "party" or whether they were receiving other pay robs this figure of much meaning, though Wentworth was paying other soldiers, singly and in groups, reasonable money for clearing and burning. Two more skilled craftsmen, Williams the saddler and Flagherty the tailor, were well paid for work done for Wentworth. Flagherty showed a strong preference for being paid in rum; five out of all nineteen payments in rum were made to him. He submitted his bills annually which were between £20 and £40 for the work he did for Wentworth alone. Williams was paid £38/2/- between April and July 1813. There were others working for Wentworth, such as Joseph Rutter, Samuel Fairs, Bayliss, Bush, Clacy, John Moss and Bagley, who were not mentioned as having any specialist skills or doing any particular jobs except fencing and, in John Moss's case, making shoes. Fairs earned £69/9/- in 1814, Clacy earned £74/19/- between August and December 1812, and Bayliss earned £55/10/- in 1813 exclusive of £42/16/- earned together with Bush in the same year. Joseph Rutter was the lowest paid, taking in £18/2/- in 1813. He then worked with a group of men so his wages cannot be isolated and in May 1816 started working as a gardener for 4s. per day. These accounts show, as does Mrs King's stock

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33. Hassall's Day Sales Book contains the accounts of two sawyers distinguished as such. James Byrne (Burn) and Carter Burn bought over £50 worth of tea, sugar, soap and material in May-June 1804.

account book, some labourers staying for reasonably long periods of time in the same employ - Laughlan Monican worked for Mrs King for at least nine years and Joseph Rutter worked for D'Arcy Wentworth for at least eight years. From this it is reasonable to conclude that they were satisfied with the conditions of their employment as they could easily have found work elsewhere at that time.

Wentworth's accounts therefore show minimum wages for unskilled male convict labour as never less than £16 a year. Those earning this minimum wage were in the minority and we have no positive evidence as to the maximum amount that could be earned by a skilled labourer as we do not know whether the people employed by Wentworth worked for others, and there is no clear example of what a skilled labourer or craftsman could earn in a whole calendar year. The sums earned in the parts of the years recorded working only for Wentworth do, however, compare very favourably with English wages and it was commonly said in the colony throughout the period that a skilled worker could earn at least £5 a week. Moreover, there was always a shortage of skilled labour in the colony at this time so that, having established a reputation, a worker could be sure of getting fairly continuous work and, therefore, credit.

Meaningful generalizations about the value of wages at that time are difficult to establish; even more problematic is a comparison with parallel conditions in England. However, a number of additional factors obtaining in the colony can be cited to give annual wage figures more meaning. Firstly, in absolute terms and in relation to England, rent in the colony was generally lower at this time and for many workers, lodgings, however crude[34], were free. Secondly, as far as assigned convicts were concerned, the employer had to provide them with shelter, food and clothing. Naturally, there were complaints about the quality of the provisions in particular[35]

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34. We must be careful when reading contemporary accounts of crude bark huts or slum dwellings in the colony, to remember that the hut of an Irish peasant family or the basement room in an English city slum area were certainly not more commodious lodgings.

35. Again, the diet of the urban poor in England or the rural poor in Ireland could not have been said to have been either copious or rich in variety and interest, at this time.

but there were also cases where the convict labourers were well treated and lived in close enough proximity to the employer and his family to be able to see that they had a reasonable share of provisions. Another convincing piece of evidence concerning the value of wages and the standard of living of the convict and working classes was that individuals could earn the money and feel at liberty to spend it on clothing. Whether or not clothing was bought on credit is of little consequence to the argument; shop-keepers in the colony were no more philanthropic than those in the mother country and could only have been supposed to have extended credit where their knowledge of the client's character and employment prospects gave them grounds to believe he could repay it. Generalizations about the over-freely available extension of credit in the colony were certainly made and may have had some basis; the specific details of Abbott's and Mansell's ledgers, and Hassall's Day Sales Book, for example, show that payment in cash or in kind accompanied most purchases by most customers most of the time.

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To examine some individual instances of convict or working class consumption preferences, let us take the case of Thomas Lucas, sentenced in Middlesex on 19 June 1799 to a seven years' devoir who was transported on the Royal Admiral[36] in 1800, and David Gardener who was transported on the Barwell[37] in 1797 after being sentenced on 21 March 1796 at Ely, also for seven years. Both these men were customers at Rowland Hassall's store and from his method of entering his accounts, it is not unreasonable to assume that they were either friends or they worked for the same employer and therefore came to the store together as their purchases were usually listed one under another or in very close proximity on the same day. By listing their

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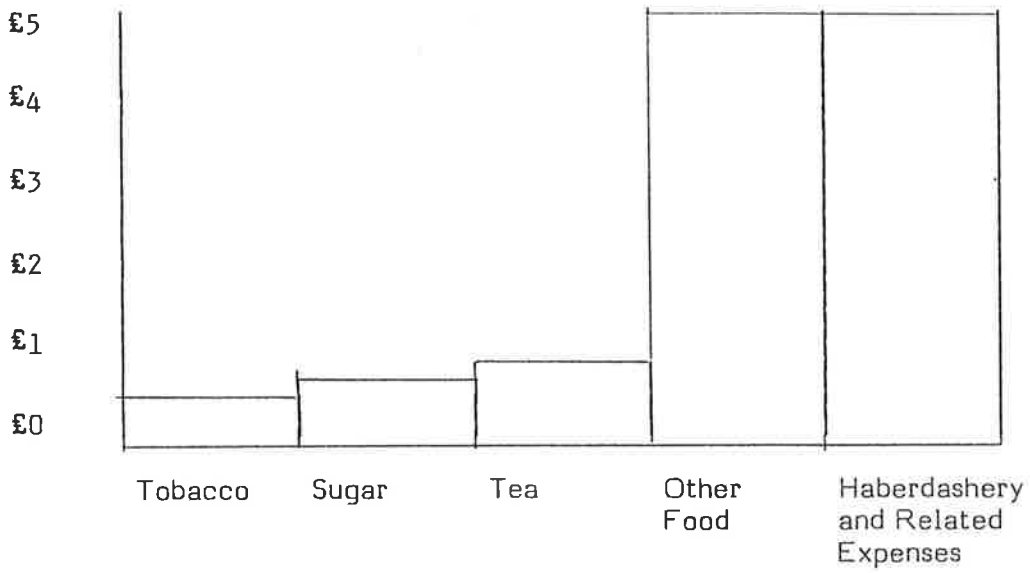
36. Australian Joint Copying Project, Reels 59-60, 1788-1867. New South Wales. Entry books relating to convicts.

37. ibid.

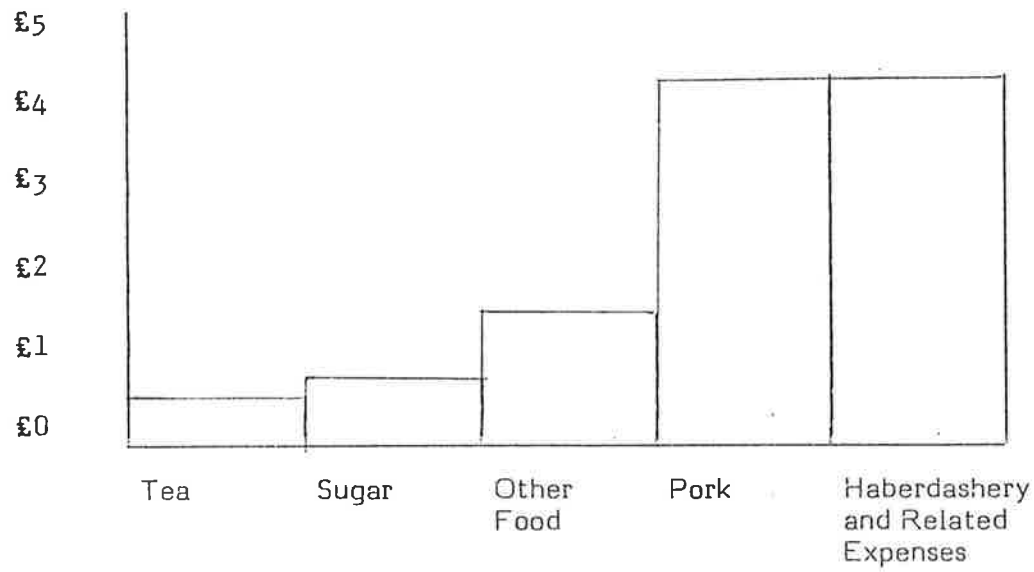
purchases along with those of Ralph Wiggan, who was brought out on the Barwell in 1797 also (sentenced at Lancaster in 1791 for fourteen years), a reasonable sample of convict buying patterns can be seen which corroborates on the individual level, the overall patterns of consumption at Abbott's and Mansell's stores. The figures in heavy type were prices listed, the others are my approximations with values estimated for clothing being the lowest recorded at the time (Table 3).

Table 3
Purchases by Two Emancipated Convict Labourers at Rowland Hassall's store, Parramatta 1803-1804

Date 1803-1804	Thomas Lucas		Date 1803-1804	David Gardener	
24/9/03	1 pr duck trousers	**16s.**	24/9/03	1 pr men's shoes	12s.
28/9/03	½lb tobacco	**10d.**		1 pr duck trousers	**16s.**
17/10/03	to Mathus, tailor	6/9	30/9/03	Washing by Bet Connor	1s.
1/12/03	2½lb pork	2/1	17/10/03	to Mathus, tailor	**2/6**
16/12/03	½yd duck	**1/9**	27/10/03	2½lb pork	**2/6**
17/12/03	3 lb pork	**3s.**	30/10/03	2 lb pork	2s.
18/12/03	1 large muslin shawl	12s.	5/11/03	2 lb pork	2s.
22/12/03	1 dungaree frock	**10s.**	12/11/03	2 lb pork	2s.
	2 lb flour	**2s.**	15/11/03	on Longford's account cash	3s.
24/12/03	¼lb tea	**4s.**	19/11/03	2 lb pork	**2s.**
			25/11/03	2 lb pork	**2s.**
3/1/04	1 pr men's shoes	**12s.**	1/12/03	4½lb pork	13/9
	½lb tobacco	**10d.**	3/12/03	2 oz tea	**2s.**
			10/12/03	2 lb pork	**1/8**
23/1/04	1 calico frilled shirt	17/6	14/12/03	¼lb tea	**4s.**
			29/12/03	2 lb pork	**1/8**
25/1/04	¼yd dungaree	1/8	9/1/04	1 lb sugar	**1/6**
28/1/04	1½lb sugar	2/3	-/1/04	1 calico frilled shirt	**17/6**
30/1/04	1 lb tobacco	**1/8**		2 oz tea	**2s.**
				1 lb sugar	1/6
31/1/04	1 pr cloth trousers	**16s.**	28/1/04	2 skeins thread	**4d.**
			6/2/04	2 lb sugar	3/3
7/2/04	¼lb tea	**4s.**	11/2/04	2 lb sugar	**3/3**
	2 lb sugar	**3s.**	18/2/04	1 bushel wheat	**10s.**
				1 frilled shirt	17/6
13/2/04	his debt to Ward - cash	15s.	8/3/04	1¼yd brown broad cloth @ 20s.	**£1/5/-**
				1 hank of twist	**1s.**
22/2/04	6 sheets of paper	**1/6**		1½doz gilt buttons	**4/6**
				½yd cotton lining	**1s.**
21/3/04	cash received from David McCoy	(no amt entered)	11/3/04	to tailor Young	**5/6**
			21/4/04	1 felt hat	**7/6**



T. Lucas



D. Gardener

Figure 4
Consumer Patterns in the Colony: Expenditure by Thomas Lucas and David Gardener at Rowland Hassall's Store, Paramatta, September 1803 to March 1804

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Table 4
Purchase by R. Wiggan, Emancipated Convict Labourer, at Rowland Hassall's Store, Parramatta 1803-1804

Date	R. Wiggan		Date		
24/9/03	1 lb tobacco	1/10	5/1/04	1 lb English soap	2s.
26/9/03	1/4lb tea	4s.		order to William Marsden	
22/10/03	1 lb tobacco	**1/10**		cash	8s.
	1/2lb tea	8s.	21/1/04	1/2lb tea	
5/11/03	1 lb tobacco	**1/10**		4 lb sugar	6s.
	1 bird eye handkerchief	**8s.**		1/2lb tobacco	11d.
	1 cotton shawl	**5/6**		1/4lb green pepper	
	1 yd ribbon	**10d.**	28/1/04	1/2lb tea	8s.
19/11/03	1/2lb tea	8s.		4 lb sugar	6s.
24/11/03	20 lb wheat	4s.		1 1/2lb soap	3s.
3/12/03	1/2lb tea	8s.	4/2/04	1/2lb tobacco	11d.
	1 lb tobacco	1/10		1/4lb tea	4s.
	1 pr trousers	16s.		2 lb sugar	3s.
6/12/03	1/2bushel wheat	6s.		1 lb soap	2s.
	1/2lb soap	1s.	9/2/04	to a woman cash	**4s.**
10/12/03	1 lb tobacco	1/10		1/2lb tobacco	**1s.**
	3/4 lb tea	12s.		a hat	**8s.**
22/12/03	1 1/2yd print	6/9		2 muslin handkerchiefs	**13s.**
	1 shawl	**5/6**	11/2/04	1/2lb hyson tea	6s.
	2 skeins thread	**4d.**		4 lb sugar	6s.
24/12/03	1/2lb tea	8s.		1 lb tobacco	1/10
	2 lb rice	1s.		1/2lb soap	1s.
	1/2lb tobacco	1/10		8 yd calimanco	**32s.**
31/12/03	1 1/2lb tea	24s.	18/2/04	2 oz tea	2s.
	2 lb tobacco	3/8		2 lb sugar	3s.
	2 lb sugar	3s.		1/2yd cambric muslin	6s.
				1 pr men's shoes	**12s.**

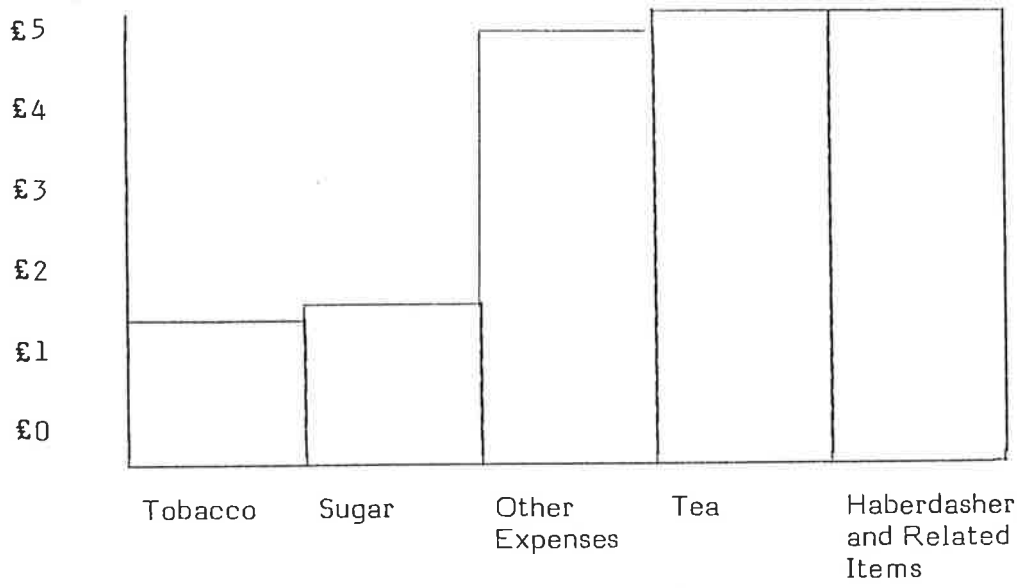


Figure 5
Consumer Patterns in the Colony - Expenditure by Ralph Wiggan at Hassall's Store, Paramatta, September 1803 to February 1804

Hassall's Day Sales Book provides similar evidence on patterns of consumption by other convicts with little variation on this overall picture. William Bellamy and William Langley are other examples. William Bellamy bought a great deal more soap than would usually have been required in a household and he may have lived with a woman who took in washing. In any case, his purchases contained the only major variation to the pattern shown in Table 4 and Figure 5. Remarkably, none of the convicts bought any grog at all. This does not mean that they were not habitués of some pub or grog shop. Hassall being of missionary inclinations, did not feel free to sell "strong waters" openly. Assuming the lowest possible annual income of £15 for a convict servant at this time, the social awareness of this was translated into terms of available credit at the general store. Thus the examples of Thomas Lucas, David Gardener and Ralph Wiggan show that these men chose to spend relatively large amounts on clothing, including items of women's clothing. Their pattern of spending in fact indicates what might be described as an average domestic household consumption, if rather luxurious by comparison with what was possible for most ex-convicts in England. Thomas Lucas and Ralph Wiggan smoked, David Gardener did not; Ralph Wiggan and the lady he lived with were great tea drinkers and had slightly gourmet tastes in food, buying green pepper and rice, which was not a popular grain in the colony at the time in comparison with wheat or corn. David Gardener was a flash dresser - gilt buttons and lining in his coat were a luxury afforded by colonial living standards that he did not hesitate to acquire.

Alford makes the point that contemporary observers thought the sex imbalance in the colonies generated criminal behaviour and that marriage was encouraged by the governing and upper classes because it was supposed to promote social stability.[38] The shopping patterns of the three households as revealed in Tables 3 and 4 show a reasonably conservative and respectable domestic consumer life even without the legal sanction of marriage. Perhaps these households were in fact a minority,

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38. Alford, op cit., pp. 9, 21.

unperceived by administrators and ministers of religion. More likely, the respectability of their daily lives being less noteworthy than the illicit nature of their unions, middle class observers commented more readily on the scandalous than the humdrum. Working class failure to comply with middle class values by marriage has been discussed by Alford who has shown that marriage was actually a luxury for members of the labouring classes.[39]

The reason that Lucas, Wiggan and Gardener were selected was that by some coincidence their given names were entered by Hassall at some stage of his accounts and that the combination of given name with slightly uncommon family name meant that it was easier to trace them with certainty than others of his customers. There is only one obvious example of a small settler's shopping list and this was William Blady's. Blady was described as a small settler on the southern creeks in the Hawkesbury district. He came into Hassall's store on 8 November 1804 and bought £6/5/- worth of sugar, £5/12/- worth of men's and women's shoes, £1/17/6 worth of gurrah and nankeen, two silk handkerchiefs for 18s., 2 lb tea at 10s. a pound, four pairs of trousers for £1/8/- and 1½ yards of green kerseymere for £1/2/6. The two obviously luxurious features of the list are that Blady bought silk rather than linen or cotton handkerchiefs at 2/6 a piece and the quantity of shoes, material and trousers he could afford to buy. Figure 6 relates these purchases as a proportion of the total of £20/11/6 Blady spent at Hassall's store that day.

Hassall himself made a list of "sundries wanted for self" dated Parramatta, September 1815.[40] The list consisted of 1.3/4 yards of corbeau priced at £2/2/-, 3 pairs of grey stockings, 1 pair of white ribbed stockings, 2 pairs worsted stockings, 2 pairs of braces, 3/4 yard of printed dimity, 3/4 yard of swan's down, 3½ yards corduroy, 1 yard of cotton sheeting, 1½ yards of cotton duck, ½ yard of brown holland, 3/4 yard of Marseilles and, again, 1 yard of cotton sheeting. Such a list would

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39. Alford, op cit., p. 36.

40. Papers of Rowland Hassall, Vol. 2, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number A862.

have cost about £12 and there is no evidence as to how long this was supposed to last him or what proportion of his total wardrobe it would have been.

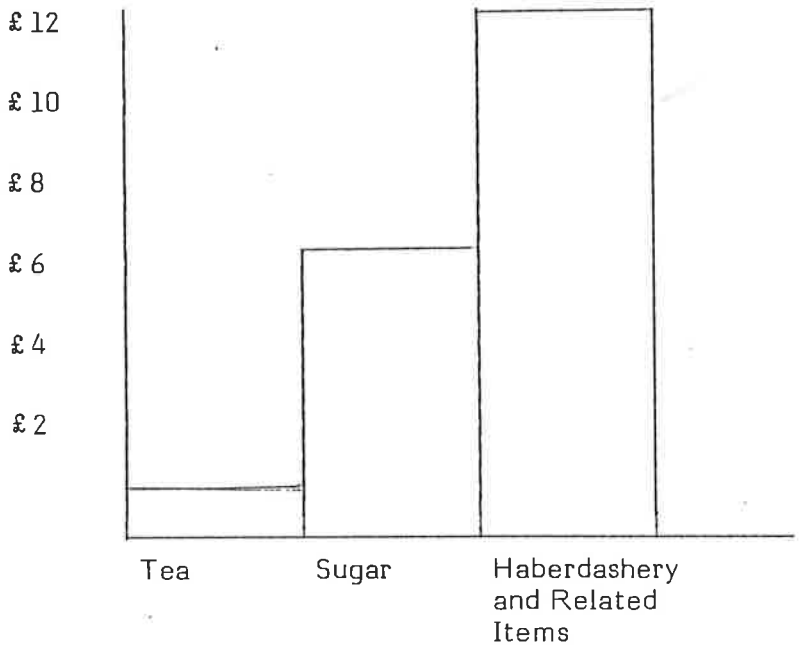


Figure 6
Consumer Patterns in the Colony - Purchases by William Blady, settler, at Hassall's Store, Parramatta, 8 November 1804

At the other extreme of his clientele, Hassall numbered among his clients many colonial notables - Mrs Marsden, Mr Atkins, Mrs Macarthur, Mr Crook and Mr Larra, for example. It is impossible to construct a table describing their spending patterns similar to Table 4 and Figures 4 and 5 for a number of reasons. Firstly, as wealthy people in the colony with some leisure time, they were more mobile and were therefore likely to spend money not just in Parramatta but in Sydney Town as well. Secondly, as a corollary of this, if they wanted specialist haberdashery items, they could more readily afford to shop at establishments such as Ann Grant's or John Driver's or attend auctions of cargoes newly arrived from England at Simeon Lord's or David Bevan's. No records from any of these businesses survive in sufficient detail for this period, but as they carried the more exclusive lines, it seems likely that the wealthier people in the colony would have patronized the Sydney storekeepers and auctioneers occasionally though they were not their major clientele. The third reason why it is not possible to establish reliable data for upper class spending patterns in this

period, in the absence of any complete surviving accounts, is that its members sent to England for a large percentage of their clothing requirements.[41] An example of this is contained in the accounts of Hannibal Macarthur with Vernon Kyle of 31 King Street, Covent Garden (see Table 5). It should not be assumed that Kyle was Hannibal Macarthur's only source of clothing.

Table 5
Purchases by Hannibal Macarthur from Vernon Kyle, Covent Garden, England, 1811-1813
Source: Macarthur Papers, Vol. V, op cit.

1/11/1811	1 pr pantaloons	£2/2/-
21/11/1811	1 pr black short gaiters	8/-
	1 super blue coat gilt buttons	£5/5/-
	1 white dress waistcoat	£1/3/-
	1 pr pantaloons	2/2/-
	2 waistcoats	£2/10/-
	1 pr brown pantaloons	£2/2/-
2/12/1811	A coat, new cuffs and buttons	6/-
	1 pr dark cord breeches	£1/11/6
	Pearl buttons	2/-
	1 Fustian shooting jacket	£2/2/-
	1 striped cotton dressing gown	£1/15/-
18/1/1812	1 Coat, new Velvit [sic]	£1/6/-
	Collar, skirts and back	£1/6/-
20/1/1812	1 pr hunting cord breeches	£1/11/6
25/1/1813	1 super black coat	£4/14/6
		£ 30/6/6
	Other purchases not detailed	-----
	TOTAL	£63/11/6 Settled 9/12/1813

If a member of the family or a friend was going to England or was already there, that person was given large commissions, sometimes for the whole household including the domestic servants. A fourth source of wearing apparel and its component parts among the upper classes was in gifts. From the earliest days of the colony, horror stories had filtered back to England about the primitive conditions and relatives were exhorted to

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41. The Macarthur family's shoes were made to order in London on patterns sent from the colony - see King, op cit., p. 110. Mrs Marsden also had a great deal of her clothing needs supplied from England - see G. Mackaness, Some Private Correspondence of the Reverend Samuel Marsden and Family 1794-1824, Sydney, 1942, p. 29, letter from Samuel Marsden, 22 August 1801.

send clothing if at all possible.[42] On 5 May 1788, Dan Southwell wrote to his mother, "if it should come easily in your way, some materials for making six pairs of shoes, some very plain second cloth, for making a working jacket, and two or three dozen small bell mids boutons [sic], one pair of blue duffel trowsers [sic], two coarse hatts [sic], round, six pairs coarse thread and 4 pairs of worsted stockings would be usefull [sic]; this is, however, left to you ... if not done, I shall make the best of it cheafully [sic] and be contented". One wonders from such a list whether anyone in late eighteenth century England read any of the voyagers' accounts at all attentively and if so, what a weight of cultural baggage prevented their grasping that bivouacking in the bush and making roads to the sites where houses had to be built required a different kind of wardrobe than what was needed for a stroll through Mayfair.

The most remarkable example of a complete failure to grasp the reality of Australia, although there were some very fine accounts of what was known about The Great South Land at the time, came from young Ralph Clark who in a postscript to a letter to Kempster of 10 July 1788, added, "... don't forget to send me all the newspapers which you promised you would, also any magazines which you can spare for the inhabitants of this place don't print any such thing ..." [my emphasis]. In many instances, these desperate requests were complied with. Thus, where members of the upper classes had various sources from which to augment their property in clothing - later, of course, India became a possibility as did China[43] - members of the lower classes may have been less mobile, less well-connected, and generally, may not have had some of these possibilities open to them. This meant they were more dependent on the local general store or even on their employer to make purchases on their behalf as can be seen from the journal of George Hall.[44] An interesting question is whether the shock suffered by the upper classes in encountering Australia which activated certain

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42. HRNSW, Vol. II, p. 682.

43. See Clark's Letterbook, p. 16.

44. Hall, op cit.

upper class mechanisms such as the use of family and connections, paralysed its members to such an extent that they went on using these mechanisms even when there was palpably no longer any need to do so; when the things they wanted could as easily, perhaps more easily, be bought in Sydney Town, for example. It seems extraordinary that Hannibal Macarthur should have sent his coats all the way back to England to get new collars, cuffs and buttons put on them (see Table 5) when he could as well have bought the material at Ann Driver's and had the alterations done in the colony. In sending his coats back to his tailor in Covent Garden despite the immense distances, length of time and real risk of damage or loss involved, Hannibal Macarthur, like many others of similar background, was externalizing his conviction that England was really home and his physical presence in the colony of New South Wales some sort of temporary aberration.

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George Hall came out with his family on the Coromandel as a free settler, arriving in New South Wales on 13 June 1802. His journal on board ship contains many interesting and amusing insights into the pressures and tensions of shipboard life. On arrival in Parramatta, his journal ceased to give the sort of detailed account he had written on the passage out but becomes, happily for our purposes, more of an account of wages paid in overtime and lists of purchases made by the men working for him. The amounts paid for extra labour are attributed generally to the men working for him as a group and are therefore not readily isolated. Not so the purchases and these will be described in detail. Of all the men working for Hall, Evan Evans was the most ambitious and extravagant consumer. Aside from tobacco, sugar, eggs, pork and flour, Evans' acquisition of wearing apparel was as follows:

Table 6
Purchases by Evan Evans, Labourer on George Hall's Farm, 1803-1805

28 June 1803	1 pr of shoes	16s.
August 1803	2 yds dungaree	12s.
18 October 1803	1 handkerchief in payment for felling straggling trees at the lagoon	5/6
	3 yds ribbon	6s.
14 November 1803	1 pr of shoes	15s.
December 1803	handkerchief)	
	pr of shoes)	£ 2/-/6
	check shirt)	
	1 waistcoat	20s.
	1 handkerchief	5/6
18 January 1804	? [illegible] yds fine printed cotton and dimity petticoat in place of 12 bushels wheat	£4/16/-
3 June 1804	black silk and ribbon	£1/6/-
15 August 1804	2 calico shirts	£1/10/-
17 August 1804	silk handkerchief)	
	trousers)	1/9/-
2 September 1804	1 pr calico trousers	18s.
8 October 1804	1 pr dungaree trousers	14s.
21 October 1804	3 yds ribbon	6s.
24 November 1804	14 yds dungaree)	
	1 skein thread)	£1/10/-
12 December 1804	1 pr gurrah trousers	14s.
24 December 1804	Jacket	£1/15/-
	Shirt	15s.
	6 yds calico	£1/16/-
	white handkerchief	10s.
	flowered apron	£1/0/-
	silk handkerchief	10s.
	1½ yds ribbon	3s.
	cotton and petticoat to the value of 12 bushels of wheat	£4/16/-
5 January 1805	1 pr duck trousers	16s.
13 January 1805	3 yds ribbon	6s.
5 February 1805	new blanket)	
	silk handkerchief)	£2/-/-
15 March 1805	2 handkerchiefs	£1/-/-
	thread and needles	4/10
	1 year 8 months total	£34/11/4

Lest it be thought that Evan Evans was a solitary dandy, alone in his sartorial ambition among the other workers at Litullington Farm, it is worth noting some other examples of haberdashery purchases made by men working there:

Table 6.1

Purchases by Five Labourers at George Hall's Farm 1803-1804

Richard Morgan			**William Ambridge**		
28/6/03	1 check shirt	14s.	24/12/04	Ambridge's account	
	1 pr trousers	19/3		cloth jacket	£1/15/-
5/8/03	3½yds canvas	14s.		waistcoat	£1/-/-
15/8/03	1 silk handkerchief	12s.		handkerchief	15s.
21/8/03	1 calico shirt	14s.		shirt	15s.
-/9/03	1 pr shoes	£1/0/9		flowered muslin	£1/-/-
	thread	1/8		chintz gown	£4/10/-
	thread and ribbon	3/6		white stockings	12s.
2/3/04	ribbon and thread	£1/12/-		duck trousers	15/10
22/4/04	shirt and handkerchief	£1/5/-			
	11 months total	£ 7/16/2		unknown period total	£11/2/10
Pat Hurley			**Ralph**		
18/10/03	check shirt	14s.	22/3/04	1 pr trousers	14s.
8/11/03	1 pr shoes	15s.	8/7/04	1 pr dungaree trousers	16s.
14/12/03	altering trousers	1s.			
	plus thread	8d.	25/11/04	1 shirt	£1/10/-
2/2/04	1 pr shoes	14s.		silk handkerchief	
	1 silk handkerchief	12s.			
	5 months total	£2/16/8		8 months total	£3/-/-
James					
-/6/03	1 canvas frock	14s.			
	1 pr shoes	12s.			
16/8/03	1½yds broadcloth 3 skeins thread	£1/3/6			
2/9/03	1 waistcoat	£1/-/-			
	4 months total	£3/9/6			

Here then is incontrovertible evidence that labourers in New South Wales chose to spend large amounts of their earnings not merely on clothing but on good quality things which would normally have been thought of as the prerogative of members of the classes above them. Silk handkerchiefs and chintz gowns at £4/10/- a piece, shoes at over £1 a pair, flowered muslins and charges for the alteration of trousers are clear examples of luxury and particular taste in clothing that was being fulfilled by the men working for Hall and the women who lived with them. Further, their consumer preferences, like those of, say, Thomas Lucas and David Gardener, created custom for

tailors in the colony who, we have noted in this chapter, drew clientele not merely from the middle and upper classes, but notably in the colony of New South Wales at this time, from the convict and lower classes. Needless to say, the power to choose and buy such articles for oneself was a new experience for members of a class, many of whom had been transported because, without ever being able to acquire such things legally in England, they had stolen them. It is not idle speculation to observe that the possession of such property, indicating conspicuously as it did the new status of the wearer, was enormously important to the working class men and women of the colony. Most remarkable of all, particularly for them, was that this was new clothing they had chosen themselves. From Hall's accounts it is clear that it was paid for by the overtime worked by these men and in some cases it was solicited as payment for a specific job or in lieu of an allowance of provisions. It is unlikely, but not impossible, that any of these men would have bought clothing or haberdashery items elsewhere. Taken together with Murphy the charcoal burner, William Field the settler, Thomas Lucas, David Gardener, Ralph Wiggan, William Blady and Joseph Prosser, the labouring men of the Rocks whose stolen property in wearing apparel was listed in Chapter 2 above, these six workers at George Hall's farm provide clear and precise indications of actual consumer preferences in the colony. Further, we know from Thomas Condor's and Thomas Perry's overtime earnings that they had a disposable income. We know too that the men working for D'Arcy Wentworth were also making a good living and had relatively few overheads. Historians until now have either assumed that the Condors and the Perrys in the colony spent their money on drink or have not attempted to account for how it was spent. Tables 3 and 4, illustrating consumer preferences in the colony, constitute adequate evidence for assuming that they spent a fair proportion of their earnings on clothes.

Lest it be argued that a sample of thirteen is a small one from which to extrapolate meaningful generalizations about consumer trends in the colony at this time, it must be pointed out, firstly, that the very haphazard nature of the survival of source material, as well as the actual material itself constitutes a more than reasonable

guarantee that the available data should form a random selection of the contemporary colonial population. In working on this data, moreover, no effort was made to isolate examples for any particular reason other than that of the possession of a slightly unusual family name and the storekeeper's having entered the given name, which was not usual for convict customers. This selection was made purely for the convenience of being able to trace the individual with certainty. Such a criterion for selection of itself does not alter the chances of making a genuinely random selection based on the available data. Secondly, there are the total sales at Abbott's and Mansell's stores to account for as well as the great volume of business done by Hassall in haberdashery.

As we have already noted, the members of the upper class in the colony had the majority of their clothing and footwear requirements supplied from England and so their custom could not have been the mainstay of all these storekeepers, not to mention the other drapers and haberdashers in the colony. The only possible way of explaining the volume of this trade is by postulating the existence of hundreds of Evans, Murphys, Hurleys, Gardeners and Bladys buying for themselves as well as for the women they lived with. Since we have evidence concerning wages in the colony, it is reasonable to advance this hypothesis. Moreover, advertisements for men's clothing along with accounts of what they bought or notices of what they had lost, show it to have been at least as intricate as women's in terms of items - gloves, stockings, garters, breeches, waistcoats, braces, cravats, shirts, coats, handkerchiefs and hats being the minimum outfit to which accessories were added. In terms of cost, men's clothing was just as expensive an investment as women's. The evidence shows a number of labouring men acquiring several complete outfits in addition to their workaday clothes. These outfits were a close imitation of the panoply of a gentleman and were certainly far removed from convict slop clothing. Thus we have cause to reiterate the assertion made in Chapter 1 that the convict dandy rather than the convict derelict was the man to follow around the streets of Sydney or Parramatta on his day off. His traditional role as the shopper, combined with an English tradition of dandyism and interest in clothing dating from the seventeenth century, gave him

strong preferences in the matter of dress and expenditure thereon. It was a while before these preferences were transformed into the singlet, shorts and rubber thongs of today's Australian male in casual dress. Because of the dominant role of the man as the shopper, women's preferences appeared passively in the lists of goods bought by their men, but they are nonetheless, like the men's, impressive imitations of upper class clothing in terms of quality. Like the men, the evidence indicates that a number of working class women had a choice of outfits.[45] However, the overwhelmingly convincing argument for working class expenditure on clothing in the colony lies in the extent of private enterprise activity: the number of specialist stores operating, the number of successful one-off speculations in haberdashery and the amount of haberdashery coming into the colony related to the precise details available on the extent and composition of the population at the time.

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The first thirty years of the history of the colony divides itself into three periods of which the first, the 1790s, shows the least homogeneity with the subsequent history of New South Wales, or indeed of the rest of Australia. The period to 1800 was characterized by an overriding insecurity and lack of direction, both on the part of authorities in the colony and those in England. The main reasons for this were the insufficient and irregular Government supplies of food, clothing and equipment from England; the uncertainty as to the nature of the colony, both in England and on the spot, which expressed itself in the choice of Governors and directions given to those Governors; and, as an inevitable corollary of these two factors, the small scale of private enterprise initiatives. There was uncertainty surrounding the future of the colony, there were physical difficulties attending its establishment and moral ones involved in social relations with the bulk of its inhabitants. Societies formed with an

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45. B.H. Fletcher, The Present Picture, p. 44 and Chapter 2, discussion of the Prosser Burglary and clothing owned by other inhabitants of the Rocks such as Elizabeth Crouch.

80 per cent convicted criminal composition had had few precedents in the history of the known world. Because of these factors it took some time for "normal" social and economic relationships, as experienced in England, to assert themselves. The role of the convicts in asserting their preference for spending money on clothes had a real part to play in this, for by the time that colonial society could be said to be fully functioning, all of its members had already exerted considerable influence on social and economic patterns. This resulted in a distinctive colonial blend which was perceptible as such by visitors and newcomers from England. The second period to 1810, inevitably carrying with it some characteristics of the first, showed an expansion of private enterprise as well as the germs of a change in the composition of society with free people electing to come to the colony and more people, both ex-convict and free citizens, deciding to stay there. It is the expansion of private enterprise and the form it took which will be the major concern of the rest of this chapter. The third period, the much-discussed Macquarie decade, showed the emergence of the colony as a fully-functioning society, with its own internal logic, pressures and dictates being as influential as its ties with England.

One of the most important single factors in the development of a western European society or its derivatives was the part played by private enterprise, the interaction between those who wished to make a profit and the tastes, interests and preferences of those who constituted the market. In the years to 1820, long before the advent of mass media persuasion, written advertising performed the simple function of disseminating information. The interaction between merchant and customer in New South Wales at this time was made complex by intangibles such as distance, communications and other aspects of the extant technology as it bore on trading. It was also simplified in the sense that mass market manipulation was as yet not a major factor in the relationship between trader, shopkeeper and customer. The 1790s saw relatively few private enterprise initiatives and this in itself set that decade apart as distinct from the subsequent history of the colony (see Table 2 and Figure 1, Chapter 1). However, of the private investments arriving in this decade, haberdashery and

related goods were noted as being greatly sought after. The next twenty years saw this preference resulting in a vast increase in volume in this area unparalleled by any other single commodity (see Table 2, Chapter 1).

Given factors such as official uncertainty regarding the colony, existing regulations governing the nature and extent of trade[46], and the necessarily slow response to colonial conditions because of distance, legitimate private enterprise was remarkably speedy in turning to take advantage of the new market created by the establishment of the colony of New South Wales. Even in the very early days, when it seemed that the colony was nothing more than a prison, firms in India had solicited the right to supply it as such.[47] However, from the first, the sale of luxury items related to the clothing trade brought high prices indicative of the preferences and the purchasing power or credit resources of the settlers. Since about 80 per cent of the population was convict in the 1790s and many of the civilian and military officers and their families continued to order much of their clothing through their families or their agents - or directly from retail sources in England[48] - it is reasonable to conclude that convicts were essential customers and their preferences could be expected to have become important market influences. Their purchasing power was finite and their credit resources limited but they formed a numerical majority (with increasing numbers of emancipated convicts) in the colony for some time. As has already been demonstrated, the role of Government in providing clothing for convicts, mishandled though it was, raised lower class expectations by taking responsibility, at least in theory, for clothing them. A study of private enterprise initiatives will reveal

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46. For an informative discussion of the effects on the colony of the East India Company's rights to sole trade in certain areas of the globe, see Hainsworth, op cit., pp. 13-14.

47. HRA, Vol. I, p. 359.

48. The officers also lost a great deal of property which had been put on the Guardian storeship, for example R. Clark, Letterbook, p. 34 Lieut. Clark to Capt. Campbell, 10 February 1791.

something not only of consumer preferences but will constitute evidence of consumer resources.[49]

Sydney's first shops were temporary affairs operating in huts until all the goods from newly-arrived convict transport ships were sold. The first of these was opened by the master of the Lady Juliana. Collins records the goods on sale as being "some articles of grocery, glass, millinery, perfumery and stationary [sic]"[50], luxuries indeed in the Sydney of June 1790. Sergeant James Scott noted that 4d. thread sold for 2s. per ounce and 8d. ribbon went for 2s. to 3/9 per yard.[51] The steward of the Lady Juliana, John Nichol, wrote that the Captain had linen on board which he had got the convicts to make up into shirts:

> He got them made cheap, and sold them to great advantage upon our arrival, as the people in the colony were in want of every necessity. 52

Collins reports at secondhand that this shop was not a success because of the high prices charged and that the master was obliged to take his stock back to sea "which he must of necessity throw overboard before he reached Canton".[53] It seems unlikely that this was true for three reasons; firstly, Scott and Nichol independently noted that articles were selling, and selling at a good profit; secondly, even in a monopoly

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49. There were many bad debts in the colony and Governor Hunter was obliged to reiterate Governor Phillip's order to the effect that if convicts contracted debts with shopkeepers or traders, the latter were fully responsible for entrusting the convicts with credit and that as prisoners of the Crown already, they could not be further imprisoned for debt. However, to put the indebtedness or otherwise of people in the colony in perspective relative to normal business practice in England, it should be noted that all businesses there carried a proportion of bad debts and in periods of economic hardship small businesses and general stores went bankrupt because of this. Operating on credit as such was therefore an understood practice and part of English retailing experience. See Alexander, op cit., pp. 175-185. Shopkeepers extending credit either in England or in New South Wales did so therefore with a background of experience in the risks involved and as they made a living by so doing, could not be said to have been motivated by excessive optimism or philanthropy in wanting to do business.

50. Collins, op cit., Vol. I, p. 118.

51. Cobley, op cit., Vol. I, pp. 231-232.

52. ibid.

53. Collins, op cit., Vol. I, p. 127.

situation, the buyers had some leverage - if the seller really wanted to off-load his stock, he had only to bring down the price a little to do so; and, thirdly, in his letters to his father, Collins showed himself to be one of those foreigners overseas who always complain that conditions are not identical with those at home. He could not see any reason at all why he should have to pay more for an article than he would have at the local shop in Rochester and later labelled the masters of the Second Fleet - with the exception of Maitland and Marshall - as Jews.[54] On an official level, the importation of millinery, perfumes and other fripperies was frowned on. Governor Phillip was the first of the Governors in these early years to resent expenditure on unnecessary luxuries and, in particular, the fact that this private trade took up valuable space in the few incoming ships.[55] To the convicts, these luxuries were far from unnecessary and were avidly sought after. In many cases they had the credit resources to acquire them. While evidence is scanty for convict preferences and consumer habits in the 1790s, such fragments that do exist show a definite desire to spend money on clothes.[56]

If the women were spending money on clothes (or getting men to buy them) the men were assuredly buying clothes for themselves as well. We know from the accounts of individual male labourers discussed earlier in this chapter that men of the working classes spent a considerable portion of their wages on clothing for themselves. Ralph Clark's letters from Norfolk Island show that he and his fellow officers likewise had a similar interest.[57] Contemporary comment was already emphasizing clothes and fashion as areas of predominantly feminine interest whereas, in fact, members of both sexes and all social classes took great care with and interest in their clothing. Any

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54. D. Collins, Letters, ML MSS 700, FM 4/1630, Collins to his father, 23 March 1791.

55. M. Fletcher, op cit., p. 25.

56. See Chapter 1.

57. There was extensive correspondence in 1791 between Clark and George Johnston and Clark and Captain Campbell over a certain piece of scarlet cloth salvaged from the Guardian. See R. Clark, Letterbook, pp. 34-35, 40-41.

investment in haberdashery appearing in the colony in the 1790s was snapped up from the temporary shops opened to sell off single cargoes or parts thereof. By the very late 1790s businessmen like Simeon Lord and Thomas Abbott may have had permanent premises open for retail trade.[58] What is astonishing is that it took such a relatively short time for consumer preferences on the part of a class of people whose inclinations through want of a legitimate means of expression had been largely unknown in this context, to assert themselves in the type and quantity of goods brought into the colony for sale. Perhaps more than any other single factor, the fact that convicts could and did afford to buy new clothes, made it impossible for them to behave as if they were prisoners, and difficult for others to consider them as such. By January 1800 when the East India packet, the Swallow, anchored in Sydney Cove on her way to China carrying goods intended for the China market, the gossip of the town made it clear to her master that it would be more profitable to sell his goods in the colony than to take them on to China. So we have evidence that by 1800 there was a definite market for a cargo comprising "many elegant articles of dress from Bond Street, and other fashionable repositories of the metropolis".[59] By the date of the first publication of the Sydney Gazette which contains detailed evidence of consumer preferences in the colony, a relatively large volume of business dealt wholly or partially in haberdashery and related goods.

It is not possible to estimate with any acceptable degree of accuracy the total volume and value of commerce transacted in the business of clothing the colony. However, a detailed examination of advertisements placed in the Sydney Gazette from its inception in March 1803 until 1815, gives us an idea firstly of the number of businesses which operated like Abbott's, Mansell's or Hassell's store partly in haberdashery lines, secondly of the number of auctions wholly devoted to cloth and haberdashery and thirdly of the number of business people involved substantially in the clothing and related trades, relative to the total volume of business advertised in the

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58. Thomas Abbott's account book covers this period and Lord's first advertisement in the Sydney Gazette, 12 March 1803, refers to his "long-established shop" - four or five years would have been long indeed in the history of the colony. He certainly was well-known by 1803. See Hainsworth, op cit., p. 40.

59. D. Collins, quoted in M. Fletcher, op cit., p. 34.

Gazette. Figure 7 shows the total number of advertisements for the major commodities on sale in the colony during the period. The figures include the same items advertised several times and the real estate advertisements include houses or farms to let as well as those for sale and allotments of land for sale.[60] Figure 7, in conjunction with Table 2 in Chapter 1, shows the relative importance of trade in clothing and related goods in the whole context of commerce inside the colony. Well-known colonial business people such as Robert Campbell, Simeon Lord, Isaac Nichols, David Bevan, Andrew Thompson, Garnham Blaxcell and Henry Kable devoted a consistent part of their business interests to selling clothing or its component parts, as evidenced by frequent notices in the Sydney Gazette. Auctions held in cloth and haberdashery lines compared with auctions of other types of goods were as follows (based on advertisements in the Sydney Gazette):

	Cloth etc.	Other		Cloth etc	Other
1803	12	1	1811	39	19
1804-1805	10	9	1812	19	11
1805-1806	4	7	1813	22	16
1805-1807	29	23	1814	26	15
1808-1809	22	11	1815	19	15
1810	27	8			

60. Note that the effect of the Bligh interregnum on real estate in the colony is shown very clearly in this figure.

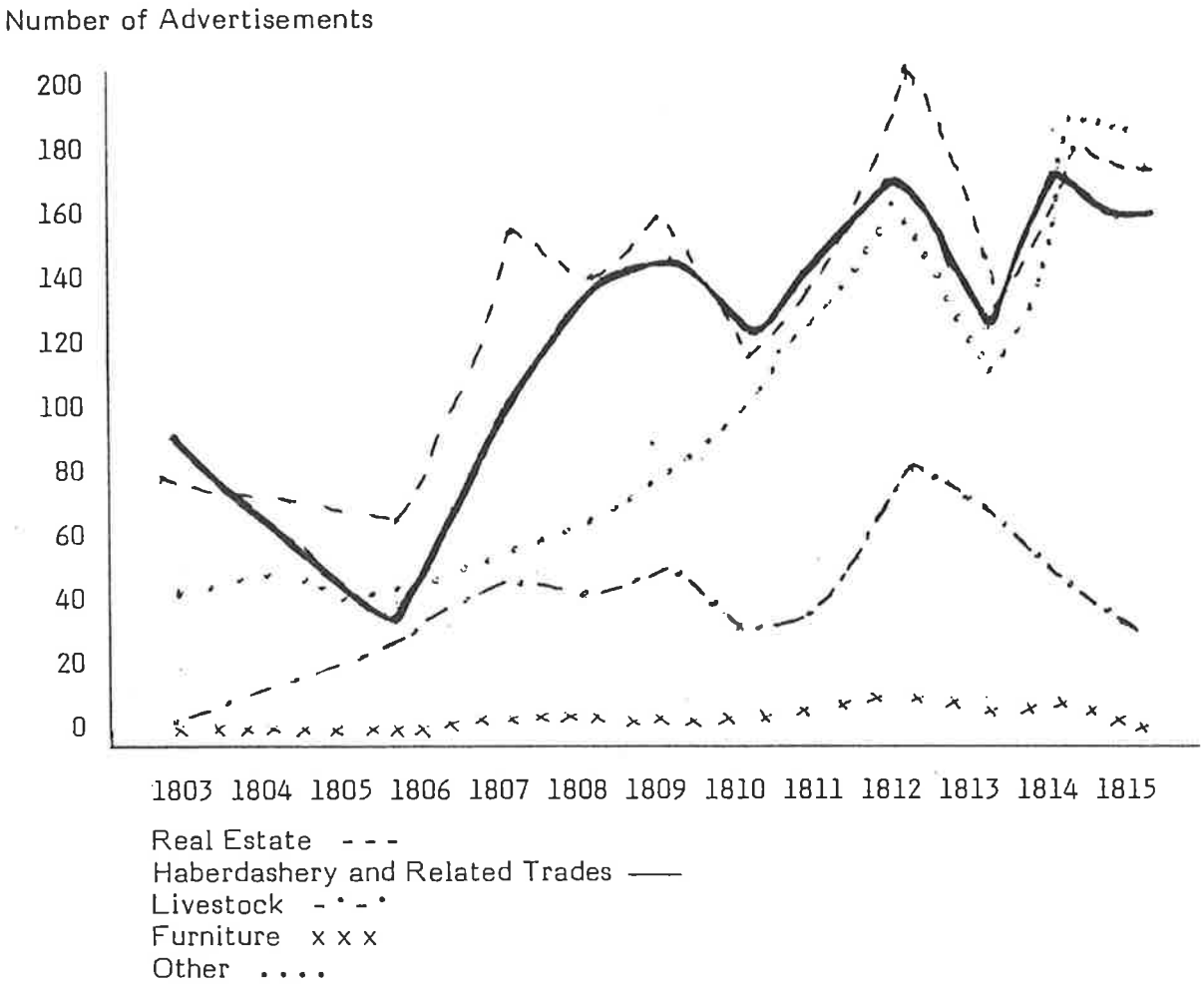


Figure 7.
Private Enterprise in the Colony - Advertisements in the Sydney Gazette 1803-1815

In the absence of more account books, it is impossible to say what this trade was worth exactly, although we do know, for example, that Robert Campbell had £9,810 worth of trade or 20 per cent of his total trade goods contained in ninety-one bales of piece goods (material and clothing) in his go-down in August 1804.[61] This was the second most valuable item of his trade goods after sugar (£ 26,388/14/8) and was worth more than twice as much as the next most valuable article, 207 tons of pure elephant oil worth £4,140. (The sugar constituted 53 per cent of his trade goods.) On the basis of advertisements placed in the Sydney Gazette, it is reasonable to conclude

61. Steven, op cit., p 305.

conclude that Lord, Nichols, Bevan and Kable would have devoted a similar proportion of their business interests to cloth and haberdashery although the total volume of their trade would have been smaller. As well as these traders, there were storekeepers also advertising. The goods as listed in their advertisements show them to have been general storekeepers with a preponderance of their stock being in the cloth and haberdashery departments. Although Abbott's, Mansell's and Hassall's account books have survived to give an indication of the nature and breakdown of their trade in various commodities, there is only one advertisement for any of their businesses in the period. Unfortunately, that was for a one-off investment on sale at Mr Mansell's house (many colonial storekeepers did business from their own houses) outside the years covered by his ledger.[62] It is therefore difficult to make any estimate of volume of business done by storekeepers whose advertisements show them to have been running similar establishments to Abbott, Mansell and Hassall based on a comparison of, say, frequency and itemization of advertisements relative to total volume of trade. However, the number of these shops dealing predominantly in haberdashery and the type of goods they were advertising was impressive in itself for a colony of a total population of approximately 10,000 in 1811, about 5,000 of whom lived in Sydney. Table 7 shows the number of general stores dealing largely in haberdashery lines, the number of specialist advertisements by craftsmen and women in clothing and related areas, and the number of specialist advertisements for other craftsmen such as wheelwrights, blacksmiths, butchers.

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62. Sydney Gazette, 3 July 1808.

Table 7
Consumerism in the Colony. Types of Businesses Advertising in the Sydney Gazette, 1803-1815

	General Stores Specializing in Clothing	Specialist Clothing etc. Advertisements	Other Specialist Advertisements
1803	6	6	8
1804-1805	17	3	5
1806-1807	38	4	8
1808-1809	71	12	30
1810	79	21	31
1811	80	10	137
1812	138	18	121
1813	90	17	47
1814	102	20	75
1815	120	29	96

The shopkeepers advertising consistently in predominantly haberdashery and related lines were Mrs Ann Grant, Sergeant and Mrs Packer, John and Elizabeth Driver, Charles Thompson, Edward Wills, William Baker, Michael Hayes, John Colles, Mrs Lewin, Samuel Foster, Mrs Mann and John Connell. As well, the deceased estates of William Tough and William Cox give evidence in the form of goods consigned to them that were subsequently auctioned by Simeon Lord, that a substantial volume of their businesses had been transacted in cloth and haberdashery. Aside from these shopkeepers, there were the advertisements of various skilled tradesmen and women; John Jacques, tailor; Mrs J. Simpson, laundress; J. Gould, hatter; George Morrison, boot and shoemaker; W. Simmonds, hatter; W. Barnfill, tailor, habit and staymaker; Catherine Mellon, mantua maker and milliner; G. Stokes, tailor and habit maker; Mrs Martha Matthews, mantua maker and milliner; J. Crook, scourer and cleaner of gentlemen's clothing; Jesse Hudson, boot and shoemaker, etc. Thus to the £9,810 worth of trade in haberdashery and cloth that we know existed in Campbell's go-down in 1804, we can add thousands of pounds more from our knowledge of the scale of business done by men like Lord, Bevan, Nichol and Kable[63], and from the nature of advertisements of

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63. Hainsworth, op cit., is the authority, not merely - though preponderantly - on the business activities of Simeon Lord. Hainsworth also discussed the nature and extent of commercial ventures of others like Kable, Underwood, Nichol, Abbott, etc., many of whom either consistently or occasionally invested in cloth and haberdashery for sale in the colony.

businesses like Ann Grant's, the Packers', the Drivers', John Colles' and Charles Thompson's. In addition to all these - and the tailors, hatters, shoemakers, mantua makers, pre-historic dry-cleaners, etc. - were the people who opened shop temporarily to do business from an investment in one cargo only or a part thereof.[64] Advertisements of such sales included those of Joseph Bennett who had part of the cargo of the Mary Ann on sale (1809), and Mr Hasselburgh, the cargoes of the Mersey and the Experiment (1810). Then there were the activities of officially appointed public auctioneers like Lord or Bevan.[65] Finally, we also know from letters and government documents that many people, men and women, indulged in trade or speculation in haberdashery and related goods outside the pages of the Sydney Gazette.[62] The whole constituted a veritable torrent of goods pouring into the colony so that its inhabitants might be better clothed. Corroboration of the volume of incoming goods is to be found in Chapter 1, Table 2. Undoubtedly there were poor settlers and convict ne'er-do-wells in the colony during these years. However, given the steadily increasing volume of incoming goods, the number of successful businesses selling materials related to clothing, and our knowledge of consumer preferences on the part of some convict labourers and poor settlers, we must postulate a majority of the inhabitants of the colony of New South Wales buying themselves new clothing reasonably often and certainly more often than was the case for their counterparts in England.

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64. Sydney Gazette, 6 October 1805. David Bevan gave a £1,000 security to be allowed to operate as an auctioneer on 5 October 1805 which indicates that he expected to transact a considerable volume of business in that capacity.

65. See the discussion below of investments in the clothing trade made by the Macarthur family. In a letter to John Macarthur, Hannibal Macarthur mentions "Two men (Armytage and Colles) whom you will remember in low circumstances the latter was a collector of Insects and commonly called Butterfly Jack, go home in the Minstrel with what ready money they have (said to be £ 4,000 stirling) for the purpose of bringing a vessel and cargo to return hither" (my emphasis). The rest of the context of the letter dated 3 July 1813 makes it reasonable to conclude that Armytage and Colles intended to invest in the clothing trade. See Macarthur Papers, Vol. 5, Letters and Accounts from Hannibal Macarthur 1810-1829. See also Sydney Gazette, 29 January 1804, in which S. Lord gave notice of an auction of an individual investment in haberdashery etc. by the Rev. R. Johnston.

Evidence as to the profits to be made from trade in the clothing and haberdashery lines shows that these were consistently high throughout the period, even in times of economic difficulty in the colony. Beginning with the "Jews" and others complained of by Collins, ships' masters, private individuals (including convicts) and, towards the end of the 1790s, professional merchants and traders, were making large profits from this business. While surviving records mean that it is not possible to compile a complete survey of profit made in this trade over the thirty years under discussion, the fragments which remain give sufficient indication that catering for the clothing market in New South Wales was a consistently profitable undertaking. The general scarcity of clothing in the 1790s meant that literally every item was treasured and because of the rare advent of shipping in this decade, almost irreplaceable. Loss of stores by shipwreck or because of mutineers making off with the ship, meant hardship for people of all ranks and both sexes in the colony in the 1790s and, as was shown in Chapter 1, many had nothing or almost nothing to wear towards the end of this decade.[66] The difference between the labouring classes of the colony and those of England in this context, was that the colonials aspired to buy new clothing to remedy this situation, and the weight of the evidence examined in this chapter suggests that they began to do so by the beginning of the 1800s. After the privation of the 1790s, all ranks of people in the colony had the means to gratify an ambition to be well-clothed. In this climate, cargoes of haberdashery and cloth were sold off at slightly lower than the 500 per cent and 600 per cent profit noted on some items in the 1790s but nevertheless at a consistent profit, indicating a thirst for dry goods equal to, if not even more widespread than, the oft-laboured thirst for more liquid cargoes. The accounts of John and Hannibal Macarthur provide good indications of the type of trade which could

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66. Although attention was given mainly to the privations of the convicts in this context in Chapter 1, mention was made of the scarcity of clothing for soldiers and officers as well. After the wreck of the Sirius just off Norfolk Island, Ralph Clark wrote to Captain Campbell on 10 February 1791 "... I have to beg of you to be so good on the arrival of any ships ... to purchase me, if any such things are to be sold, as much linen as will make a half dozen shirts, a couple of pair of sheets and three or four pieces of nankeen. I should not trouble you with this commission if I was not very much in want of them, for I lost all my linen by the Sirius". Letterbook, p. 33.

profitably be done in cloth and clothing materials later in the period, but unfortunately no adequate evidence has come to light on which to base detailed analysis of all component parts of a given cargo with the profit made on each in the 1790s. Papers giving details of the cargo of the Experiment (1795) or the Walker (1799), would be very interesting from the point of view of amount and type of trade goods sold, the time taken to sell the investment and the profit made on different lines of trade.

In March 1808, the Harrington arrived in Sydney from China with the following cargo[67]:

	Spanish Dollars		Spanish Dollars
350 chests hyson tea	5,250.00	60 rolls of silk	575.00
460 chests gunpowder tea	2,300.00	10 doz shirts	261.00
482 bags sugar	3,976.50	700 nankeen jackets	725.00
100 sets of china	300.00	800 pr men's shoes	400.00
		535 pr ladies' shoes	294.25
		15 boxes and packages containing 2,000 pcs of nankeen and other cloth	1,400.00
			11,902.00

From the lists of cargoes recorded in the Naval Officer's returns of incoming shipping, this would appear to be a typical assortment of goods with haberdashery, cloth and clothing making up 46 per cent of the total value of the cargo. With the Spanish dollar being worth about five shillings at this time,[68] the cost to Macarthur was £6,845/18/9. On arrival in Sydney this sold for £15,809/3/3 with £6,141 worth of goods still unsold. Interestingly, the description of the goods on board the Harrington show that, as a buyer, Macarthur was directing his agent to cater for a significantly working class market with a definite masculine clientele in mind. The cargo of the Harrington was one of nine similar cargoes coming into Sydney in 1808. The cargoes of the Spring Grove and the Isabella which were bought by John Macarthur from London firms, arrived in Sydney at a time of glut and Hannibal Macarthur had a lot of trouble

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67. All the material here and following comes from the Macarthur Papers, Vol. 6, Mr Macarthur's Accounts 1806-1832, Mitchell Library Manuscript Number A2902 unless otherwise stated.

68. Butlin, op cit., p. 81.

selling them off. India goods were arriving by this time to further crowd the market.[69] Nevertheless the Macarthurs made a reasonable profit from these two investments under adverse market conditions and despite their lack of professional expertize as merchants[70], a good indication that trade in cloth and materials for clothing was always profitable in some degree. John Macarthur bought everything from stay tape to shirt wires, buttons to gloves, from big London firms such as Nicholson and Haydon, James Hunter and Co., and Thomas Fidgeon. John and Hannibal Macarthur's investment, which left England in the Spring Grove was made up as follows:

Cotton	£662/10.0	Woollens	£402/18/0
Fine cloths	£415/16/7	Haberdashery	£442/19/10
Gloves	£39/11/8	Buttons	£20/16/5
Shawls	£36/6/3	Fustian cottons	£30/10/10
Cotton	£416/13/11	Cards	£45/1/6

The total value of the cargo was £2,504/6/-. An incomplete account of sales realized in the colony including some damaged bales of cloth and other goods[71] with some merchandise still unsold, totalled £4,141/6/2. Again, like the volume of business done by storekeepers in the colony relative to the advertisements appearing in the Sydney Gazette, it is not possible to extrapolate from our knowledge of the value of these cargoes relative to the breakdown of cargoes in the Naval Officer's returns, a reliable figure for the total value of incoming cloth etc. and the profit made on that. However, an examination of Table 2 in Chapter 1 in the light of our knowledge that 1812 was a difficult year for business in the colony, paralleled with the breakdowns of the cargoes of the Harrington, the Spring Grove and the Isabella shown above, gives enough

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69. Macarthur Papers, op cit., Vol. 5, Hannibal to John Macarthur, 27 November 1812.

70. ibid. While there was expertize in the family (John Macarthur's father was a draper), and John may have had connections in England still to help him, Hannibal in the colony was sometimes at a loss. He complained because he had to sell goods by the piece and was therefore obliged to be constantly in attendance on the store which "is a system of trade which can never repay one for the time it takes up which might otherwise be applied to concerns of much more advantage" - rather the attitude of a gentleman than a trader/storekeeper.

71. ibid. "Our hosiery and two cases of corduroys with a bale of cloth was much damaged and the sales which I made of them were considered very fortunate - most of the hosiery was rotten."

evidence to make some very rough estimates of the value of incoming cargoes (see Table 3, Chapter 1) and to hazard the assertion that even in periods of economic glut or recession, profit could still be made in this trade.

In summary then, we have seen that at all points of the wholesale-retail-consumer chain, trade in cloth, ready-made clothing and haberdashery lines was booming in the colony, both absolutely and relative to other commodities. While Government regulations did have implications for such trade, we have also noted that it was relatively uncomplicated by weighty moral considerations in comparison with, say, the sale of alcohol. Finally, of its nature, it played a vital part - and was perceived by contemporaries as so doing - in changing the colony from a prison to a fully-functioning society, albeit one with inevitably different values and manners from those of the Mother Country. When labouring men walked in the streets dressed in frilled calico shirts, tailor-made nankeen trousers and expensive shoes, they were no longer shamed by the toilette of men like Lieutenant Ralph Clark and Captain Campbell. Furthermore, they were just as likely to be accompanying women wearing chintz gowns at the top of the price range or black silk bonnets and cloaks. Little wonder that new arrivals from England found it difficult to see in such passers-by, convicts or ex-convicts. Little wonder that their very mien and deportment was being noted by the end of the years under discussion as being appreciably different from their contemporaries in England. The convicts had found their purple and gold at Port Jackson.

Entr'act

For some time past, we have repeatedly seen a swellish gentleman sporting about town, with a super-abundance of silver chain dangling over his waistcoat. In such a small community the appearance of a stranger naturally gives rise to the question, who is he? Many were the conjectures we formed on the subject, but could not altogether make up our mind whether he was a new Justice of the Peace, a retired millionaire, a land and stock dealer, a bank director, a barrister, a physician, or a scion of nobility.... this genteel young man was no other than the convict scourger ... the wretch who has an income of some one-and-ninepence halfpenny a-week for scarifying the backs of his fellow prisoners - a felon with whom the other convicts would consider it pollution to associate. (emphasis is in the original)

Geelong Advertiser
27 December 1841

PART II

The Businesspeople

Melbourne

1840-1887

CHAPTER 4

THE VICTORIANS START INDICATING THEIR TASTES

SYNOPSIS

Phenomenal expenditure on clothing by Victorian colonists began before the gold rushes and was far greater than on alcohol consumption. Customs statistics and literary sources used to demonstrate high per capita expenditure on clothing. Discussion of social consequences of this. Greater per capita income and increased working class expenditure on clothing contributed to important changes in the colonial retail drapery trade. Evidence in literary sources of development of good taste owing to working class discernment in their first consumer forays.

The retail drapery trade in Britain was a conservative one conscious of its moral and social obligations and very traditional in its views on the proper modes of doing business. By the mid-nineteenth century many of the traditional values of the trade had been seriously threatened by a new wave of business practices including the advent of window dressing, price ticketing, hypothecating goods on a large scale, holding sales, and advertising with a view to securing and extending the clientele of a firm.[1] The reaction in England to these innovations was initially intense, both in the major contemporary trade journals and in the writings of individual authorities on the trade. Most writers were cautious, not to say disapproving. This was because the British retail drapery trade clearly perceived its interests to align with those of the upper classes. The mechanics of doing business and the criteria by which innovations in the trade were judged were consciously calculated to serve the habits and inclinations of those classes.

From the earliest years of the settlement in and around Port Phillip, the colonists had shown the same overwhelming preference for clothing as a consumer item that has already been discussed with reference to Sydney. It is one of the arguments of this second section that this consumer preference, made possible by the higher per capita income in the colony than in Britain, was to create a distinctive colonial retail drapery trade. While essentially derivative from the British tradition, trade practices were evolved which suited the colonial environment and were necessarily quite different from those in Britain. It is possible to re-create a picture of the people of the colony actively asserting their tastes and preferences in such a material way as to determine the volume and type of consumer goods entering the colony as well as the ways these goods crossed the counter and entered their possession.

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1. Until this time advertising had performed the function of letting customers know of matters of interest to them - with their convenience in view - rather than being oriented to the goal of doing more business. It was thus literally informative rather than being persuasive in any sense that we might conceive of today.

A secondary aspect of this argument is to assert actual consumer preferences of the colony and their implications. These must be stressed, given the continuing misconceptions about the role of alcohol.[2] So strong have been the myths describing drinking habits in the colony that no reliable and complete breakdown of consumption patterns and preferences has been undertaken. Yet legends describing the fabulous amounts of money spent on clothing in Melbourne are as numerous and colourful as those describing drinking habits, if not more so. This failure to quantify, let alone analyze, how the colonists really spent their disposable income has resulted inevitably in an unnecessarily contradictory picture of the colony. It is difficult to imagine how the bustling colony crowned by a sophisticated city which astonished contemporary English visitors by its magnificence and has been thus re-created in the works of historians like Serle and Davison, could have been conceived of and built by a mob of colonists whose only conception of how to spend their disposable income was to drink themselves into incoherent stupour. Undoubtedly people of all social backgrounds got drunk, some of them a great deal more often than others, but these people also spent a lot of time and money on clothing themselves and their families. This leads to the reconstruction of a more plausible image of the colony which is overwhelmingly demonstrated by even the most cursory examination of the surviving Customs statistics detailing imports. These at first glance suggest the existence of a powerful consumer thirst for the full range of luxury items available at the time. In the early post Industrial Revolution, the first consumer item to be widely available was

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2. Sydney Morning Herald, 22 January 1986. An article reviewing the latest reprint of Historical Records of Australia, headed "Victoria was founded on a sea of alcohol, records show", deals exclusively with alcohol consumption in the early years of Victoria. By quoting statistics concerning alcohol and omitting any reference to other articles of consumption, this article reflects the continued obsession with drink as a newsworthy item even in today's society. The culture surrounding alcohol and its consumption is an essentially male-dominated one and the force of working class consumer interests in toto in Australia has meant that views regarding excessive alcohol consumption have changed. Far from being seen as scandalous, irresponsible or degenerate, it is now regarded with a sort of pride. The article could as well have focused on the pre-eminence of clothing as an article of consumption - and in so doing would have been statistically correct - thus depicting the people of early Victoria as little different from those of today and a great deal more privileged than similar groups of people in the England of the early 1840s to the 1860s.

clothing. It will be argued that better quality clothing was as sought after but more easily obtainable by a wider cross section and a greater proportion of Victorians than was the case in England, stimulating very different concerns in the colonial retail drapery trade from those dominating the trade in England. There is evidence also in the newspapers, private papers and literary impressions that most people embraced wholeheartedly the - for many - literally golden opportunity to clothe themselves in as much finery as they could buy. This impulse existed before the discovery of gold and the trend was to continue thereafter, as will be seen in Figure 8 below. This shows that the overwhelming volume and value of imports of clothing and its materials above other consumer items, particularly alcohol, dates from the earliest years of the colony. It also suggests the existence of an active retail drapery trade well worth studying as a clear indication of colonial consumer preferences, while directly giving the lie to the assertion by economic historian A.E. Dingle that

> If drink is seen as one among a range of consumer goods competing for a slice of the wage earner's pay packet, some light is shed on those periods of heavy drinking in the early days [of New South Wales] and especially during the gold rushes. Those were years when the range of alternatives available to the consumer was extremely restricted. Once basic needs for food and shelter had been satisfied there was little else to do with surplus purchasing power other than save it, gamble it, or drink it away ... (my emphasis) 3

To counterbalance this claim, it should be mentioned that £2,898,290 worth of clothing and its materials was imported into Melbourne in 1853, a figure clearly suggesting that consumer preference and business initiative had moved with astonishing speed to gratify the inclinations of a population of less than 100,000.

Figure 7 is evidence of a staggering total consumption of clothing relative to the population of Melbourne and a convincing preference for clothing over alcohol. Two points should be drawn from these figures. Firstly, with such a small total population in which the lower middle classes and working classes predominated, it is just not possible to argue that these vast amounts of clothing were consumed entirely by the upper classes. Secondly, while it must be remembered that the official Customs

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3. Dingle, op cit., p. 238.

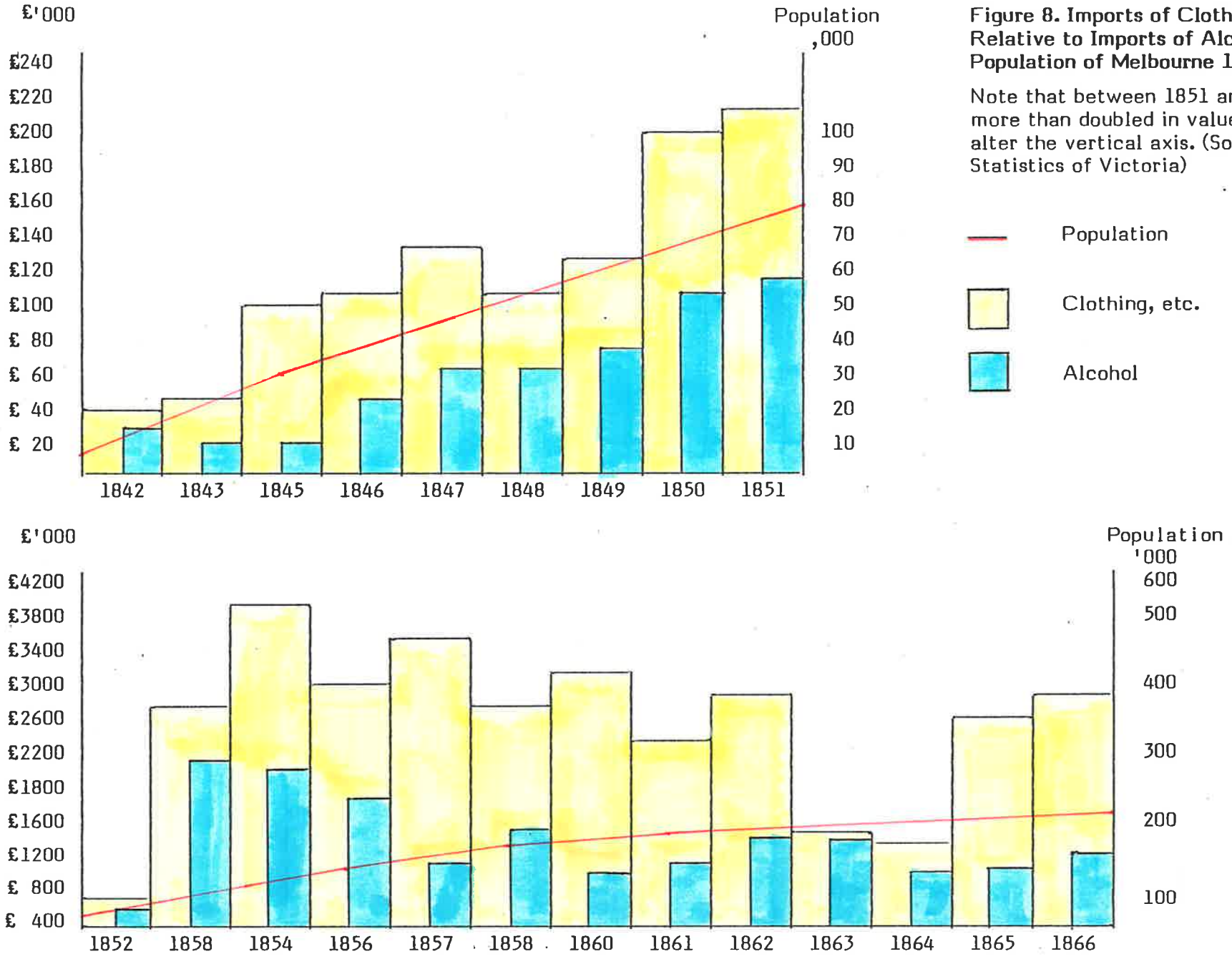
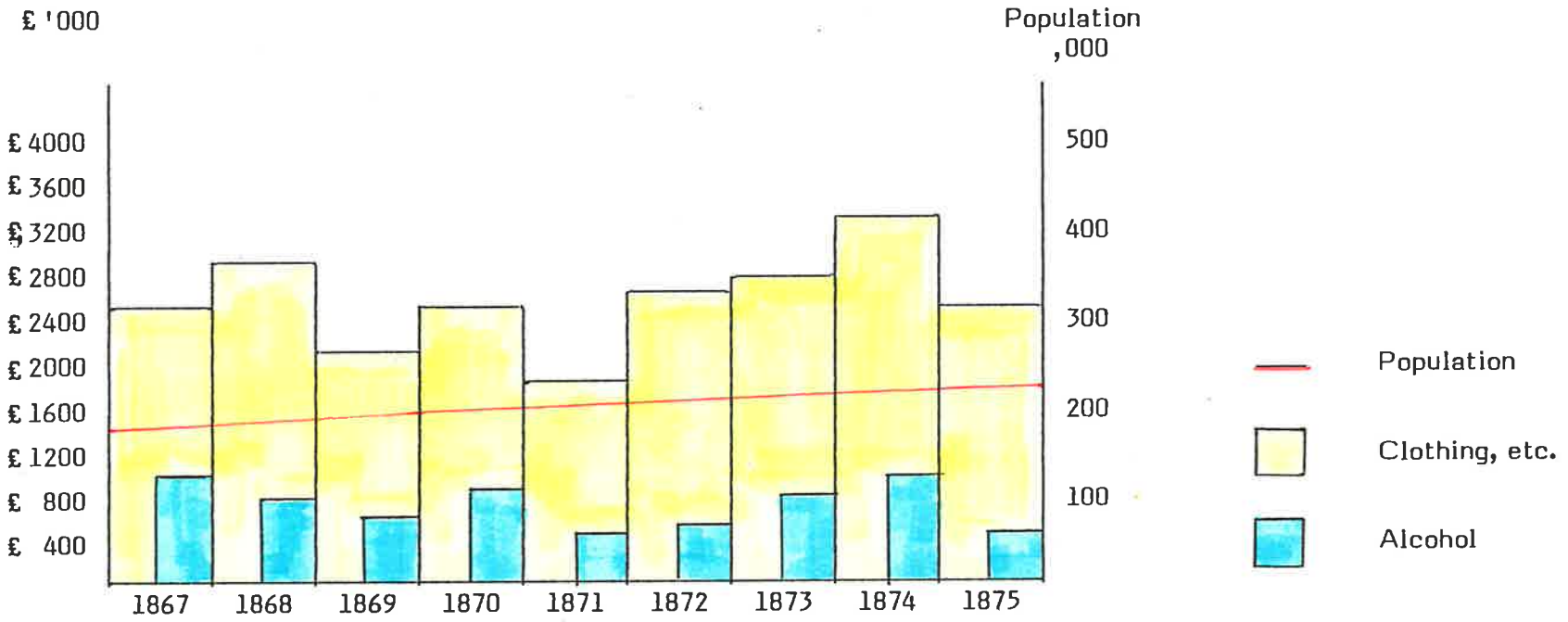


Figure 8. Imports of Clothing and its Materials Relative to Imports of Alcohol and to the Population of Melbourne 1842-1875.

Note that between 1851 and 1852, imports having more than doubled in value, it was necessary to alter the vertical axis. (Source: Customs Statistics of Victoria)

Figure 8 (continued)



figures do not take into account quantities of home-brewed liquor produced in the colony, they equally do not encompass the personal belongings of individuals coming into the colony. Clothing brought in by private individuals entered the market in two ways, the sale of personal garments by new arrivals trying desperately to make ends meet,[4] and that brought out expressly as a form of small-scale speculation. As was the case in early New South Wales, those who had visited the colony of Victoria[5] gave advice indicative of the enormous perceived value of clothing in the colony:

> for those who wish to invest small sums in goods for Australia, boots and shoes, cutlery, flash jewellery, watches ... fancy articles, cheap laces and baby-linen offer immense profits. 6

Thus we see a continuation of the trends observed in early New South Wales. The bulk of the population showed a clear preference for clothing as a consumer luxury and the economic circumstances of the colony allowed them to gratify their whim. Moreover, evidence of the vast amount of imported clothing materials - particularly luxury items such as silks and fancy goods - relative to the total population of both colonies, argues - as does other evidence such as wills, newspaper advertisements for lost property, and so on - that enjoyment of clothing as a consumer pleasure was a consciously sought after part of working class experience in the colonies one hundred years before it was in England. In Melbourne, as was the case in and around Sydney, the visible external social effects of this were remarked by English visitors and were to shape the practices of the Melbourne retail drapery trade. A study of contemporary literary accounts of the Melbourne social scene shows as convincingly as do the Customs statistics that far from squandering all their money on drink because of a "restricted range of consumer goods", members of all social classes were avidly

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4. W. Kelly, Life in Victoria, or Victoria in 1853 and Victoria in 1853 showing march of improvement made by the colony within those periods in town and country, cities and the diggings, Lowden Publishing Co., Kilmore, Australia, 1977 (1859), Vol. I, pp. 137-138.

5. Although Port Phillip did not become a separate colony from New South Wales until 1851, it will be referred to as Victoria, meaning the city of Melbourne and its environs as it was from the late 1830s.

6. Clacy, A Lady's Visit, p. 285.

following the sweeping tides of fashion with an enthusiasm and to a degree which made them compare favourably with the capital of fashion, Paris itself.[7] It is a fundamental contention of this thesis that Australian society has been shaped to an appreciable extent by the fact that economic circumstances in the colonies in the nineteenth century gave the working classes a disposable income which they chose to spend on clothing.

While the patterns of wage-earning were grossly distorted in the colony of Victoria by money made on the gold diggings and the effects of the gold rush on all sectors of the labour market, the same trends emerged as were discussed with reference to New South Wales. Firstly, all labour was better paid than in England. Secondly, despite occasional gluts, scarcity of labour and long distances between places of work increased working class bargaining power and therefore control over working conditions in the early days of the colony relative to the English context. Thirdly, the very nature of the booming frontier society meant that there was a continual demand for itinerant labour which equalled if not out-ran the supply. In Thompson's view, one of the tragedies of the Industrial Revolution in England had been the loss of control a working person had over his or her working hours and place of work.[8] This was restored to the working class in both New South Wales and Victoria in the early years of settlement, and with it, a corresponding sense of individual dignity. Such a line of argument is in no way at odds with the legends of the great Australian thirst in the nineteenth century or the facts of the amounts of alcohol imported into the colonies. It provides a background against which these legends need to be evaluated. The myths must be set in a context more closely approximating the reality of the colony. As Dingle pointed out

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7. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, p. 219.

8. E.P. Thompson, op cit., pp. 357 and 446.

> In view of such unanimity [concerning this thirst] it is rather surprising to discover that this assumption is based on the scattered observations of contemporaries who usually stressed the heavy drinking they witnessed, rather than on detailed empirical research. (my emphasis) 9

Dingle not only failed to undertake meaningful empirical research himself but he also omitted to question the class-based assumptions of the contemporary observers he accepted as sources. As was emphasized in Section I of this thesis, the English upper and middle classes had constructed ethics of work and leisure with concomitant restrictions in terms of low wages for long hours of work such that even the mildest working class indulgence in any consumer luxury could be seen to be reprehensible.

Dingle concluded that the inhabitants of New South Wales drank four times as much as their countrymen in Britain and similar claims have been made concerning the people of Victoria.[10] Two points need to be made about such a stress on alcohol consumption. Firstly, careful analysis of wages in the colonies for the years under discussion show them to be a great deal higher than those earnt for the same kind of work in England, while costs such as food and taxes were lower in the colonies. Obviously then, a colonist could afford to drink more without either necessarily becoming an irresponsible alcoholic and starving his wife and children, or even curtailing the amount of disposable income available for other consumer goods. Secondly, there was a clearly discernible degree of class-based rancour tingeing contemporary observations about drinking patterns - even more obvious in comments on colonial taste in clothing. The implication was that it was somehow more morally reprehensible to get drunk, the lower the individual was on the economic and social scale. While this may have had a certain logic in the English context, it was a hypocritical assumption and has exerted untoward influence on those Australian historians who have continued to stress the heavy drinking in the early years of both colonies. Whether alcohol consumption in the colonies by all classes of people was heavy absolutely or only relatively to that possible in England with its vastly lower standard of living for the

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9. Dingle, op cit., p. 227.

10. Dingle, op cit., p. 241.

working classes, the point has not yet been made that such consumption was in no way culturally or morally reprehensible, balanced as it was by an even greater consumption of the first luxury fruits of the Industrial Revolution: the materials of fine clothing now beginning to be available en masse. Far from being drink-crazed philistines, the picture of the working classes at leisure in the colony of Victoria which most consistently emerges from the literary evidence, is one of a group whose appreciation of their increased standard of living was evidenced by a wide spectrum of consumer tastes and leisure activities with the purchase of fine clothing predominating. This is not to say that traditions of 'work and bust' described by Dingle did not exist, but to stress that such traditions applied to a minority of the population for particular reasons and as such should not be taken as indicative of the consumer habits and lifestyle of the colonists as a whole. An important factor in spending patterns was method of payment. Payment in notes of small denomination after long periods of work in some trades encouraged the "work or bust" tradition, particularly when the place of work was far from any town or city.

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As much of the unquestioning re-telling of the myths of the great colonial thirst derives from literary sources describing these years, it would seem appropriate to use these same sources to illustrate and develop the arguments outlined above. The same literary sources can in fact be used to develop a far more credible image of the colony than that of its being awash with drink. Naturally these sources must be complemented by others such as private correspondence and the newspapers of the day. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will be based on these latter in order to analyse in detail the argument that greater per capita income and increased working class expenditure on clothing contributed to important changes in the colonial retail drapery trade. In his book Life in Victoria in 1853, W. Kelly tells a story which makes a very appropriate starting point as a literary illustration of the argument of this chapter. In it we see

that colonial life offered the possibility of earning high wages quite impromptu (itself an interesting difference in the elasticity of the labour markets in Melbourne and London). Secondly, Kelly makes quite clear the social results of the greater availability and freedom of better-paid labour by giving direct speech to the anti-hero of his story, a wood-carrier. Finally, Kelly's comment shows the predominant English class attitude that members of the working class ought to be grateful to their betters for giving them the opportunity for service.

After some heavy rains a large group of people was stranded on the far side of a sodden cricket ground between St Kilda and Melbourne with no means of getting across without damaging their fine clothes. A wood-carrier approached from the other side and seizing the opportunity to make a little extra, he unloaded his cart and made several trips over and back to take the group of sixty-seven over the mud. Kelly's comment on the incident was that

> so far from evincing any emotions of thankfulness on that occasion, he declared 'we were a bloody rubbishy gang of lime juicers' for not remaining and helping him to re-load (his wood). 11

Furthermore, Kelly waxed indignant over the fact that the wood-carrier made £3/7/- for twenty-five minutes work. Such a man could afford to stop by the public house, he could afford to take his wife and daughters to the local drapers and buy them all new bonnets and he had the leisure time to drive them to the Botanical Gardens or the beach on Saturday afternoons so that they could show off their finery. The economic and social environment in which he lived and worked was not such as to make him take off his cap and humbly touch his forelock with gratitude for the chance to earn his daily bread.

The social implications of the higher standard of living expressed by expenditure on clothing emerge from the observations of English visitors to the colony in three ways of particular interest to this argument. Firstly, there was a strong element of surprise and sometimes indignation that the masses dressed so well, or conversely,

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11. Kelly, op cit., Vol. I, p. 76.

excessive scorn if they were not dressed tastefully. Secondly, and most interestingly, there was a marked discomfort that it was no longer possible to place people at a glance by their manner and bearing:

> A stranger, on arriving in Melbourne, is perhaps longer in becoming initiated into the 'who's who' of that metropolis, than I should think in any other place in the world. This may naturally be expected in a new gold colony, where so many, by industry and fortunate speculation, have made for themselves a name. At home, on entering a gay assemblage, one sees almost at a glance, from their manner and bearing, who are the important guests; but in a colony it is a work of time to become completely initiated. 12

The difficulty of placing people by their manners and bearing was increased by a peculiarly colonial phenomenon. Very early in the history of the colony, men began to deliberately dress down and beaux or dandies were ruthlessly derided. "Frock and dress coats are only laughing-stocks for everyone and generally draw forth the expression 'there goes a new chum'."[13] The social pressure to be seen to keep up appearances for some reason applied to women only. It became impossible to judge a man by his dress either because he was a gentleman dressed carelessly or because he might be a ragged working class digger who was worth a fortune but did not feel the need to dress the part. (This point will be further discussed in Chapter 6.) The third and last observation by English visitors on colonial standards of living as expressed through dress was evident in the overwhelming consensus that crowds whether at the races, at balls, in the Botanical Gardens, at the theatre or on the beach were orderly and well-behaved.[14]

> A very high degree of comfort in dress, in fare, and in the means of social enjoyment - is everywhere visible among the people ... [and]

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12. C. Aspinall, Three Years in Melbourne, L. Booth, London, 1862, p. 33.

13. Flower, op cit., p. 54, quoting a new arrival writing home to England from Melbourne in 1852.

14. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, pp. 91 and 217; I. Massary, Social Life and Manners in Australia Being the Notes of Eight Years Experience. By a Resident, Longman Green, Longman and Roberts, London, 1861, p. 54, pp. 71-72; C. Rudston Read, What I Heard, Saw and Did at the Australian Gold Fields, T. and W. Boone, London, 1853, pp. 41-42.

> considering the freedom with which money is spent, there are after all comparatively few instances of drunkenness or demoralisation to be witnessed .... The perfect orderliness of the crowds is something very noticeable: their good humour never fails; rowdyism and rioting may be said to be unknown. This we believe to be mainly attributable to the fact that the people generally are so 'well-to-do'. 15

The fact that this orderly behaviour was being remarked and singled out as such could very possibly have been because it was a contrast to what the writers would have expected in England. Indeed, sometimes favourable comparisons with England were made.[16] By the time of the first visit to Australia by a member of the Royal Family, it was precisely this well-to-do appearance and orderliness in crowd behaviour which was singled out by the journalists as a distinctive colonial phenomenon to be proud of. On all occasions in which orderly crowd behaviour was praised, the observers were witnessing a new social phenomenon. The lower orders had the clothes and the leisure time to imitate the recreations of the upper classes - balls, theatre, promenades - and to do so very creditably in the eyes of even their severest critics. We have already noted in Chapter 1 the tone of tongue-in-cheek disparagement of the amusements of the convict classes evident in the early pages of the Sydney Gazette. This was to be wildly exacerbated by the undeniable public display of wealth on clothing and entertainment by working class men and women in Victoria during and after the gold rushes.

Two interesting complications of the new social phenomenon of a wealthier lower class were firstly, that within English society during the nineteenth century a respect for money itself grew to rival the respect for hereditary family connections. In 1860, The Draper and Clothier quoted an article from the Westminster Review which enlarged on the disproportionate power and influence that had come to be consequent on the possession of mere wealth as well as "the indiscriminate respect paid to wealth" which was felt to be an instigator of dishonesty and malpractice in the drapery trade and the cause of dishonourable dealings in society generally. The

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15. J. Ballantyne, Homes and Homesteads in the Land of Plenty. A Handbook of Victoria as a Field for Emigration, Cassell, Petter and Galpin, London, 1872, p. 152.

16. Massary, op cit., p. 54 and pp. 129-130.

implication was that changes were beginning in the social order in which a man's honour and connections had hitherto been invaluable and intangible entities to be considered as worthy in themselves aside from his wealth.[17] (Businesswomen whose honour was of any consequence were almost non-existent at this time, thus throwing into relief the existence of considerable numbers of highly successful businesswomen in early Sydney and Melbourne. See further discussion in Chapter 6.) Thus in Melbourne, as an off-shoot of this society, where fabulous wealth was to be made in ways which were still considered unacceptable socially in England, it became increasingly difficult to snub people whose income and gradually therefore dress and bearing, began to show comparable distinction with that of those who would forever have remained their "betters" in England. Secondly, in the colonies, as these lower classes began to acquire good taste through dint of practice in playing the consumer stakes[18], the terrifying possibility arose of incorrectly judging a person by his or her bearing and accoutrements to be of the gentry class. This became an obsession with those who wanted to preserve a hierarchical view of society with themselves at the top. It was at the bottom of many of the trivial scandals which erupted into affairs of momentous import as people jockeyed to establish their social position in early Melbourne. The ultimate scandal was when a person was either wrongly accused of or

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17. The Draper and Clothier. A Book of General Information for all Traders in and Purchasers of Textile Fabrics, Vol. I, Houlston and Wright, London, 1860, p. 15.

18. There are a number of accounts of how well dressed the servant girls were, notably the scandalized observations or R.E.N. Twopeny, Townlife in Australia, Penguin, Australia, 1973 (1883), pp. 55-56. E.P. Thompson, op cit., pp. 207-212, when discussing the debate concerning the standard of living for the poorer classes in England during and after the Industrial Revolution, observed that "People may consume more goods and become less happy or less free at the same time". As this may be true, the historian wishing to make some statement about standard of living and its relationships to happiness or freedom, needs to choose goods which constitute a social force in colouring relationships and examine how these goods were acquired. For example, if as in England, domestic servants were given clothing by their masters or mistresses, it deepened their obligation, stressed their dependence in that social relationship and even outside it by being a perpetual reminder to the wearer of that dependence. In this context, Twopeny, op cit., p. 56, remarks on servant girls employing milliners and dressmakers to make their bonnets rather than lowering themselves to sew.

discovered in fact to have had concealed recent convict origins.[19] This was a factor in the social life of Melbourne of the 1850s and the 1860s in a way which was irrelevant in Sydney before 1815.

Observers of the Victorian colonists made scathing comments on the clothing tastes of the lower orders, on their ignorance of such matters, and interestingly, for the purposes of this argument, their lack of savoir faire and seemly behaviour over the counters of exclusive boutiques. The exciting social fact was that the lower orders were in front of the counters at all and the persuasive powers of their fistfuls of bank notes broke down the well-schooled exclusivity of even the most traditional retail drapers. Mrs Charles Clacy, who wrote some short stories about Australian life and an account of her visit to the gold diggings in 1853, was ruthless in her appraisal of the taste and shopping habits of the diggers.

> Some of the shops are very fair; but the goods all partake too largely of the flash order, for the purpose of suiting the tastes of successful diggers, their wives and families; it is ludicrous to see them in the shops - men who, before the gold-mines were discovered, toiled hard for their daily bread, taking off half-a-dozen thick gold rings from their fingers, and trying to pull on to their rough, well-hardened hands the best white kids to be worn at some wedding party; while the wife, proud of the novel ornament, descants on the folly of hiding them beneath such useless articles as gloves. 20

At first reading, it is clear that Mrs Clacy is very scornful about their ignorance in matters of dress and even more dubious about their right to be in the shop at all. In fact that is the hub of Mrs Clacy's objection; she was unaccustomed to the presence of such uncouth people in shops which in England had the exclusive patronage of people of her own class background. Her report of the dress of the crowds at a horticultural show at the Botanic Gardens was equally scathing, underpinned as it was by the same class-based assumptions about dress. (Another witness wrote quite differently of the same crowds, see discussion of Isabel Massary's writings below.)

> The showy dresses amused me greatly; and on one person who was there arm in arm with a roughly arrayed digger, I counted all the colours of the rainbow. Light blue kid shoes with pink rosettes; purple silk dress,

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19. This even touched a branch of the Hordern family in Melbourne. See Hordern, op cit., p. 87.

20. Clacy, A Lady's Visit, p. 24.

> shot with red; lace mantle, lined with orange and trimmed with the same colour; pink silk bonnet trimmed with a wreath of green leaves, and a gaudy ribbon, in which every imaginable tint had been assembled; yellow kid gloves, and a sky-blue parasol lined with rose colour. She strutted about, evidently thinking herself the Centre of attraction, which she certainly was, though not altogether of a complimentary description. 21

Another observer whose remarks made it quite clear that his amour propre was wounded by having to rub shoulders with the hoi poloi while out shopping, was William Kelly. As with Mrs Clacy, his comments and evidence must be treated cautiously as indicating something of the gall and wormwood he was swallowing in the colonies as he discovered that class barriers which had so effectively kept the lower orders at bay in England no longer operated as expected. Since Kelly and Clacy were observing this in the context of shopping and clothing rather than public houses and alcohol consumption, their comments while condescending and outraged, were not as emotive as those describing colonial drinking habits. Nevertheless, there is plenty of literary evidence which indicates more about the affront to British traditions in the context of shopping and clothing, than the reality of the colonial experience.

> The scenes in the larger shops (which might come under the denomination of the 'Swann and Edgar, Howell and James, Gunter' etc, of Melbourne) were ludicrous to a degree; nothing seemed to be sufficiently expensive, and in some instances, when objected to, on account of the low price, the shopman as a matter of course, had far more superior articles inside ... 22

Scenes of digger behaviour in shops which showed their total lack of respect for the normal canons of behaviour acceptable in smart retail drapers shops were retold around Melbourne with a mixture of admiration and scorn. One such story concerned a digger who took his lady into a shop to buy her a bonnet. He came straight to his point and asked for the most expensive bonnet in the shop which was brought to him valued

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21. Mrs Charles Clacy, Lights and Shadows of Australian Life, Hurst and Blackett, London, 1854, Vol. II, pp. 260-261.

22. Rudson Read, op cit., p. 93. See also pp 97-98 for a description of the infamous diggers' wedding parties. "A volume might almost be written on the ridiculous manner in which this class of people squander their money; many, I have heard boasting at the diggings, as to the shortness of time in which they could 'knock down' a thousand or two pounds." Like many other writers discussing the consumer escapades of the newly-rich diggers, Rudson Read by no means implied that alcohol was the sole or even the main object of their attentions.

at fifteen guineas. He promptly crushed it under his boot and asked for another like it. Having paid thirty guineas, he walked out of the shop with his woman friend or wife carrying a beautifully packaged bonnet for which he was proud to be able to say he paid thirty guineas.

To return to Kelly, his reaction to the colonial shopping scene, like those of Mrs Clacy, Rudston Read, Mrs Aspinall and others, are interesting as indicative as much of the backgrounds of the British retail drapery scene, as of what was happening in the colony. The British shopping traditions were the norm in the minds of these observers and their indignation at finding this norm being flouted in every possible way, caused them to make observations which were either quite untrue, or not as representative of the colonial reality as could have been the case. The happy chance of Isabel Massary having visited the colony at this time and combining in her intelligence an exceptional humanity and tolerance gives another set of impressions to balance against those of the Clacy's and the Kelly's. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of Massary's observations. Mrs Clacy's indignation about the colonial shopping scene was such as to cause her to state that goods were more expensive and of inferior quality in Melbourne than in England, which at the time of her writing - except in very rare instances - was quite untrue.[23] Kelly's reaction showed rather more directly that his ideas of social propriety and the tradesman's place in the order of things had been offended. Kelly was the gentleman who felt that the wood-carrier ought to have been grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve his betters. One day in the street he overheard a gentleman who had just bought a plucked fowl, say to the shop assistant "Perhaps you would be good enough to send home my fowl by a messenger". Kelly was horrified to hear the reply "Messenger! I know of no such a person here abouts".[24] It would require a detailed discussion of the mannered rituals of the British retail world to provide sufficient context to understand just how much it would have shocked Kelly to hear

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23. Clacy, A Lady's Visit, p. 256.

24. Kelly, op cit., Vol. I, p. 85.

such a reply. In England he knew, gentlemen were not expected to stroll home with a plucked fowl tucked under one arm. They sent their servants out for such mundane and undignified essentials of their tables.

Neither the tradesmen nor the colonists knew their place. Writing of the women he saw in the streets of Melbourne, Kelly reported that these were either members of the lower orders or prostitutes:

> These striking but unattractive women jostled you on the flagways, elbowed you in the shops, and rattled through the streets in carriages hired out at a guinea an hour, arrayed in flaunting dresses of the most florid colours, composed of silks, sarcenets, and brocaded satins, which had evidently been manufactured in the infancy of the power loom, and low-classed, old-fashioned tabinets that had slumbered on the shelves of Dublin warehouses antecedent to the Union, but now went off swimmingly as the 'newest and latest fashions' in exchange for Ballarat nuggets. 25

One wonders just how unattractive these women really were and just how much Kelly's perceptions of them were coloured by a jumble of social fears and misapprehensions about them as a group of people to whom he had never been introduced but which he was now being forced to pass in the street dressed, not in rags he could dismiss entirely, but in a reasonable caricature of what had once been fashionable for women of his class. He went on to deplore the taste of this group of women, running as it did to excessive indulgence in artificial flowers, umbrellas and costume jewellery.

There are three points to be made about Kelly's vituperative observations. Firstly, the exercise of taste in consumer items comes as a result of practice. Having never before had the financial means to enjoy such practice, the group of people he was describing were in the process of creating their own canons of taste. Moreover, they were well aware that in so doing, they were asserting themselves by displaying their material affluence in such a way as deliberately to goad the members of the classes above them. Those with upper class pretentions in the colonies, given the healthy respect increasingly felt by the English for wealth itself, were finding it

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25. Kelly, op cit., Vol. I, pp. 46-47.

difficult to snub the parvenues, however they might try to console themselves about the tastelessness of their dress:

> ... the middling classes in and around Melbourne ... had lately emerged from the lowest levels of the community; and with all the coarseness pertaining to their former habits and associations, they superadded the intolerable obtrusiveness of purse-proud arrogance. They entertained crude notions of American equality .... They were very well aware that very many of ... the better orders came to the colony under stress of circumstances ... and they lost no opportunity of taunting them indirectly by insolent and ridiculous displays of their unbounded affluence. 26

The second point about Kelly's deprecatory comments on the dress of the lower orders relates to an oft-observed fact about fashion which became more obvious as the nineteenth century wore on and the middle classes began to consume in earnest. Fashion had always been initiated in the very highest circles in England. It thus flowed from the Court to the aristocracy and for many hundreds of years, sumptuary laws actually arrested any further socially downward movement. Thus the materials Kelly derided as having been "manufactured in the infancy of the power loom" and being "low-classed" and "old-fashioned", had once been those gracing the bodies of ladies with whom Kelly could comfortably have sat down to dinner. They had been manufactured for members of the upper classes - the working classes in England would never have been able to afford them - and now fashion, which only the wealthy had hitherto had the means to follow, had moved on, stranding these materials in Dublin warehouses. Taste could thus be seen to be a matter not only of historical but social perspective and as Bell observed, a sure means of killing a fashion trend among the upper classes, was the ability of the lower classes to emulate it, however much of a caricature their imitation might be.[27] Thus it is not impossible to attribute an unconscious indignation to Kelly - who knows but that he might have had dim memories of his grandmother wearing those very tabinets now being "flaunted" in Collins Street by women he would definitely never escort to the dining room.

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26. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, p. 61.

27. Bell, op cit., pp. 22-23 p. and 154.

The final point to note about Kelly's remarks concerns his statement that goods which were unsaleable elsewhere in the world, were positively welcomed by people in the colony, a further proof of their low taste. Mrs Clacy, too, recalled an incident in a shop in which she saw a digger buy twenty-five yards of what she thought to be a hideous orange satin at the astronomical price of £3 a yard.[28] In that instance, she was deprecating not only his taste but his folly in spending such a sum on those goods, the implication being that his class origins deprived him of the experience necessay to determine correctly their value. This may have been - and probably was - true, but does one not detect here the slightest touch of envy? Perhaps the Mrs Clacys of England and Melbourne would have liked to be in a position to pay £3 a yard for a dress length of their choice. (A dress length of the time required between fifteen and thirty yards.) Kelly's was not the only testimony that the discovery of gold and the international business awareness of which classes were - broadly speaking - profiting from life in the colony of Victoria, resulted in the sending of boat-loads of inferior "tasteless" goods to Port Melbourne, in an attempt to find a market.[29] However, we also have evidence that this attempt by the business world to off-load its rejects and to pre-judge the taste of the colonists as ignorant and inferior was of short-lived duration. This will be discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Suffice it to say here that William Ablett, one of the foremost authorities on the English drapery trade wrote in his Reminiscences, published in 1876, that the colonies

> ... do not now offer such a good outlet for low goods as formerly, for, I am told, our colonists are more particular in the goods they buy than are many customers in the home trade. 30

Evidence of the process by which the colonists acquired this awareness will be further discussed below. Because of misconceptions by some historians about consumer

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28. Clacy, A Lady's Visit, pp. 288-291.

29. Clacy, Lights and Shadows, Vol. I, p. 187, "the paper on the walls was a trifle too striking, perhaps; but if the exporters of goods for the colonies will send out such gaudy articles, the colonists cannot help buying them".

30. W.H. Ablett, Reminiscences of an Old Draper, Sampson, Low, Masters, Serle and Rivington, London, 1876, p. 224.

patterns and a lack of consideration of these altogether by others in the early years of the colonies, an important fact about colonial life has not yet emerged. That is, that large groups of people who now had a disposable income were becoming a market factor. As such, their tastes were worthy of consideration. Furthermore, as the relationship between business people and consumers is never entirely one-sided, the existence, tastes and influence of this new market factor in the colonies had to be considered as important as the motives and traditions which had hitherto governed the world of retail drapery in England. This meant that in the colonies, even among the most respectable retail drapers priding themselves on their good taste, concessions of all kinds began to be made to the customers. If Richard Twopeny's observations of nearly twenty years later were in any way accurate, the results were not as horrendous as might have been predicted by even the most exigent middle class critic.[31]

Before briefly examining some examples of the traditions of the British retail drapery trade which formed the shopping habits of people like Clacy, Kelly, Aspinall, Rudston Read, Massary and later Kerr and Twopeny, among others, it is worthwhile quoting at length an incident observed by Kelly while out shopping. Such occurrences were similarly dilated upon by all the above writers with the exception of Massary who will be discussed separately at the conclusion of this chapter.

> H. and I turned into one of the fashionable shops in Collins-Street, where this class [lower class women and/or prostitutes - Kelly was not sufficiently acquainted with these people to be able actually to tell the difference] and their admirers constituted the majority of the throng, just to witness the style of transacting business. The quantity of money they expended was really fabulous and afforded a tolerable earnest of the teeming richness of the land. They never found fault with, or rejected, any article, unless the shopman, in a fit of absence of mind, happened to ask a low figure - about 200% above cost price. On this occasion a lady of respectability, who had timidly receded to the end of the shop watching for a lull in the digger demand, now advanced to the counter, and after examining a dress in a manner which showed that she was somewhat of a judge of the fabric, declined it, saying 'It was too expensive'; whereupon a gallant digger with a Dulcinea on his arm,

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31. Twopeny, op cit., passim.

> promptly ordered two to be cut off, and absolutely endeavoured to force them on her as a spontaneous gift. (my emphasis) 32

Here, then, is the ultimately outrageous consequence of the lower orders having access to fashionable shopping repositories. (Collins Street was then, as now, an exclusive area where beaux "of the most elegant description, may be seen from two to four o'clock in the afternoon"[33] with the fashionable haberdashers Alston and Brown being the contemporary equivalent in prestige of Georges today.) They had actually succeeded in driving out the very people whose patronage had formerly been the mainstay of such shops and whose class interests and traditions had dictated the mechanics of the way business had been done. In the incident described by Kelly, not only was the "lady of respectability" forced to the back of the shop, but she was further subjected to the unsolicited familiarity of a person to whom she had never been introduced.[34] The circumstances of this affront were in themselves even more galling. Kelly was trying to show that the lady in question was a woman whose class background gave her the expertize and taste necessary to evaluate the goods in question.[35] However, the fact remained that she was publically forced to say that

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32. Kelly, op cit., Vol. I, pp. 47-48.

33. Aspinall, op cit., pp. 9-11.

34. Anon, Guide to English Etiquette with the Rules of Polite Society, for Ladies and Gentlemen in all the Relations of Life, etc. etc. With the Mode of Introduction at Court, C. Mitchell, London, 1844, p. 66. "Always bow to a lady of your acquaintance in the street, and leave it to her to answer it or not as she thinks proper ... if she does not notice or recognize you, you pass on - and no harm is done."

35. E.E. Perkins, The Lady's Shopping Manual and Mercery Album, T. Hurst, London, 1834. The introduction of this work makes it quite clear that it is addressed to the gentry class pp. iv-v. "From this Manual, a lady may ascertain precisely what descriptions of goods are manufactured, and with confidence order a shopkeeper to procure what he may not happen to possess; an order which of course he will not risk the loss of her custom by disregarding. Heads of Families ... the Benevolent Patronesses of Charitable Institutions for clothing the poor, as well as the Parochial Authorities, will find in this volume sufficent instructions to guard them alike against miscalculations on their own parts - and imposition ... on the part of others." In the England in which this manual was published, it was inconceivable that a member of the poorer classes, debarred from access to it in most cases anyway, through illiteracy, should have had any requirement for the technical information it contained. The people of the poorer classes were the recipients of activities made from above to clothe them; they could not be active selectors of their own wardrobes. Thus Mrs Clacy was quite right to suppose that in general a member of the working class would be ignorant of the value and type of consumer luxuries available to clothe him or herself.

they were too expensive. In the prevailing social climate such a public admission, whether or not it was made on the basis of expert knowledge of the fabric, was one which would have cost the lady dearly. That the public on that occasion was composed of a social class she would normally shun - and before whom she would still less relish having to mention openly the price of an article - represented a shocking departure from the shopping traditions she would have known in England. In this context, being publically pressed to accept such a gift under such circumstances would have been the ultimate affront.

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It would not be sufficient for the purposes of this argument to detail some of the traditions of the British drapery trade as they differed from colonial practice without attempting a brief explanation of the social environment in England which gave rise to those traditions. From the Middle Ages onwards, the silk mercers, lacemen and drapers were among the wealthiest and most powerful tradesmen. As a body, the drapers had evolved by the nineteenth century into an intensely conservative group, deeply conscious of the need to appear respectable and very proud of their traditional links with the Court, the aristocracy and the leaders of English society. This is not to say that the retail drapery trade lacked dynamism or the resources to innovate creatively in business affairs. Indeed, in this respect, the trade had been noted as a trend-setter since the seventeenth century reflecting a long-established consumer interest in clothing, and by the nineteenth century, was demonstrably leading that part of the business world devoted to consumerism. However, the important factor about these innovations which has not been discussed by historians is that only those new business methods were adopted which could not in any way be perceived as offensive to upper class interests.

In his work George Williams and the YMCA, Binfield remarked that it was "perhaps because the dividing line between the acceptable and the improper was so

slight that the trade was so insistent on good order".[36] However, the English retail drapers' passion for respectability can also be seen to be directly linked to its drive to achieve social acceptance (as distinct from economic patronage) at the highest possible level of society.[37] As a force, this operated on the smallest drapery concern in a country town as much as on the wealthiest city establishments with annual turnovers of hundreds of thousands of pounds. The reasons for this drive for social recognition were twofold and inherently contradictory. The simplest explanation was that English drapers at all levels were conscious that they made their living by catering to the requirements of a certain class of people which was definitely exclusive of the working class poor. Being well aware of the snobberies and class distinctions practised by their clientele, drapers sought to create an environment which by pandering to their patrons' social pretensions, would ensure their continued custom. This made very good business sense in an economy in which only the upper and some sections of the middle classes had a disposable income. Thus the drapers were obsessed with gentility as a direct reflection of the social attitudes of the classes with which they sought to do business. This obsession led them to adopt particular policies with regard to layout of their shops, comportment of their assistants, advertising and payment for their goods, and many other aspects of running their businesses, even to the extent of the "proper" sources for borrowing money and the "honourable" terms by which this should be done.

The second reason for this striving for gentility or even social recognition was the ambivalent attitude towards wealth within the ranks of English society. The novels of Austen and Thackeray are full of examples of young gentlewomen whose families agonized over an alliance "with trade". The very wealth of the English drapers, earned as it was through trade, was at once the attractive and repellant factor inhibiting

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36. C. Binfield, George Williams and the Y.M.C.A. A Study in Victorian Social Attitudes, Heinemann, London, 1973, p. 69.

37. What a boon was provided to the drapery world in the shape of Royal Appointments by Queen Victoria's stupendous family.

their easy acknowlegement by Society. One way individual drapers attempted to solve the problem was by retiring early from their businesses and leaving them in the hands of assistants while appearing to lead a life of gentlemanly leisure. The fact remained that throughout the nineteenth century, trade connections were never quite accepted by the higher echelons of English Society. There was a hierarchy of preferred business dealings, the wholesale trade with its merchant prince image being definitely superior to the retail trade in which sooner or later the distasteful subject of money on a small scale was going to have to arise. These attitudes had a profound impact on the business world in England and influenced the way the retail drapery trade responded to the innovations which arose within the trade. The range of response varied between those who held to their traditional sense of perceived social respectability and responsibility as a means of effacing the origins of their money, and those who gradually came to admit that they were interested in making money as an exercise in itself. Some of these attitudes were imported to the Australian colonies and were still in evidence there in the 1870s, but enough has been said already about the economic and social forces operating both in early Sydney and in Melbourne to assert that the colonial environment made it very difficult for these English traditions and values to retain much validity in the colonial drapery world.

It is not easy to obtain evidence concerning the traditions and values of the nineteenth century English retail drapery scene which had conditioned the shopping habits of people like Kelly, Clacy, Rudston Read, Aspinall, Massary and other observers of the colony. Relatively few drapers wrote accounts of their experiences, or if they did they chose to write about a wide range of interests from fire fighting to gold mining rather than to set down their views on the trade. Perhaps this was a reflection of their perception of public taste and interest. This means that the work of William Ablett is almost unique in offering insights into the world of the retail draper in England. His Reminiscences were published in 1876 and embody all the values and conflicts described above. He was apprenticed as a very young boy and had over sixty years of experience in the trade. Moreover, he had a strongly-developed sense of historical

perspective which added much to the nature and depth of his insights. In his person he reflected the paradoxical situation of the high-class draper. His dress was always immaculate and as a young man he used to change his toilette in the late afternoon, donning the most expensive and highly-fashionable tailor-made costumes for his walks in the Kensington Gardens. Full of pride in the fit of his coat and the gleam on his top boots, he used to raise his hat to customers who shopped in the high-class retail drapery establishment in which he served, "but, of course, I am sensible now that I ought to have been rebuked for my impertinence".[38] The unsuitable comportment of colonial drapery assistants was extemporized upon at length by several observers of the Melbourne scene from the 1850s to the 1870s. These were people who would have passed by young Ablett in Kensington Gardens, ignoring him frostily. Dress as they might, amass money as they did, adopt extravagant households and lifestyles[39] - however much they tried to obliterate their origins, the social niceties of English society would occasionally focus an unwelcome scrutiny on the origins of their money and kept its pinnacles forever out of reach of even the wealthiest drapers and silk mercers. This was not to be the case in the colonies.

There was thus, in England, a conflict between the exercise of technical expertize in the trade with the view to maximising profits (and after all, drapers were in business to make money, however much they tried to disguise this sordid truth) and the social considerations that had to be heeded so as not to alienate middle and/or upper class custom. Ablett showed a particular flair for window-dressing, itself a controversial matter within the trade as the name and reputation of the business house was considered to be sufficient recommendation, accompanied by the presentation of

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38. Ablett, op cit., pp. 88-89.

39. J. Bray, All About Dress. Being the Story of the Dress and Textile Trades, T. Werner-Laurie, London, 1913, p. 108. "Buyers are mostly 'big pots', often very big pots, bigger pots than their employers.... I remember hearing the expression of surprise of someone who called upon one of Cook's buyers, and was received by a valet in breeches and stockings. He thought he had tumbled at the door of a duke."

a very few discreetly arrayed articles (unpriced, of course)[40] in the widows of its premises. The deliberate arrangement of the windows with a view to attracting patronage was still regarded as controversial - and by many drapers, undesirable - in the 1860s in England. This was not the case in the colonies as will be discussed further below in Chapters 5 and 6. Ablett himself used to open out men's silk handkerchiefs in the bottom of the window of a shop he managed for some years in Bristol. One of the arguments against displaying goods in the window was that they might become soiled. That drapers thought this way is indicative - among others things - of a higher perceived unit-value of articles such that increased turnover was not as yet seen as sufficient justification for the damage of goods. Ablett never mounted such a display

> without attracting some sailors into the shop, who would often buy several [of the handkerchiefs]. We did not cater for the sailor kind of trade, but we were willing enough to serve them when they came in. (my emphasis) 41

In terms of social status at the time, sailors were only a hairbreadth away from convicts and there would have been plenty of shops whose proprietors would have been most unwilling to serve such clients. There were ways in which floor-walkers and shop-owners could secure their premises inviolate from the taint of lower class custom. Moreover, the comments of people like Kelly, Clacy, Aspinall and others in the colonial environment, make it clear that the middle and upper classes in England expected the retailers to thus preserve them from the presence of the lower orders.

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40. The Draper and Clothier, Vol. III, July, 1859, p. 89. In an article on price ticketing the editor felt constrained to make the following remark on what was then a big issue "... in certain localities, including places where much credit and long credit and the 'knocking down' system prevail, it is wise not to adopt the practice of ticketing ... in other localities the opposite course is the wisest. In neither case ... is there any departure from mercantile honour and integrity" (my emphasis). The editor was describing a lower and a higher class style of business, associating ticketing with the former and not the latter. This meant that a stigma continued to be attached to the practice of ticketing, which indicated that there was in fact a perceived "departure from mercantile honour and integrity". Hence a spate of letters to the editor of The Draper and Clothier on the subject of misunderstandings arising from this controversial practice, e.g. Vol. VII, November 1859, pp. 201, 203 and 210-212. Note Ablett's typically sensitive compromise position on the issue, Ablett, op cit., p. 211.

41. Ablett, op cit., p. 162. For more details about Ablett's perceptions of the novelty of window dressing, see pp. 142-144.

While Ablett was not averse to doing business with the respectable lower class custom comprised of farmers' wives and servant girls when he was managing a shop for someone else,[42] he had definite ambitions to secure a middle class trade when he opened a shop on his own account. The deceptions he practised to this end were the subject of lengthy description and considerable self-congratulation on his part.[43]

A final example of the way in which Ablett responded to the challenges of the drapery business in such a way as to defy received traditions and social attitudes, was evidenced by his particular interest in building up a wholesale trade from his retailing establishment with distributors operating on a smaller scale than himself. In Ablett's case it seems clear that he was interested in doing this to make more money, rather than to try to emulate the merchant prince image. As he was never the manager of very large drapery businesses, his wholesale ambitions meant that inevitably he would have to confront the issue of doing business with hawkers. This issue was a controversial one in the trade, not only because hawkers were seen by small shopkeepers as potential rivals. More importantly, the drapery trade itself was divided by the twin pressures of being seen to be doing business with a respectable clientele as far removed from the working class as possible (the Mr Kellys, Mrs Clacys and Mrs Aspinalls of England expected this), and the need to make money. Like all drapers in England at this time, Ablett was aware of these contradictory elements in doing business and he resolved the problem of the need to make money versus the need to fulfil social expectations regarding his status as a draper - in his own eyes, amongst his fellow drapers and in the eyes of his customers. On this issue of supplying hawkers from his retail premises, then, his personal flair for pursuing all profitable business avenues inclined him to try to build up a wholesale trade even with such a prohibitively disreputable clientele, while his acute sense of his position as a genteel

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42. Ablett, op cit., p. 102.

43. Ablett, op cit., pp. 201-202. Ablett did not have enough capital to stock his shop fully, so he hit upon the idea of making dummy rolls of material out of wood, painting them and putting them on the very highest shelves in the shop to keep up suitably grandiose appearances.

and highly respected draper precluded even considering the possibility. It is difficult to over-emphasize the degree of corporate scorn heaped on those drapers who supplied the low class trade. In a business environment in which everyone's dealings, character, turnover and beliefs were known to everyone else sooner or later, this corporate shrinking from any degree of involvement in trade with the lower class was a real force in the drapery world.

> Many of our new customers were of a ragged and dirty appearance, the shop, when several of this class of person were in it, presented the appearance of one where the very lowest trade was carried on ... when a favourite pattern [of tatting] which took with their customers [many of the hawkers were women] was getting low ... there would be at times no small amount of squabbling and quarrelling at the counter, so I laid down the rule that all this kind of trade was to be done before eleven o'clock in the morning ... 44

Class as a recognized factor in determining business methods and stock was regarded as an important consideration when buying a drapery concern in England even into the twentieth century.

> If [an assistant] has gained his experience in a high-class trade he would be ill-advised to take a shop amongst the dwellings of working class people. 45

Ablett was a very brave businessman indeed; it was not only clients of the Kelly, Clacy, Aspinall or Twopeny ilk he was risking, he was also hazarding his reputation in the business world of suppliers, travellers, bankers and fellow drapers which could corporately make or break a business depending on its apparent respectability. Respectability began increasingly in the nineteenth century to mean not how much money a draper owed his creditors, but who he actually dealt with, which wholesale house he called on and which carriages stopped outside his shop.[46]

Ablett's choice inclined him to follow his business sense rather than heed the socially inhibiting consequences of so doing. However, being aware of these, he had to orchestrate his disparate sets of clientele such that one should not encounter the other.

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44. Ablett, op cit., p. 147.

45. R. Beynon, Drapery and Drapers Accounts, Pitman's Traders Handbooks, Pitman and Sons Ltd, London, 1911, p. 160.

46. Ablett, op cit., pp. 190-191, "... everyone has his own peculiar kind of connection [e.g. support by co-religionists].... The field was narrower, and not so open as it is now, and personal character went a much longer way than in the present age".

The example of the Collins Street draper showed that in the 1850s in Melbourne, this was not possible. For Ablett, the hawkers constituted

> the foundation of a small wholesale trade that soon swelled the amount of our weekly takings very considerably ... 47

and his deliberate break with tradition in choosing to permit business initiatives with such infra dig associates put him with a group of English drapers which was just beginning to conceive of breaking social and business traditions and taboos in the interests of doing further business. He and many other drapers were aware and conscious of the kinds of choices they were making in these contexts. In the colonies, the large numbers of lower class people with money in hand standing right in front of the counter made such choices almost academic. The colonial customers bore themselves as though they had the right to be there, they were there - however they might be dressed - and they visibly had the money to buy whatever they wanted. The drapers of Collins Street were presented with a fait accompli as were their middle class customers. Since there were no other more exclusive shops to retreat to, if the middle class wanted to taste the delights of the colonial retail drapery trade - and delights there were - they had to risk encountering the lower orders.

Back in England, Ablett was operating in a far less fluid economic and social environment in which people's patterns of behaviour were far more predictable. His case is interesting because it provides evidence of the existence of businessmen who began to consider it financially worthwhile to predict the patterns of behaviour of any other but the middle and upper classes. Ablett had sufficient knowledge of the constraints and business practices of his hawker associates to realize that his solution of having them in the shop before eleven in the morning, that is, before his middle class customers had completed their morning toilette, was inadequate. Many of the hawkers were from the country and could not reach his shop on foot in time to comply with this restriction. His final solution to the problem was to give a back room to this branch of his trade and make the customers go to it by a separate entrance. By such means were

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47. Ablett, op cit., p. 146.

the working classes getting back-door access to the temples of consumerism thrown up by the Industrial Revolution in England. Ablett contrived all this while managing a shop as a salaried employee because he had an outstanding flair for the drapery business which he exercised despite his own snobberies as a private individual. When he travelled to Wales with another employer, a Mr Reece, for example, Reece

> somewhat sarcastically remarked upon my acting the gentleman for I would have nothing whatever to do with the details of his project, which literally assumed the form of a hawking method of trade ... 48

There was a fine but logical distinction in Ablett's mind between being associated with a purely hawking enterprise and building up a wholesale trade - based largely on the custom of hawkers - from his employer's respectable retailing establishment.

Were there no poor in the colonies then? Were there no hawkers? The answers are that there certainly were poor people and there were hawkers who catered for their needs but this poverty was in terms of absolute comparison with England on a very much smaller scale, and relative to the population of the colonies, suffered by fewer people. In the colonies the controversy surrounding the hawkers as a group largely gave way to a matter-of-fact acceptance of their contribution to the retail trade so necessary in a country with such a widely scattered population. In England they were forever tainted by their links with the rural and urban poor, many of whom continued to testify gratefully to the quality of the goods in the hawkers' packs into the 1880s.

> Few of the hamlet women could afford to test the quality of his [the packman's] piece goods, cottons or tapes, or a paper of pins, were their usual purchases; but his dress-lengths and other fabrics were of excellent quality and wore much longer than anyone could wish anything to wear in these days of rapidly changing fashion. 49

In the colonies, this was no longer a relevant connection and wealthy squatters' wives bought alike from the hawkers as did the women on struggling selections. The single most obvious external badge of poverty viewed en masse was clothing. While there are

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48. Ablett, op cit., p. 129.

49. F. Thompson, op cit., p. 128.

descriptions of the misery in the early immigrant camps by the Yarra and later of "round-cheeked", "bright-eyed" children running around the streets of Melbourne barefoot,[50] the contemporary observations unanimously stressed large crowds of floridly-dressed, well-behaved people at picnics, in the gardens, at the races, on the beaches.[51] These were the people whose social expectations in England at the time would never have risen to such delights. In the colonies, they had nice clothes to wear and some leisure time in which to show them off. By the time people were dying of overwork and starvation in the big cities of England, they were too weak to appear on the streets. Their presence was little publicized until the advent of journalist Henry Mayhew. If evidence is required for the desperate degradation of the English working class for want of clothing, it will be found easily accessible, ad infinitum scattered throughout Mayhew's writings. It is also to be found in stark wretched detail in the evidence of all Commissions on the Poor Laws.

> In answer to the question whether any [needlewoman] had other clothes than what they appeared in, the very idea of a change of garments appeared to excite a smile. One and all declared they had not, and most asserted that even those they wore were not their own. One said, 'This bonnet belongs to another woman'; another said, 'I have no frock, because I had to leave it in pawn for six pence'; [she would probably have been wearing just a shawl and a petticoat on that English winter's night] ... still another added, 'I had to take the petticoat off my child, for six pence to get victuals last Saturday morning'. 52

Mayhew's writings also gave evidence that the lengths the poor had to go to to obtain clothing were painful to their personal dignity - the daily reminder of their poverty in having to wear dirty, miserably patched and darned garments was perceived by them as dehumanising as well as a contributing factor to illness in winter.

> Fourpence I gave for the very coat I've got on from a gentleman's servant, and the other things has been gave [sic] to me by asking, which is very painful. 53

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50. J.H. Kerr, Glimpses of Life in Victoria by a Resident, Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1872, p. 370.

51. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, pp. 91 and 217; Massary, op cit., pp. 54, 71-72, 104 and 135; Aspinall, op cit., pp. 92-93; Ballantyne, op cit., p. 156; Twopeny, op cit., pp. 18 and 74-81; Kerr, op cit., p. 395.

52. Humphreys, op cit., p. 100, letter to Morning Chronicle, 13 November 1849.

53. Humphreys, op cit., p. 53, letter to Morning Chronicle, 9 November 1849.

> 'Look at me', cried [a man in a low lodging house] standing up. The man was literally a mass of rags and filth. His tattered clothes and shirt were black and shiny as a sailor's dreadnought with grease and dirt. "Look at me; who'd give me a day's work in the state I am?" 54

> I haven't no shawl to my back ... I only wish I could get a shawl, to keep the cold off me when I takes my work home - that's all ... [an old woman employed as sweated labour to make convict clothing]. 55

In Mayhew's England, the poor were suspicious of shops and were made to feel unwelcome in them by two simple expedients. The first was the absence of marked prices on any article. This reflected the English draper's conscious striving to efface the origins of his wealth. If money was not discussed openly, one could almost wash one's hands of that sordid but vital component in the transaction. To this day, people enquire about the cost of an article, prefacing it with, "Do you mind if I ask you how much you paid for it?"; the taboo on direct reference to price has proven very strong and it was the poor who suffered by this. To the rich, this presented no problem at all. They came, selected what they wanted and were handed back to their carriages with the goods to be wrapped and follow them at their convenience and the account to follow even more discreetly at some unspoken future date. In 1911 Richard Beynon, whose work on the trade was a classic and who typified the pride in his calling of a draper with upwardly mobile social aspirations, wrote wistfully

> Doing business with the highest people in the land, mostly for long credit and large profits in proportion, these shops made no window show whatever ... Those were the days when customers ... dealt with particular tradesmen for certain articles, and unless something very unusual caused them to remove their account, went on dealing with them for years in succession. The customer had such implicit confidence in the tradesman that it was no unusual thing for a large parcel of expensive goods to be bought and the price never once mentioned in the whole transaction. 56

For the lower middle class, the absence of price tags could be turned into humiliation and used to intimidate or it could be tactfully smoothed away, depending on the

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54. Humphreys, op cit., p. 7, letter to Morning Chronicle, 30 October 1849.

55. Humphreys, op cit., p. 57, letter to Morning Chronicle, 9 November 1849.

56. Beynon, op cit., p. 5.

discretion of the proprietor, the floor-walker and the assistant.[57] Customers were known fairly intimately by the drapers who made their policy clear to the floor-walker and the assistants. To the working class, the whole air of mystique and taboo enshrouding what was for them the vital consideration of cost, acted quite simply as a deterrent. Even when it became common to ticket goods in the windows, many of the working poor in England were still debarred from participation in the consumer stakes as run by the drapers, because of their illiteracy. The stigma within the trade attached to the practice of ticketing was still in evidence in the attitudes of leading English drapers and writers like Beynon into the twentieth century. Beynon quoted Dickens when writing of

> some reputable houses of good standing [which] have descended to the practices of the 'dirty-looking ticketed linendraper's shop, where every description of goods are sold at fifty per cent under cost price'. 58

The second way in which the poor in England were made to feel uncomfortable in shops, was the physical luxury with which they were appointed and the social extravagance of the mannered ritual with which customers were accommodated. Commenting in 1851, Charles Knight wrote

> To whatever part of London we direct our steps, we shall find that the drapers shops are the handsomest. 59

By the mid-nineteenth century, drapers' shops had broad glass fronts, were brilliantly lit at night and were luxuriously appointed inside, with carpeting, good lighting and chairs for customers to sit at counters while examining goods. Such an environment

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57. In this context, there is an interesting example of a shopkeeper's prattle aimed at soothing, flattering and generally furthering business in the Ladies Magazine of April 1772. (This is held in the State Library of South Australia.) Examples of the opposite case are more difficult to find except in general comments about how shop assistants gave themselves airs. See Davis, op cit., p. 196 who described the "high premium apprentices whose condescending airs were alleged to be insufferable to any customer without a title". Drapers themselves were unlikely to have felt that they could own directly to snubbing the poor.

58. Beynon, op cit., p. 150.

59. Quoted in A. Adburgham, Shops and Shopping 1800-1914. Where and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought her Clothes, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1965, p. 96. The title of this work indicates the extent to which the social preoccupations of the upper classes in the consumer world of clothing have influenced research in the field. It is noteworthy that few academic historians have given more than passing attention to the world of swag shops, slop clothing, pawn shops and second-hand clothing dealers as revelatory of the standard of living of the poorer classes in nineteenth century England.



"The Toy Shop", Francis Donkin Bedford (1864-1954)[60]

was not likely to set at ease the inhabitants of attics, tenements, basements and dingey hovels. Further, it was peopled by assistants who were experts at hitting the right tone of obsequiousness or superciliousness depending on their perception of the customers before them. In a biography of Gordon Selfridge, Pound remarked that when Selfridge visited London in the 1890s

> He was amused by the ridiculous deference of the shopkeepers [Selfridge wrote that] 'The stores and larger shops tried to reproduce the subdued and disciplined atmosphere of the gentleman's mansion .... It was not part of the function of the store to create a demand. That would be presumptuous, entirely out of harmony with the dignity of the house'. 61

There has been sufficient discussion already of the economic and social environment of the colonies to assert that stores and shops which hoped to create this kind of image were a minority with little real comparable social or trade influence. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Even into the twentieth century in England, conservative writers on the drapery trade, like Beynon, were finding it a matter of regret that

> Exclusive houses too high class to ticket their goods, or expose them [in windows] for sale are getting fewer every year, and instead of the 'what d'ye' lack, what d'ye' lack' [he is referring, of course, to that horrific set of vendors, the street criers or hawkers] of a couple of centuries ago, there is even the more seductive call of a price ticket on almost every article that is exhibited. 62

In the drapery world Beynon knew, every customer was greeted at the door by the floor-walker who in many smaller establishments was the proprietor himself. The higher class the establishment, the more likely the customer would be known to the floor-walker by name. As people dealt with particular drapers even in the middle and

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60. This painting could have been executed expressly to illustrate Selfridge's observations. The gentleman depicted would have been one of those customers beloved of Benyon (note 59 above) for whom price was not a concern. The expression on the shop assistant's face has been nicely caught at something between suitable deference and benign interest in the "dear children's" delight with the toys.

61. Quoted in Adburgham, Shops and Shopping, p. 238.

62. Beynon, op cit., p. 5.

lower class trades because of their religion or politics, the lower branches of the trade also aspired to know their customers by name.[63] The floor-walker would enquire the requirements of the customer and conduct her to a seat at the counter where these could be met.[64] He would then personally introduce her to the assistant with an explanation of her needs. The assistant had the responsibility of eliciting whether Madam had any further needs, in which case goods from other departments would be brought to her for her examination. Conversely, if the assistant was unable to oblige, he was expected to call the floor-walker, as to fail to effect a sale was seen as a serious breach on the part of the assistant.[65] Adburgham pointed out that such a system of service deprived the customer of the freedoms of comparison and selection but it is also noteworthy that the system was based on the assumption that the customer wanted something, had the money/credit to pay for it, and that all reasonable steps should be taken to gratify her needs. If customers asked for articles not in stock, assistants were dispatched if possible then and there to obtain the articles. A study of the rules relating to customer service in any middle to large-sized drapery store (there were sometimes as many as fifty or sixty) makes it clear that the whole ritual of shopping was centred on pleasing the customer.[66]

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63. Bray, op cit., p. 153, "In medium and low class houses, the dealings are with the mass, the greater part of whom having no name and no pretension to be known, are not punctilious about goods, and only want to be served on the most advantageous conditions. But in high-class houses, which are patronized by those who have a name and expect to be known, they must be known to the assistants". Bray was not alone among writers in the drapery trade to touch on aspects of class relations and their bearing on ways of doing business.

64. Adburgham, Shops and Shopping, p. 7, wrote of the "well-dressed Englishwoman" and therefore of the upper classes, saying that "No lady, of course, shopped after dark, nor did she shop in daylight except accompanied by her maid, her footman, or a page". The nineteenth century saw a transition from the male to the female as the major customer of drapery shops. The pattern noted in early New South Wales of the men in households of all social classes being predominantly responsible for all kinds of shopping, had altered by the second half of the nineteenth century.

65. To fail to effect a sale or, in draper's slang, "to take a swop", was regarded as one of the most serious faults in an assistant and reams of advice were written to help drapers' assistants avoid such a disgrace.

66. Beynon, op cit., pp. 186-187.

The hidden aspect of such a system of service was the compulsion on the customer to buy. This was a well-known aspect of the shopping ritual which acted as a complete deterrent to those with no money or credit. Flora Thompson gives a good picture of the British drapery world with its business methods geared to limiting the clientele it perceived as worthy, socially as much as economically, of sharing the delicate rituals and delightful fruits of consumerism even in the limited economic environment of a small country town.

> The length of raised sidewalk before the temptingly dressed windows of the stores [a low class drapery and therefore by the 1880's one which displayed some goods in the window] was the favourite afternoon promenade of the women .... There The Rage or The Latest, so ticketed, might be seen free of charge, and the purchase of a reel of cotton or a paper of pins gave the right of entry to a further display of fashions. 67

Ablett gives evidence that this system of "customer service" was one which acted against the interests of the less well-educated.

> Customers were often bullied into buying goods they did not want. They were reasoned with in a most forceful manner ... Many a half-frightened girl have I seen go out of the shop, her purchase in her hands, the tears welling up into her eyes, shaking her head, and saying 'I am sure I shall never like it'; some shawl or dress having been forced upon her contrary to her taste or judgement. 68

For members of the upper classes accustomed to being waited on by large establishments of domestic servants, this kind of service in shops was no more or less than what they expected. Furthermore, the colonial experience showed that they expected to enjoy these services in the comfortable anonymity laid down by the etiquette of their own class. Similarly, for those more confident members of the middle classes well in control of their purse strings and their "hs", it presented no problem at all and was even rather gratifying than otherwise. But for the shabby genteel and the working class, it was intimidating in the extreme. The very layout of the shops with most of the goods put away in drawers or on shelves, left the initiative with the assistant. A hesitant customer, perhaps not quite so well-dressed, who could not quite

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67. F. Thompson, op cit., p. 458.

68. Ablett, op cit., pp. 8-9.

work up the courage to ask for something could either be offered assistance more or less superciliously or dismissed regretfully with an "I am so sorry Madam, but we have none in stock at present". It was not until the twentieth century that drapers' assistants began to be told "Don't neglect a customer who happens to be poorly dressed". The very fact that such an instruction had to be given explicitly at the head of the "Don'ts" to salesmen is a good indication of what had hitherto been the fate of those customers who "happened" to be poorly dressed.

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The corporate social experience of being publically humiliated and demeaned because of their physical appearance was not on the whole a part of working class experience at this time in the colonies. The fact that men in the colonies tended to under-dress if they really were gentlemen or to have comfortable accounts at their banks despite their coarse appearance, was an attack from both ends on what had hitherto been a safely assumed connection, that is between physical appearance and status. Certainly, individuals would have been aware of tongue-in-cheek rudeness directed at their taste or their presumption but such comments as Kelly's about the publican's wife who sat in her carriage "like a half-filled beer can"[69] were a lot easier to bear when one was acutally sitting in one's own carriage rather than pushing aching feet to run out of the way of someone else's carriage wheels at the end of a fifteen-hour-day's work. The rancour in Kelly's tone when he was writing about diggers' wives can only be accounted for by seeing in him someone whose whole social perspective of right and wrong, the whole set of traditions which governed his social behaviour was daily being affronted in the colonies most visibly through the dressing and shopping habits of the lower orders. It was perhaps almost more than he could stomach to actually live in the same suburban area as such people. What historians have not

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69. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, p. 122.

focused on, however, is that almost all the accounts of drinking - or any other social - habits prevalent in the colony are those written by people like Kelly, and as such necessarily offer a partial view.

Kelly lived down the road from a digger and his wife. He described the wife's dress when she did some light washing, her accessories, the way she moved, with such unnecessary scorn, that it seems his notions of social order and propriety had deprived him of all sense of humour, generosity or humanity. He was not laughing with the woman but at her and he was laughing to hide the bitterness of knowing that her husband could afford to give her things which he and many of his class were unable to offer their wives in this benighted colony. There are many stories of shop behaviour in which it is obvious that the digger and his wife got the twofold pleasure of being able to afford to buy something beyond the reach of middle class clerks and to be seen to be doing it. To return to Kelly, not only did he describe the digger's wife's toilette while doing her washing "for a little relaxation" but he further ascribed to her his own middle class obsession with the need to keep up public appearances, which in this case was being grossly flouted or inverted or somehow, perhaps, even invalidated.

> [she was] thus arrayed, I presume, to show her neighbours that she did not wash for filthy lucre or contemptible economics, [many a colonel's daughter had to do this in the bewildering new social order prevailing in Melbourne[70]] but only as a colonial substitute for crochet work. [71]

Here, then, is the very bitterest mouthful of aloes. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century, middle class and upper middle class ladies were turning to painting, music, crochet work as, thus occupied, they provided the ultimate statement of their husband's wealth; he could afford to keep these pretty, graceful creatures idle. In the colonies rich men's wives did not need to work but some of them were making no attempt to keep up a public appearance of gentility. This was a powerful and unexpected statement of scorn for middle class values.

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70. Aspinall, op cit., pp. 220-221, gives an example of a good-hearted Irish servant and her friends who gave plain sewing work to the destitute daughters of an Army Officer.

71. Kelly, op cit., Vol. I, p. 66.

In this chapter, then, we have seen that from the earliest days of the colony, working and lower middle class people began to buy fine clothes for themselves. In so doing, they stimulated these social innovations. Firstly, they caused resentment among those who had in England considered themselves to be higher on the social and material scale. Secondly, they caused confusion because continued practice of the consumer stakes allowed them to develop a distinctive taste which could no longer simply be derided as bad; or because they chose to ignore the conventions relating material wealth to physical appearance. Thirdly, even after the gold rush, high wages, lower taxes, cheaper foods and other factors improving the standard of living for the working class in the colonies, meant that these people continued to have a disposable income which they went on spending on clothing. Finally and most importantly, over twenty years, their tastes and habits began to influence the traditional ways of doing business in the retail drapery trade as the English saw it. While necessarily brief, the discussion of particular aspects of the English retail drapery trade in this chapter made it clear that the trade there had evolved to cater for the upper classes and therefore its workings were adapted to the requirements of those classes and were not such as to make the lower classes feel welcome in drapery shops. The bulk of evidence concerning middle class reaction to increased working class purchasing power in and around Melbourne is hostile and needs to be considered carefully.

There remains one writer whose observations deserve attention as indicative of her outstanding humanity and tolerance. Isabel Massary's intelligent observations on the colony are unique and the more worthwhile for being the least tainted by her own English-formed prejudices and convictions. The best illustration of Massary's reasoned social flexibility and intelligence in adapting to and enjoying the different social life of the colony was in the description she gave of a minister's wife and her own reaction to the woman. This minister's wife was

> the very personification of discontent and vanity... [she spoke of] the indifference of her husband to her 'former position', and the horrid, vulgar society with which she was forced to associate. The first months of her married life had been passed in various stations with 'farmers' and their 'vulgar' wives, whom she was compelled every moment of the day to make feel that they must not treat her as an equal ... [Massary told

> her that if] she gave herself absurd airs, and talked of her 'family', and 'good society', she could only expect to meet with contempt. 72

Indeed, reading Massary's accounts of the shops, the people, the countryside, the fun to be had, it is with an effort that one realizes that these are the identical aspects of the colony treated so belittlingly by other writers. In comparison with the majority who took care to emphasize the rough, the dirty, the uncouth and the uncivilized, here is Massary who has just been invited to tea in a tent on the Castlemaine diggings, "The ladies ... were well-dressed, some even elegantly, in the newest fashions".[73] She went on to praise the excellence of the food and decor and the whole tone of her writing was remarkable for the absence of condescention so apparent in the other writers.

It is in her account of a digger and an Irish girl choosing a wedding dress that we are really indebted to Massary's personal kindness and tolerance for allowing us a glimpse of the feelings of the people on that occasion. All other similar accounts emphasized with such indignation, the want of taste and the ignorance of the customers in question, that the only impression left of them as people is one of their coarse folly in indulging in the orgies of the nouveaux riches. Massary's perceptions, being so much finer and more humane, we learn far more about the nameless Irish girl and her swain:

> At first she seemed dazzled with the finery displayed before her; but, with a woman's instinct, she caught the hints which the clever and experienced shopman endeavoured gently to insinuate, [note that the tradesman is not being portrayed as eager to make the most money possible out of working class ignorance and inexperience] and, seemingly self-possessed, allowed herself to be guided in her choice as to what would be most advisable. Silk stockings, satin shoes, and undergarments were soon disposed of; but the selection of bonnet, dress, and shawl was most perplexing ... all this I saw with a sigh for evidently my beauty would soon be converted into a vulgar, ordinary looking girl, as she could not even put on her finery properly. Once in her embarass de richesses, she turned to me, and said, 'Maybe your honour would tell me which is the prettiest'. I advised quieter colours. 'Ay, sure, they'd be more to my likin' too,' she replied, 'but its him as wants me to be grand, and sure he pays for it.' (author's emphasis) 74

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72. Massary, op cit., pp. 65-68.

73. op cit., pp. 18-19.

74. op cit., pp. 36-37.

Certainly, Massary does admit fear that the girl "would soon be converted into a vulgar ordinary looking girl", but she is in quite a different league from other observers in admitting also that the girl was lovely and implying regret that she might become vulgar. The alarming truth about Massary's observation that "she could not even put on her finery properly" is that dress in the nineteenth century even a step away from the poverty line was an intricate affair. The very poorest people wore shifts, hose and a shawl. Above this mean foundation, however, stretched the most elaborate and delightful details, acquaintance with which only came by money - unless one was a lady's maid who had to help my lady with her toilette. Without the necessary income then, these delights remained inaccessible mysteries, ignorance of which by no means implied coarseness or stupidity, just poverty. There may have been something about Isabel Massary which did not absolutely forbid intercourse with strangers in a shop or the Irish girl may have been unusually forward in addressing her "betters". Happily for us, not only did the girl ask advice, but her gambit was not snubbed, so we are left with the very significant insight into working class taste at the time - "Ay, sure, they'd be more to my likin' too [the quiet pastel shades] but its him as wants me to be grand, and sure he pays for it". Perhaps working class women did not have so much to learn about what constituted "good" taste as their upper class contemporaries would have us believe.[75] In any case, the young Irish girls of the colony, it would seem, had as much - if not more - to learn about keeping their men in line than trimming their bonnets.

Massary provides us with ample evidence of the colonial public en masse. At Bendigo

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75. Aspinall, op cit., pp. 92-93. Note that she was struck by the "particularly nice-looking nursery maids" she saw in the Botanical Gardens, "who, dressed in clean muslin dresses, brown straw hats, and with parasols in hand, looked very superior to the ordinary class of servants; indeed I heard of several nursery maids who had not been born in servitude, but who had been reduced to it by the adverse circumstances of their parents who had emigrated to the colony". As Aspinall was generalizing about a large group of people, this romantically-acceptable explanation for their good taste may well have held good for one or two of them. More likely, the servant girls in question had good taste and had "been born in servitude", not after all an impossibility, evidence for which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

> After dinner, we went to the Theatre in Pall Mall; the tent was exceedingly well got up, the audience numerous and orderly, and the company far more talented than could be expected ... [she went to the races next day]. There were fewer disturbances, and less fighting than on similar occasions at home; a spirit of order seemed to pervade all classes; the grand stand was crowded with all the beauty and fashion of the surrounding country ... The next evening we went to a concert; the orchestra was as good a one as you could hear anywhere. But what astonished me most in all these public places was the order maintained apparently without effort; not a sound disturbed the performers or the audience while the pieces were being played. 76

Compare this with Kelly who wrote in 1855 that

> low comedy, broad farce, and tawdry vocalism was driven back to the diggings and with them also disappeared that obstreperous class of habitués whom I have noticed in my early chapter. 77

One wonders if Kelly and Massary were looking at the same group of people and if not, what Massary would have written about the people Kelly was describing. Time and again Massary describes a group of people who, albeit of lower class origins, are getting together and enjoying themselves. Her evidence is important. She is describing people whose consumer and recreational needs were a great deal more complex than those suggested by the historians who have emphasized disproportionally the drinking habits and culture of the early years of the colony. For example, she described a ball at the diggings to which - in the absence of nannies - babies were brought wrapped up in shawls and laid out on beds. "The greatest order prevailed and the whole affair was admirably got up."[78] Undoubtedly, that very night there were men and women getting drunk just around the corner, but too much emphasis has been laid on the activities of these latter rather than the thousands of orderly ball, theatre and race goers.

Given his own deeply-ingrained view of social hierarchy and the attendant proprieties of social life, Kelly felt indignant that the lower orders should be paid so well.

> I almost wished I could forget my antecedents and shoulder the hod, from which employment I could earn, without provoking lumbago, the very respectable income of 273.10s. per annum. 79

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76. Massary, op cit., pp. 54-55.

77. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, p. 127.

78. Massary, op cit., p. 71-72.

79. Kelly, op cit., p. 271.

Furthermore, he recognized the fact that this would upend the social order he had known. He therefore welcomed the arrival of Governor Hotham who as he saw it had been

> sent out ... to offer an excellent and salutary example to people afflicted with a form of partial insanity in their habits and expenditure from the effects of sudden and unexpected affluence. People, too, jumping from the modest level of mediocre station to the dazzling heights of princely magnificence without going through the intermediate social gradations indispensable in the older countries, were fit subjects to be experimented on for their own immediate good. 80

Yet he

> listened with pleasure to the ebullitions of astonishment from some fashionable friends of mine lately arrived from England, who were unable to contain their surprise at the distingué aspect and bearing of the crowded assemblage [at the opening of the Melbourne Exhibition Building] so far beyond their most sanguine imaginings. 81

and in 1855 wrote

> I have read of revolutions and reformations, and witnessed some radical social transformations in my own time, but I never imagined that so radical and sudden a change could be wrought in the aspect and bearing of a great community as that which was wrought under my own eyes in the city of Melbourne in the marvellously short space of one year and a half. 82

The importance of Massary as a witness was that she could and did tell writers like Kelly how this transformation occurred. The simple answer was that the seeds of the change were in the minds of the colonists all along. It was Massary who admitted from the first that she did not regret taking out her finest clothes so that she was thus able to take her place among the well-dressed colonials.[83] It was Massary who said - in complete contrast to Clacy - that

> ... the bonnet shops ... were very grand. As to the drapers we found the articles reasonable, and <u>suited to every taste</u> and purse, from the cheapest cotton fabrics to the richest materials London or Paris could supply. (my emphasis) 84

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80. Kelly, <u>op cit.</u>, Vol. II, p. 52.

81. <u>op cit.</u>, p. 91.

82. <u>op cit.</u>, p. 128.

83. Massary, <u>op cit.</u>, p. 2.

84. <u>op cit.</u>, p. 89.

It is Massary's evidence rather than Mrs Clacy's which should be taken as indicative of the crowds at the Botanic Gardens where the band attracted

> the beauty and fashion of Melbourne; and certainly the most wonderful toilettes were there exhibited. I do not think the ladies of New York could outdress some of the fashionables there, yet I must confess that generally very good taste was combined with richness of attire. (my emphasis) 85

It is Massary's fair description of the Victorian Rifles Ball, untainted by class condescension, that gives us a real picture of the colonists at the time.

> I have seldom seen a prettier ball ... many had evidently never been to a ball in their lives before, and the attempts at trying to dance ... were most amusing ... it was wonderful how orderly the strange mixed crowd was; there was nothing to find fault with but awkwardness and bad style of dress. Such a ball could not, I should think, have taken place in England, and have gone off so quietly. (my emphasis) 86

These were the people who were learning to enjoy the good things of life and at the same time building a magnificent city for themselves. Kelly need not have been so surprised about the transformation in Melbourne if he had been able to see in its people tendencies which were not parvenu, or loud, or above their station, simply the trying out of new consumer wings on the part of the working class with far little slight intended to the classes above them than had for hundreds of years been their accepted station to receive. It is appropriate that Massary should tell the last story. At the fetes at Toorak

> I was lost in admiration of the wonderful dresses ... exhibited. Never had the noonday sun shone on such a gorgeous display of rich brocades, silks, satins and India muslins! ... We heard it whispered that the bonnet worn by one of the ladies present had cost 30 gns. ... I think I see the face of my escort as we draw near [her], the lip turned up expressive of contempt at what he thought must be some outrageous display of gaudy finery, and then the gradual toning down ... into surprise and admiration when he saw only a very quiet, pretty bonnet of white lace and oriental pearls! 87

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85. op cit., p. 104.

86. op cit., p. 135.

87. op cit., p. 192.

CHAPTER 5

ADVERTISING IN THE COLONY OF VICTORIA

SYNOPSIS

Advertising as a controversial issue in British retail drapery circles. Window dressing and price ticketing also regarded in Britain as dubious innovations. These changes in business methods potentially beneficial to lower class customers. In the colonies, unusual economic and social conditions forced retailers to reconsider their business techniques. Rapid development of advertising in the colonies. Advertisements contain evidence of a consumer-base broadened to include the working class.

The establishment of the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria occurred at a time when advertising as we know it today was non-existent. In this chapter, I wish to describe the attitudes of traditional British retail drapers to advertising and then to analyze advertising in the colonial press in order to demonstrate the differences between British and colonial business practice. While other retail drapery practices differed in the colonies and will be touched on - attitudes to bankruptcy, hawkers, window dressing, price ticketing and the holding of sales - advertising is the most crucial. Advertising in the form and to the extent that it appeared in the Victorian press from the 1840s to the 1870s gives evidence of working class consumer interest and purchasing power. Furthermore, it shows the importance this consumer interest, of working class purchasing power, tastes, and culture in changing the structure of the retail drapery trade from the British traditions. Lastly, while advertising gradually evolved to incorporate deception and dishonesty which could affect all classes, it will be argued that it was initially beneficial to the working class in Victoria. By making publicly available the sorts of detail indispensable to those with lower incomes, it stripped away many of the taboos and fears surrounding shopping for clothing and its materials. Details about shopping available through advertising were not not so widely accessible in England because working class purchasing power had not yet created sufficient commercial incentive for retail drapers to overcome their inhibitions about advertising for working class custom. As well, the traditional values of the British trade, with its deeply-rooted ambivalence towards that most essential component of the business, the making of money, contributed to a reticence about advertising. Advertising was thus a controversial issue in retail drapery circles in Britain long after it ceased to be so in the colonies. I have chosen to concentrate on newspaper advertising because it had the widest circulation. The printing of small advertising hand-bills by retail drapers in the colonies began in the 1850s but, reflecting their contemporary importance in the totality of advertising, insufficient of these have survived to make it possible to use them as a source.

Of the many innovations that threatened to change the retail drapery business in Britain, advertising was the one that implied the greatest changes in the traditional mode of doing business. It undermined the essential relationship, that of trust between customer and shopkeeper. The first way in which this happened was that advertising created the possibility of large numbers of unknown clients. To the post-Second World War mind such a statement appears ludicrous. The aim of advertising is surely just that: to increase the volume of sales by bringing in large numbers of customers. This was not only an alien concept in early nineteenth century Britain, it was one that had distinct drawbacks and which was even seen as quite unacceptable to many business-men in the drapery trade. Ablett wrote with pride of the houses selling rich India shawls in the 1830s which only had two or three customers a day. The most obvious danger inherent in an influx of unknown customers was the possibility of incorrectly judging their credit-worthiness, thereby increasing a shopkeeper's bad debts. Bad debts were an inevitable part of doing business before computers could supply information on customers' credit ratings for the price of a telephone call. An essential ingredient of business acumen was therefore the ability to judge customers in such a way as to keep bad debts, and to a lesser degree book debts, to a minimum. There was another less tangible threat directly consequent on the decision to advertise. This was that the indiscriminately-solicited customers attracted to the shop might have been of social origins unacceptable to the already-established clientele, thereby alienating them and negating the advantage of advertising. Hence Ablett's delicate handling of the hawkers with their "ragged and dirty appearance" discussed in Chapter Four. In England, factors such as illiteracy and extreme poverty could, in most cases, be relied on to annul this latter disadvantage. However, the characteristic division of society into tight hierarchical groups each exclusive to the one below and mutually recognizable as such by clothing worn, among other factors, meant that advertising had the potential to widen these groups, perhaps not so far as to include even the lower middle class, but far enough to offend established custom. As the English drapers had upward social aspirations at all levels of the trade, these were important considerations which

governed their modes of dealing, but which quickly proved irrelevant to the exigencies of business in the frontier settlements of the Australian colonies.

While the above problems involved in the extension of business through advertising were not overtly perceived and written of as such, there was a second way in which the drapery trade in England saw a threat to established relations between customers and shopkeepers. These could be destroyed by advertising as it quite clearly opened the possibility for the shopkeeper to deceive the customer in a number of ways. Its potential for doing this was remarked in Britain by the 1850s and proved offensive to the traditional draper's view of the relationship of trust that should exist between shopkeeper and client. Vigorous steps were taken to counter the potential element of deception inevitably implied by advertising. Trade journals and, into the twentieth century, textbooks on the trade, published letters, articles, and even short stories aimed at unmasking dishonest trade practices. Immorality in business dealings was being unleashed upon the unsuspecting public as increasingly respectable firms began to condone advertising in one form or another. For every respectable traditional retail draper who only very cautiously turned to advertising, there were some who did not consider themselves as bound in any way by the trade's corporate moral ethos and began using its potential unscrupulously. Interestingly, a public which on the lower end of the socio-economic scale had been accustomed to assessing the value of goods and bargaining for them, was not nearly as gullible as many of its defenders believed. One suspects that what was being defended in the major trade journals were trade relations at the upper rather than the lower end of the retail drapery hierarchy. There were those customers who had come, selected their goods, and driven off with the parcel to be sent after them in the manner described by Beynon in Chapter 4 as that of shops at the very pinnacle of the trade. They were the most likely customers to be cheated by practices such as substituting cheaper quality garments for the ones advertised or seen in the window. The servant girls who had grown up seeing their mothers longingly fingering cloth from the tallyman's bundle and reluctantly declining it, however desirable, because the budget could not stretch to making the necessary payments,

were not destitute of resources in the consumer stakes as they were being redefined by advertising.

The original purpose of advertising was no more than to inform customers - as deferentially and discreetly as possible - that the shopkeeper had certain items in stock. As such it is readily obvious why it was to take decades - if not in the case of the most exclusive British retail houses, a century - for drapers to turn to advertising. Drapers whose business ethos was directed at taking pride in serving two or three customers a day with rich India shawls, were not about to disrupt this mode of dealing and risk offending such clients by exposing them to the consequences of advertising. The element of discretion and deference, so essential in trade connections the higher up one aspired in the social hierarchy in England, naturally precluded the mention of anything quite so brutally forward as the price of particular articles when advertising. As business rivalry became a more pressing factor in the trade, some drapers felt that the advantages of advertising were outweighed by the drawback that one's business rivals would have important information about one's methods of doing business.[1] There was increasing competition among drapers because of wider availability of consumer goods. At the same time, the market was not correspondingly increased by more customers with greater buying power. There followed an increase in volume of the discreetly informative type of advertising until a change in purpose occurred. As it was pointless trying to attract social groups with insufficient consumer power, more pressure was used to appeal to those on the fringes of the same groups. Some shopkeepers began to use the language of advertising in a slightly more aggressive or "pushful" way in order to advance the claims of their goods over their rivals. There was not, however, in Britain a change in the retailers' target by direct advertising to the working class budget, taste, and interest comparable with that which occurred in the colony of Victoria.

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1. Draper and Warehouseman, 1873, p. 205.

"Pushful" or "puffing" advertising was definitely frowned on by the establishment in the English drapery trade. An article inveighing against "puffing imposters" and cautioning against "puffs of the most outrageous character" which appeared in The Draper and Clothier of July 1859,[2] shows however that some businessmen had made swift progress to the modern style of advertising with all its deceptions and gimmicks. While those businessmen, outside the ranks of a conservative, tradition-dominated trade were setting a fast pace, the article leaves no doubt that such practices were to be shunned. The article gave an example of one shop which offered free bus fares to those customers who spent over forty shillings. As forty shillings represented up to a month's wages for many unskilled workers, and as many of the women whose budgets allowed them to spend over forty shillings comfortably would have had their own carriages, the offer of free bus fares was very modern in its ingenuity. Very few customers would have had either the social courage or the economic wherewithall to take it up. However, the main points to be stressed are that this type of advertising was in the minority, that it was unacceptable to the majority of retailers, and that any advertising copy that was pushful, gimmicky, emotive, or dishonest was the exception rather than the rule in the British drapery trade. The step between the use of "puffing" advertising and outright dishonesty was a small one and Ablett's Reminiscences give evidence that it was taken by some kinds of retailers, generally associated with the lower class trade, and always looked down on by drapers at all levels of the trade. This does not mean that Ablett was not capable of bias, nor therefore, by extension, that higher class retailers were always scrupulously honest. However, such deceptions as they might have practised were not generally related to advertising, window dressing or price ticketing.

There were few works published in nineteenth century Britain on shopping, reflecting the attitude that it was still seen as a necessary evil not yet really supposed to be discussed by polite society. An examination of the advertising policy of those

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2. Draper and Clothier, July 1859, pp. 86-88.

works on retailing that did appear, shows that policy to have been one of extreme conservatism. In 1834, E.E. Perkins published a Lady's Shopping Manual and Mercery Album.[3] (She also published a Treatise on Haberdashery which went through nine editions from 1833 to 1874, an indication of the potential market for works of this nature, whether or not their subject matter was quite de rigueur.) The Lady's Shopping Manual was very clearly tailored to meet the needs of the upper classes. Thus, not surprisingly, it did not contain a single advertisement of any kind, not even on the end papers. Some manufacturers of specific items such as thread or table linen were recommended by name and one wonders whether Perkins received a consideration for this very low-key form of advertising. In today's retailing world, it is unthinkable that a similar volume should appear without extensive advertising sponsorship and market research. Perkins, however, was writing to inform ladies "precisely what description of goods are manufactured" so that they could "with confidence order a shopkeeper to procure what he may not happen to possess". Ladies clearly had quite some leverage in the consumer stakes. They were not to be importuned by unsolicited advertising; they were to be given the information they required at their convenience in order to shop where and as they pleased.

This image of the customer and her requirements was perpetuated by the advertising policy of The Draper and Clothier which appeared in 1859. It contained very few advertisements and these were of the strictly informative kind, very discreet in both wording and layout, and containing no emotive copy whatever. In fact, so scrupulous were some of the advertisers, that they even submitted samples of their wares to the editor, itself a delightfully naive form of advertising. By the 1870s, with the publication of The Draper and Warehouseman, the wording of advertisements was still informative with no element of "puffing". Engravings were used to illustrate such advertisements as those for sewing machines and this in itself was a striking measure in a medium which for reasons of cost was not highly visual as yet. The drawings were

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3. Perkins, op cit.

literal with no attempt at any form of emotive provocation. These trade journals were complemented by very popular (because upper class) fashion magazines such as The Queen or weeklies, such as The Illustrated London News in which again, advertising occupied a minute proportion of total space, was discreet in the extreme, and obviously geared to the interests of upper class readers. While the conservative policy of these kinds of journals and magazines did not represent all retailers' attitudes to advertising, they were immensely influential and definitely indicative of the status quo. Moreover, these magazines and journals had a wider circulation than their price or policy might suggest as they passed from the head of a business or household through the ranks of the shop assistants or servants and on to their families. A detailed study of the daily press in Britain must remain outside the scope of this thesis. However, the argument developed later in this chapter regarding the advertising policy of the Victorian press between 1840 and 1870 could prove a useful starting point for a similar study of the English press.

Turning from the policy implicit in the tone and total space occupied by advertisements to the explicit attitude of retail drapers and others commenting on the trade, there was general agreement that the morality of trade was declining, various commentators selecting different reasons for and examples of this decline. The pattern of complaint makes it clear that the traditions which served upper class interests exclusively were being eroded by the introduction of more and cheaper goods.[4] The greater volume of consumer goods meant increased competition for only a relatively slight increase in customers and the consequent beginnings of business methods which involved dishonesty or deception of those customers. A leading article in The Illustrated London News of 29 March 1851 on Trade Morality, makes it clear with its indignant examples of who were being cheated by whom, that the upper classes could no longer have complete confidence in the tradespeople with whom they dealt. When buying material for dress lengths, for example, the writer expostulated

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4. Ablett, op cit., p. 102.

that ladies were being cheated twice over, once by the vendor and once by the dressmaker. The reason given for this decline in trade morality "in the highest degree disgraceful to a civilized and Christian country" was "the manufacture of cheap articles, made for show and not for use". In the good old days, the prohibitive cost per article of consumer items had kept the retail trade and its traditions inviolate between shopkeepers and the upper classes. Now its consumer-base was being slightly broadened, the morality of the trade was "lower than it ever was".

> Were the secrets of the internal management of the show-shops and the flaunting linen drapers, and many other establishments as fully exposed as they might be, a detail of ingenious, systematic, and pertinacious fraud and robbery would be laid bare. 5

It is difficult to exaggerate the degree of scorn felt by socially and economically significant sectors of English society and faithfully reflected in the equivalent circles of the drapery trade, for the "show-shops" and the "flaunting linen drapers".

In 1859 The Draper and Clothier was founded expressly "on the REFORM interest. Love of evils, tricks, and abuses was a thing of which we never had so much as a particle in our nature".[6] In a separate publication containing extracts from The Draper and Clothier, a city (of London) merchant was quoted by way of introduction as saying that he hoped soon to see the journal:

> in the hands of every respectable merchant, manufacturer, and wholesale house, and looked upon as the exposer of everything that is not legitimate business. 7

The Draper and Clothier contained articles and letters to the editor complaining about and/or exposing the decline in business morality from the standpoint of the conservative upholders of the status quo in the retail drapery trade. Its columns were almost exclusively devoted to debating and condemning the innovations in the trade which made such dishonesty possible to the detriment of the trusting relationship between

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5. The Illustrated London News, 29 March 1851.

6. The Draper and Clothier Introduction, p. iii.

7. "A Latch Key to 'A Store of Valuable Information'" (extracts from The Draper and Clothier), front cover.

shopkeeper and customer. As such, the practices of advertising, ticketing, holding sales, elaborate window dressing, hypothecating goods, giving false measure and manoeuvring to do business again after having been declared bankrupt were all exposed to continual criticism.

Without oversimplifying, it is possible to interpret the criticism of these unacceptable trade practices because they were an assault on the sensibilities of the upper classes. In themselves there was nothing morally wrong in most of these new measures - except that of giving false measure - and some of them had the potential for making shopping easier for those in the lower socio-economic groups. To select two examples of the type of advertising which was forcefully criticized and which involved the duping of an upper class customer. A lady received a personally addressed letter

> On the top of the address 'War Notice!' was inscribed in large red letters. Then came, 'Alarming Telegram!' and at the bottom was printed 'Private'. It was sealed with the royal arms ... it contained the advertisement of a well-known member of the 'Towzery gang', stating that he was about to dispose of a quantity of haberdashers' trash at what he called 'the buyers own prices', having assumed, for the purposes of robbing the public more effectually, the name of one of our most respectable auctioneers. 8

In a general article headed "Puffing Imposters - a Few Words to All Ladies Making Purchases", the editors in the next month's edition of The Draper and Clothier warned against

> puff of the most outrageous character. The puff is generally delivered during the period of the day when the male head of the family is away from home. It is contained in an envelope, bearing a superscription sufficient to excite the curiosity of all females ... their cupidity. 9

Thus these examples show that some retailers were beginning to form a new conception of their customers as female, vulnerable, eager for a bargain, and not necessarily able to recognize the true worth of the goods being advertised. It must be stressed, however, that in fact there was very little widening of the class base from

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8. The Draper and Clothier, June 1859, p. 22.

9. The Draper and Clothier, July 1859, p. 86.

which potential new customers were sought. What was offensive was that some drapers were aiming for imaginary customers who were not at all like the "lady" for whom E.E. Perkins wrote the Shopping Manual and Mercery Album a quarter of a century before. The Draper and Clothier was fighting a rear-guard action to defend the traditional rights of ladies as they had been defined against a new wave of surprisingly modern advertising techniques which postulated a new kind of "lady" as their target.

A third example again shows the lady being duped but in a morally more sophisticated and therefore, in the eyes of the editors, even more reprehensible way. In a letter headed "Drapery Puffing versus Piety" and signed "Fair Play", another surprisingly modern advertising technique was exposed:

> There is a very large drapery establishment ... that adopts the plan of delivering religious tracts and has gained the name thereby of being 'such nice people'. I am acquainted with a lady who, foolishly believing them 'such nice people', took the trouble to go several miles out of her way to this 'nice' establishment, to make her purchases. These 'nice people' sold her a faded dress for thirty-five shillings, not worth honestly ten shillings, which dress was left with me to pack up. I showed it to one of the assistants of this 'nice' establishment, who assured me he wondered how such a 'counter duster' fetched so much, considering it had only a two shilling 'tinge' on it. [A 'tinge' was a premium given to drapery assistants who managed to sell goods at full value or more which for some reason or other had been in the shop for a long time and were proving difficult to get rid of.] 10

Thus long before the enacting of consumer protection legislation and the formation of consumer protection lobbying groups, British retail drapers had isolated for their wholehearted disapproval, the sorts of advertising campaigns and techniques they perceived would destroy the world of retailing as they knew it.

Window dressing and price ticketing of goods were forms of advertising and as such had the same potential for destroying established retailer-customer relations. They also, like advertising, had the potential for attracting new customers. Spanning as they do the half century of the drapery trade in which there was greater competition to sell more goods to a market not correspondingly more numerous,

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10. The Draper and Clothier, October 1859, p. 176.

Ablett's Reminiscences make it clear that his early forays into the field of window dressing were regarded by his peers as a "profuse and extravagant way of doing business".[11] At a time when many people were too intimidated to enter shops, it was a great step to take to display more goods more temptingly in the windows, and an even greater one to actually mark the price on them. To take these initiatives meant that one was breaking with tradition and sticking out one's neck to attract unknown customers.

> At that period [1850s] the custom of ticketing goods in the windows was not universal as it is now, but my previous experience [in lower middle and working class trade] had shown to me that an attractive display of any kinds of goods could bring custom into a shop, especially if here and there a leading article were ticketed. 12

The practice of ticketing prices in shop windows was a controversial one leading to potential disputes between customer and retailer and as such was less and less evident as retailers attempted to attract custom higher up the socio-economic scale. The editorial line taken by The Draper and Clothier and later the Draper and Warehouseman on window dressing was extremely cautious and the columns of both magazines inclined to select examples of the corrosive rather than the potentially useful results of price ticketing. The official line on ticketing was that

> ... in certain localities, including places where much credit and long credit, and the 'knocking down' [taking a bit off the price] system prevail, it is wise not to adopt the practice of ticketing ... in other localities the opposite course is the wisest. In neither case ... is there any departure from mercantile honour or integrity. 13

Theoretically then in some circumstances it was permissable to mark prices on goods, a procedure which would make shopping a lot less harrowing for all customers with restricted budgets. In practice, by concentrating on examples of drapers who were dishonest, these trade magazines made it quite clear that price ticketing was an unsavoury, slightly shabby way of conducting business. A letter to The Draper and

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11. Ablett, op cit., p. 163.

12. Ablett, op cit., p. 211.

13. The Draper and Clothier, July 1859, p. 89.

Clothier of November 1859 signed "Witness" described the following example of price ticketing at Worcester.

> A draper in our city is in the habit of marking his goods after this fashion. He puts a figure of (say) 2, as large as life and black as ink can make it; then follows, faintly marked in pencil, '11', perhaps and then '1/2', black and big. This system seems to be pursued with all the goods displayed in his window, or outside the shop - 3 pence, the '3' monstrous, with a little '3/4', in pencil behind it, and so on. 14

Upper middle class customers did not stand to be deceived by such practices as they would never have patronized such a shop. However, there was a strong feeling that discredit was brought on the whole trade by dishonest, tawdry business dealings and this was clearly seen as resulting from the departure from the accepted canons of retailing. In the same issue there were two other articles describing the evils of ticketing and their potential for harming the relationship of trust between customer and draper, both of which made it clear that when cases of fraudulent ticketing came to court, the judges decided in favour of the consumer.[15]

What the British retail drapers failed to see but which their contemporaries in the colony grasped instantly, was that it could actually be in their interests to indulge in all these "dubious" business methods but to proceed from honest principles. Given the inevitable conservatism in any established group with strong traditions, the inability of the British trade to accept and adapt to these new ways of doing business, argues a lack of sufficient perceived working class consumer purchasing power to make it worth their while to change. Changes in business practices such as the introduction of price-ticketing, window dressing and advertising, were not intrinsically immoral but by continuing to seize on examples of deceit, the trade journals and other commentators on the trade were linking the innovations with the lower disreputable end of the trade and roundly condemning them. A final example makes this clear as

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14. The Draper and Clothier, November 1859, p. 201.

15. The Draper and Clothier, November 1859, p. 203. The case of a draper brought before a judge for inaccurately labelling goods - the case went against him and he had to pay all expenses. And the case of Williams v. Glace in which a milliner managed to show she had been significantly misled by the draper's manner of ticketing and win her case.

well as giving evidence of the beginnings of the drive to innovation in advertising which could take a retailer ahead of his competitors. The example concerns, notably, the low class trade and admits with reluctance that advertising through window dressing could boost business dealings.

> Peculiar or mis-spelt tickets ... are useful in their way for low-class trades to draw the attention of passers-by, and by that means to introduce the stuff ticketed for their consideration. One hatter's window that I know of used to be quite a study in this way, every hat shown was specialized by the title of some comic song, 'Champagne Charlie', 'One of the Three Jolly Dogs', 'Costermonger Joe', 'William Winks' and many others, and I firmly believe this queer idea was the means of greatly benefitting his business. Anything striking in this way is of benefit, and a catch word or title of a popular play, book or slang phrase, is often applied to various goods for purposes of distinction .... A well-known job firm once bought a whole drove of ponies, and clearing out the window entirely, made a porter stand the whole day in the window holding a sample pony by the bridle; this firm was noted for its various eccentricities, and it was no uncommon thing to find a couple of 'touts' outside with boxes of cigars, meerschaum pipes, jewellery, or other articles totally unconnected with the drapery trade. 16

Gimmicky sales campaigns were clearly evolving by the 1870s. Two points must be made about this article, appearing as it does in The Draper and Warehouseman. Firstly, it was clear that such practices were only associated with the lower branch of the trade. Secondly, the tone of naive wonder in the writer's assertion that "I firmly believe this queer idea was the means of greatly benefitting his business", shows the whole concept of an organized emotive advertising campaign based on deliberate assumptions concerning unknown customers, was a relatively new one on the drapery scene. Interestingly, the innovation was breaking down retail drapers' traditional views of shopkeeper-customer relations from the lower socio-economic end of the retail chain. That the article appeared in The Draper and Warehouseman at all and moreover explicitly associated its message with job firms and the low class trade, shows that the official trade journal had opened out a little to permit articles on controversial issues which were not clearly upholding the status quo.

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16. The Draper and Warehouseman, 1873, p. 205.

In the colonies, businesswomen and men found such unheard of conditions operating on their dealings that they were obliged from the very beginning to drop many of their British-learned business methods and use all their resources to start learning to adapt to the most unusual market situations at hand. In early Sydney, the continual pattern of glut and total dearth of every desired commodity meant that a far greater element of change was involved in all business dealings than could have been the case in England. Moreover, more than ninety percent of customers were convicts or ex-convicts and the majority of the free population continued to send to England for the bulk of their clothing supplies. Thus in one stroke all notions regarding the customer's position in the retail chain were thrown open to question. These two factors: the market fluctuations between glut and dearth and the predominance of lower and even criminal class custom as a percentage of all custom, continued to be important forces in drapery retailing in the colony of Victoria before and after the gold rushes. In New South Wales from the very first, store owners like the Packers, William Mansell, Campbell, Lord, and Rowland Hassall, to mention a few, advertised lists of goods with the prices clearly attached. While it must remain a matter of speculation, it should still be hazarded that given the known composition of clientele in the colony, the taboos operating on the public marking of the price on an article were consciously or unconsciously felt to be irrelevant by early Sydney shopkeepers. With the frequent arrival of ships with unknown cargoes, advertising was essential to keep customers abreast of what was available. However, even though it would have been possible to do this without going so far as to list prices, the majority of advertisements in The Sydney Gazette nevertheless described goods and named their price.

As well, tradespeople and shopkeepers continued to adopt the deferential tone that had been thought proper in "correct" advertising in the England they had just left.

> John Jacques Taylor ... Repectfully acquaints the PUBLIC, that in consequence of the reduction that has lately taken place in the Prices of many Articles of common Consumption, he has been enabled to make an Abatement on his Charges, and that all Orders with which he may be honoured shall be carefully and punctually executed. 17

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17. The Sydney Gazette, 5 March 1803.

The irony is that many of the customers he was hoping to have the honour to receive were convicts. Thus the prospective convict client was the recipient of advertising language which in England was reserved for the upper classes and he could see for himself (or get a friend to read out to him) how much the articles cost. He was therefore no longer the victim of gratuitous snubbing at the hands of store owners or tradespeople and indeed, it would have been business suicide for retailers to offend convict or ex-convict custom. Convicts had simply to find a copy of The Sydney Gazette and read, or have read to them, what Mrs Packer's long cloth was worth, then decide whether or not they might be better to take the afternoon off and walk to Parramatta and buy it from Mr Hassall. While outside the immediate scope of this thesis, an interesting study which would reveal much about the actual consumption patterns in this allegedly rum-riddled colony, would be a comparison of prices asked for drapery articles in Sydney relative to those being asked for the same things in England. While care would have to be taken to identify the times of glut and scarcity in incoming cargoes, such a study should bear out the assertion of this thesis, that given a variety of consumer goods to choose from, however inflated the prices of any of them, there was a consistent spending on clothing and its materials by working and criminal class colonials. It would be interesting to know, relative to a similar group in England, just how much greater the per capita colonial consumption power was.

With the establishment of the settlement of Port Phillip, similar developments occurred in the addressing of advertising to working class custom. These developments gained momentum during the gold rush, but before going on to examine press advertising in detail, the literary sources will be culled for evidence of changed colonial attitudes to business morality, service in shops and window dressing. In England a firm gained respect for the length of service it had given to the public (or put another way, the amount of time it had been taking profits from the upper classes), no matter how shabby its interior. Physical appearance was less important in

the final analysis than the more intangible if not the less priceless "tradition". Lighting and carpeting were introduced in the 1850s and 1860s so that relative to other English retail outlets, many drapery shops became notably smart. However, according to a wide range of commentators, the shops of Melbourne were as smart if not more splendid than those of London, and their owners and the public alike perceived and accepted this form of advertising as an indication of the importance of the business.

> A peculiarity of Melbourne is that the shop-windows there are so much better set out than is customary in England ... it is an accepted maxim in commercial circles that money spent on buildings ... is amongst the cheapest forms of advertising a rising business and keeping an established business going [an Australian cannot undersand] how wealthy merchants can work in the dingy dens which serve for the offices of many a London merchant prince. 18

While there were firms such as G. and G.J. Espie's who advertised in the 1860s as having been "established since 1853", thus imitating the English tradition of length of service (barely decades in the colony to match centuries in England), such firms were in the minority and were generally among the less successful or long-lasting.[19]

Businesses such as W. Ferguson's Commerce House advised the public that they had now opened "in the magnificent buildings lately erected by Mr. Dawson".[20] There was no reticence about public show of wealth in the colony; buildings and shop windows were unashamedly resplendent and inticingly sumptuous. Far from repelling the lower socio-economic groups, their share in the wealth should be seen as a factor in its lavish display. These buildings with their windows dressed as they were, displayed enough of their goods - in consort with newspaper advertising - to draw customers from all socio-economic groups. Not only was window dressing clearly

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18. Twopeny, op cit., p. 12.

19. G. and G.J. Espie sold out in September 1865 to Cookson & Brown. No reason was given in their advertisements for selling out. While they may, of course, have sold out because they had made enough money and wanted to return to England, this in itself would have been a statement of their lack of faith in the class of the colonial retail drapery system they had pretensions to head.

20. The Argus, 28 September 1850.

elevated to an art at all levels of the trade, but by 1856 the first advertisement for Drapers' Window Tickets on sale in Russell Street appeared in The Argus.[21] Thus in the 1850s in Melbourne, retail drapers were breaking with British tradition by lavish window displays with marked prices on articles. They were doing this for the commercially-sound reason that such business tactics drew in lower class customers who had money to spend.

By 1856, W. Kelly was writing that the shops of Melbourne rivalled the West End. By 1862 Clara Aspinall was waxing lyrical at the window displays in the drapers' shops concurrent with the visit of a British warship whose officers lit up Melbourne society for a few weeks. By 1883, Richard Twopeny went so far as to declare that the drapers' shops of Melbourne were more comprehensive than the English ones, that shop windows were better dressed in Melbourne than in either Sydney or England, and that in his opinion money spent on buildings was good advertising, a gamble hazarded by Ferguson thirty years before. Twopeny's ultimate accolade was to observe that

> The windows in the fashionable part of the town are dressed anew every week, and with a taste that reminds one of Paris. 22

The rough and ready colonials were obviously very ready but not quite so rough as many English contemporaries and some subsequent historians would have us believe. While Clara Aspinall noted that there were "one or two shops which have a great name" to which the wealthy confined themselves, the two exciting developments in consumerism in Melbourne were firstly, that the working classes were by no means necessarily excluded from these shops (see Chapter 4), and secondly, the more exclusive shops were still obliged to make some concessions in their mode of doing business, concessions with regard to window dressing, advertising and the holding of sales, which latter two factors will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. There was offended middle class comment on Melbourne shopkeepers and traders whose attitudes

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21. The Argus, 22 December 1856.

22. Twopeny, op cit., p. 199.

to customer service were seen as far too arrogant and independent.[23] These observers had undoubtedly detected a nuance of change in service from that which they had been accustomed to in England. The problem may have been that the same manners they found irritating from shop assistants as being too familiar or laissez-faire and not sufficiently deferential had been evolved by the shop assistants while catering for their considerable working class clientele.

These magnificent, well-stocked shop fronts whose doors were opened to a wider cross section of people in the colonies than was the case in England, were owned and operated by men and women whose business principles differed markedly from those of their English counterparts. In some respects, these differences were directly attributable to the large proportion of working class custom for which they catered. Such elements as the type of stock carried, the way in which it was displayed, the sorts of advertisements placed in the newspapers, all bore witness to a deliberate catering for those on the lower socio-economic rungs. Among businessmen themselves, there was a sense that commercial morality and the traditional hierarchy of the retailing world was being up-turned in the colony of Victoria. Paul de Serville saw that "one of the first victims [of the boom in Melbourne] was commercial morality". The problem was as he saw it one of "squaring one's obligations as a gentleman with the necessity of making money".[24] As we have already seen, this was no new problem to the middle and upper ranks of British retail drapers. What actually happened in Victoria was that there was remarkably little debate over business morality in general, and none at all about the desirability or otherwise of particular business methods such as window dressing, price ticketing, holding sales, etc. Observers like Kelly noted the inverted order of things whereby representatives of honoured "hereditary firms" took rooms in common boarding houses and flashy "commission agents" lived in mansions in South Yarra.

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23. Kelly, op cit., Vol. II, p. 36.

24. de Serville, op cit., p. 39.

De Serville's book demonstrates in general how ill-equipped the British upper classes were for successful survival in the colonies. By extension, those retailers who elected to rely solely on upper class custom were in the minority, were not necessarily regarded with the same reverence as their counterparts in England, and were not among those who made the most money. The new directions taken by the drapery trade in particular show that any old-world fastidiousness about methods of doing business meant that their exponents were ruthlessly brushed aside by the new market conditions in the colony. In August 1870 there was a series of letters and an editorial in The Argus on business morality in the colonies. Notably, there was absolutely no discussion of the rights and wrongs of particular aspects of doing business such as advertising, hypothecating or holding sales. The main point under discussion was the legality or otherwise of resuming business having once been declared bankrupt (bankruptcy representing the ultimate disgrace for a businessman in England from which for some the only possible step was suicide). The Argus concluded that

> just at present commerce in this part of the world is rather sick and consequently everyone connected with it is in a very exalted moral condition, and is ready to animadvert most severely on his neighbours peccadilloes .... If tomorrow things were to take a turn for the better, would our columns be so frequently occupied by dissertations on the exceeding sinfulness of defaulting traders? 25

The Argus concluded with realistic cynicism that this would not, in fact, be the case. Ten years later Richard Twopeny wrote

> The old-fashioned English prejudice against bankruptcy has been improved out of existence by the speculative nature of all business, and the consequent frequency of insolvencies. Some of the largest merchants have 'been through the Court' more than once; and provided there has been no open swindle in the case, no approbrium attaches. 26

Thus the whole gamut of business methods as understood by traditional British retail drapers - from price ticketing to insolvency - had been re-adapted by the colony of Victoria for other purposes. To examine just how much the spending patterns and purchasing power of the lower classes were responsible for this, we must undertake a detailed examination of retail drapery advertising in the colonial press.

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25. The Argus, 8 August 1870.

26. Twopeny, op cit., p. 192.

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For the purposes of this argument, it is important to state at the outset that the gold rushes in Victoria only reinforced working class initiated developments in the retail trade. The evidence of the Customs statistics as shown in Figure 8, Chapter 4 and advertisements in the columns of the Port Phillip Gazette* shows quite clearly that working class choice in spending money on clothing began, as in Sydney, with the establishment of the settlement. The advertisements in The Port Phillip Gazette reflect this choice as well as establishing its influence on the retail drapers of Melbourne. The gold rushes with the vast influx of money, people and consumer goods into the colony exaggerated the pattern of working class consumption of luxury goods, made it more public and ostentatious, but did not create it. The gamut of advertising style from 1839 to 1850 ran from traditional deferential obsequiousness to a new use of emotive appeal to factors outside literal information about articles in stock. The businesses adopting the British style of discreet deference were in the minority and the advertising columns of The Port Phillip Gazette gave evidence of the rise in a colonial style of advertising in which the influence of working class taste, shopping habits, income and even life in the bush was paramount.

Enough has been said about the taboos enshrouding mention of the cost of an article in English shops to indicate that direct reference to the "cheapness" of an establishment in general, or the price of an article in particular, represented a definite break with British tradition. John McColl's advertisement of 29 April 1839 in The Port Phillip Gazette contains an interesting mixture of copy calculated to appeal to the working class colonial public with a crumb thrown to those with more upwardly mobile aspirations. This kind of hybrid advertising was not unusual.

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* The Port Phillip Gazette had various titles over the years but for convenience will always be referred to as The Port Phillip Gazette.

> JOHN McCOLL, TAILOR and CLOTHIER ... hopes ... to be able to give every satisfaction and especially in that most essential point - cheapness. Gentlemen who prefer purchasing their own Cloth and furnishing, may rely on due attention ... having been upwards of four years in the Establishment of Messrs George Willis and Co., St. James' street, London, Tailors to Her Majesty and the Royal Family. (my emphasis)

The wording of this advertisement clearly shows that McColl is trying to appeal to a public he envisages as being of widely different class backgrounds. The difference in the colonial public he is addressing is that there are potential customers among the groups which in England would have been too low on the socio-economic scale to aspire to having bespoke clothing. Knowing this, McColl is careful not to alienate such potential clients. W. White's advertisement in The Port Phillip Gazette of 20 May 1839 is an even clearer example of a social environment in which members of the lower classes were possible customers.

> W. White Tailor and Habitmaker. Respectfully informs the Gentry and Inhabitants of Melbourne that he has just received a stock of superfine black, ble [sic], and invisible Green Cloths, etc. The above goods are of the best description, and will be made up at reduced prices. W.W. [sic] intends keeping on hand an extensive assortment of Ready-made Goods of the best description, also at the lowest prices.

Real gentlemen did not wear suits made of superfine black cloth - every working class man aspired to own one - rather as every working class woman aspired to have a best black silk. Real gentlemen were not only indifferent to the price of making up of their suits, they would have thought any public reference to the same rather infra dig. Above all, real gentlemen did not wear ready-made clothing even "of the best description". They did not buy it for their servants either; house servants wore livery and farm hands bought their own clothes. No, White was obviously advertising to attract lower class custom while hoping not to alienate possible upper class clients. This kind of advertising predominated in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette and instances of it could be given ad infinitum, illustrating not only the number of different businesses angling for lower class custom but that the businessmen in question were by no means reticent about having recourse to advertising in the press.

> CHEAP TAILORING ESTABLISHMENT. Humphrey and Coleman [have engaged a first-rate cutter from Sydney] .... Gentlemen leaving their orders, can rely on a first-rate fit and workmanship. Prices lower than any other shop in Melbourne. 27

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27. The Port Phillip Gazette, 26 September 1846.

Thus well before the gold rushes, we see evidence of the influence of working class purchasing power and taste on business policy. Humphrey and Coleman must have thought that the kudos of importing a cutter from the (then) so much more sophisticated Sydney, would more than repay the price of the man's fare and wages which would in turn be recouped from the business. They were not alone in this idea. A more upwardly-mobile tailoring business, Michael McNamara's had advertised on 11 March 1846 that he had

> recently secured the Services of A First-Rate Cutter, Mr Dunn, for nine years Superintendent to Mr Pendry, the most fashionable tailor in Sydney. 28

In some circles the name Sydney had as good a ring to it as the name of London itself. Humphrey and Coleman's advertisement showed that they conceived that their lower class custom knew enough about clothing to distinguish a better cut garment and that they were prepared to outlay money to gratify their customers' tastes. Furthermore this lower class custom was given the honorary title of "gentlemen" and was large enough to form the backbone, not only of Humphrey and Coleman's business but many others besides. In 1847 in Melbourne, real gentlemen sent to England for their clothes, as did their counterparts in Sydney before 1815; they certainly did not patronize "cheap" tailoring establishments which openly advertised that their prices were "lower than any other shop in Melbourne".

A survey of the advertising columns of The Port Phillip Gazette shows that this type of advertising of tailoring businesses predominated. It was a decided minority of the tailoring businesses which adopted the true British advertising style of deferential obsequiousness, omitting all reference to price and placing themselves thankfully in the service of their patrons. In fact only two businesses which advertised without making any concessions to the lower orders were evident. Mouat, Brother and Company opened the British Warehouse in Collins Street with the following advertisement:

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28. The Port Phillip Gazette, 11 March 1846.

> MOUAT, BROTHER and COMPANY upon the occasion of opening their Premises deem it unnecessary to make any profession, or to enumerate the articles of which their selection consists, but would merely observe to their Friends and the Public generally that from the circumstances of commencing business at a time so favourable for laying in a new Stock upon the most advantageous terms - and with their firm determination to keep no goods but what they can conscientiously recommend - confidently anticipate general support. 29

From a twentieth century viewpoint this would seem to be the ultimate example of non-advertising. The retailer declines to say what he has in stock, to describe his stock in any way, to say how much it costs, or in fact to give any other assurance about it than to say that he can "conscientiously recommend it". However, the retailer had been sufficiently soiled by the realities of business life in the colonies to stoop to place even this advertisement in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette. Mouat, Brother and Company clearly represented the old school of retail drapery in which their word of honour as retailers in respect of their goods could be (and would still have been in England) implicitly trusted by the exclusive circle of their clients who had no need for further information about the merchandise in question more than the conscientious recommendation of its vendor. In the colonies, such businesses quickly went to the wall. By 1849, Mouat, Brother and Company had been forced by the reality of business in the colony to publically declare themselves a ready-money establishment.[30] The agonising over whether or not to stop giving credit and become a ready-money establishment was greater in British retail circles than colonial ones in proportion to the retailers' pride in having a sound enough business to be able to offer this service to its customers. However, even in the colony in 1849 the public declaration of one's business as a ready-money establishment, took one far down the scale from the houses with pretensions to exclusivity. By 1852 there was no further evidence of Mouat, Brother and Company.

There was an immense contrast between this kind of advertising and that undertaken by, say, Cheapside House, Say's Cheap Emporiums, the Scotch Warehouse, the Scotch and Manchester Warehouse and the Temple of Fashion which will be discussed

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29. The Port Phillip Gazette, 20 December 1847.

30. The Port Phillip Gazette, 3 July 1849.

below. The remarkable difference in style indicates that each retailer had a completely different concept of the clientele that would be attracted by their advertisements and the purist traditional retailers of the British model were decidedly in the minority in the pages of The Port Phillip Gazette. While this could be because there were some so conservative that they refused to advertise at all, this is not a likely possibility in such a small settlement with so many retailers competing for custom.

Mouat, Brothers and Company's advertising was the most extreme form of the traditional British style but there were others which reflected the obsequious deference of British advertising with the relatively minor taint of colonial influence apparent in a fleeting reference to charges.

> DAVID HAMILTON Respectfully informs the Inhabitants of Melbourne, that he has commenced business ... near the Club House, solicits a share of their patronage, and trusts its continuation to the fashionable manner, the correct matter, the economy, and implicit regard paid to individual directions, which will characterize all orders confided to his care. (my emphasis) 31

Here we see the last echoes of the trusting relationship between customer and tailor in which the tailor respectfully assures his complete attention to every possible whim his customer might have. The point about such a commercial relationship is that in England it only existed between tradespeople and members of the upper classes while in the colonies those who aspired to continue it as such quickly found themselves in the minority. There were too many tradespeople who realized that good business could be done with lower class custom and were therefore in the process of constructing different codes and rituals to attract this custom. They quite rightly felt the language of advertising, the layout of shops, the style of service and many other matters of drapery business policy would alienate the lower classes who now evidently had surplus purchasing power they wished to spend on clothing.

Michael Macnamara's business as revealed by his advertising style was one which eschewed all pretension and aimed straight for the lower middle class market. One of the many "oldest established" businesses in the colony, he was nevertheless successful

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31. The Port Phillip Gazette, 18 June 1840.

enough by 1846 to move from Queen Street to larger premises in Collins Street, presumably taking many of his customers with him. Here we have clear evidence for the upwardly-mobile social consequences of being able to afford to graduate to bespoke clothing. As one's tailor rose to the most exclusive street in town, one found oneself entering his door with equanimity as one of his old customers, where once one hesitated to cross his threshold at the lower end of town. At the risk of over-labouring the point, it must be re-emphasized that the majority of the initial clients of a tailor like Macnamara were unmistakably working class. It might be argued that with success he put up his charges but on the whole there does not seem to be evidence of a marked increase in rates for tailor-made suits over the years 1840 to 1870.

To conclude, a final example of the minority British-style traditional drapery advertisement only marginally tainted by a brief reference to price, made as tastefully as possible (though nevertheless appearing in block capitals). With much respectful begging and soliciting J. and I. Martin placed an interesting advertisement on the front page of The Port Phillip Gazette on 3 July 1849. It was interesting because it made an oblique reference to the fact that inferior business had hitherto been flourishing in the colony. Whether the Martins meant inferior in the sense of the goods actually manufactured or in the sense of the way business was conducted, they do not make quite clear. From an extensive reading of drapery advertisements over thirty years in the Victorian Press, it is hazarded that the Messrs Martin wished to set themselves up as superior on both counts (see Clipping 1).

J. Mitchell, Tailor and Draper from London likewise succumbed to the prevalent mode of the colony by listing the materials he had and then saying that he was "determined to make [them] up"

SURPRISINGLY LOW

He however does not follow the practice of pretended cheap Houses by substituting a list of prices, but guarantees every Garment put from his Establishment to be

20 per cent, under any other House in Melbourne. 32

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32. The Port Phillip Gazette, 2 March 1849, p. 233.



CALEDONIA HOUSE.

J. & I. MARTIN,

TAILORS, DRAPERS, AND HABIT MAKERS,

COLLINS-STREET,

OPPOSITE THE ROYAL HOTEL,

RESPECTFULLY announce to the gentry of the province of Victoria in general, and the inhabitants of Melbourne in particular, that having commenced business as above, they earnestly solicit a trial of their skill, and an inspection of their stock recently

IMPORTED GOODS.

They are determined on carrying on the above trades in a much superior manner than has hitherto been attempted by any tradesmen in the colony. This they are enabled to do from their long connection with the most fashionable houses of business in Great Britain and the Continent, the result of which valuable experience is, that

J. & I. MARTIN

can in the happiest manner unite fashion ease, grace, and

MODERATE CHARGES,

so that gentlemen have an opportunity of having their garments

WELL MADE AND FITTED,

desiderata hitherto of rare occurrence, in consequence of the slovenly and untradesmanlike manner in which the Tailoring business has up to a short period been conducted. To this they beg to add that punctuality and a studious attention to the commands of their Patrons will be their chief aim and endeavour.

J. & I. Martin are flattered by the very liberal support hitherto awarded them, and it will be the height of their ambition to secure a more extended share of that public patronage which is universally accorded to acknowledged merit.

CALEDONIA HOUSE

Collins-street.

Clipping 1. The Port Phillip Gazette, 3 July 1849

Mitchell listed extensively the materials he had in stock but drew the line at actually listing their prices, thereby indicating that there was still some slur felt to rest on retailers who did name prices. However, he opted for another advertising strategy considered at the apex of the trade in England to be a very low one indeed: the public under-cutting of one's fellow tradesmen. The point about such a hybrid advertisement as Mitchell's is that the public language likely to attract the rich just could not be allied to that likely to draw the lower middle class and working class. On the lower end of the scale, people reading Mitchell's advertisement might be taken in by his claim that he was "20 per cent, under any other House in Melbourne" but they might

equally well be put off by his refusal to name any price at all. At the upper end of the scale the whole tone of his copy has missed the comforting deferential flattery usual in advertising from the most imposing establishments. We may thus hazard a new range of customers exactly in the middle of these two extremes who might have felt flattered not to be thought of as clients of the "cheap Houses" but glad enough to believe they were buying at 20 percent under anyone else in Melbourne. It would be an interesting study to examine the press advertising of an English town comparable in size to Melbourne at this time to see if the same range and nuance of advertising copy was evident.

The bespoke tailoring business represented the top end of the retailing of clothing at this time along with a very few department stores which were beginning to acquire a name for themselves. In both the tailoring business (as we have seen above) and the larger retail drapery houses, there was a wide range of quality, service and style. As with the tailoring businesses, the advertisements for the drapery retail houses show the majority of these catering for lower class tastes and interests. George Say began advertising in April 1839 as a wholesale and retail dealer who carried mixed stock but with an emphasis on dry goods. By October 1839, his store had been officially named "Say's Cheap Emporium" and the following advertisement appeared in The Port Phillip Gazette.

> GEORGE SAY'S CHEAP EMPORIUM
> George Say begs most respectfully to inform the Inhabitants of Melbourne and of the district of Port Phillip generally, that in consequence of his great increase of business, he has opened a second STORE in Collins St ... as a general CHEAP EMPORIUM; and from the many arrivals from Europe of goods direct to Port Phillip he is now enabled to offer to the Public all description of goods much cheaper than he has been enabled to do before .... He begs with many thanks to say that he feels deeply grateful for the flattering encouragement he has received since his commencement as a 'caterer' for the public taste and assures them it shall be his study to try to deserve a continuance of it. 33

A notch down in superiority from a business producing bespoke clothing or selling material, a retail drapery business such as George Say's selling ready-made clothing

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33. The Port Phillip Gazette, 14 October 1839.

was thriving to the extent he could open a second branch in Collins Street. (Collins Street was already the exclusive precinct it has continued to be until now. Interestingly, it could be hazarded that there was a direct relationship between the number of drapery shops in Collins Street and its fashionable reputation.) Mr Say also indicated that he thought that it was because he fulfilled public taste that he had been able to expand his business. Furthermore, an essential ingredient in supplying the public was the cheap rates at which he was able to advertise and sell his goods. While this advertisement did not as yet include a price list, Mr Say was not backward in his assurances as to the cheapness of his wares. It is a powerful indication of lower class purchasing power and inclinations that advertisements for businesses like George Say's were everywhere in evidence in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette and that the businesses themselves were expanding. Although the point has been made repeatedly that upper-echelon drapery businesses disdained advertising, they did actually advertise albeit very discreetly so some traces of their business operations were gradually visible through the advertising columns of The Port Phillip Gazette.

Another good example of a blatantly working class oriented retail drapery business was D. Benjamin's Cheapside House, the first advertisements for which appeared in The Port Phillip Gazette in 1839. Partly because of the evident social down-grading of business in the colonies with nevertheless a respectable, indeed astonishing amount of money to be made out of the custom of the lower orders, Jewish businessmen who owned businesses like Cheapside House and later in the 1850s and 1860s the Monster Clothing Hall, were not quite looked down on the way they were in England. The other reason for this, of course, was that the Establishment in the colonies was a lot less "established" and a lot further away from being able (or wanting) to claim the sorts of exclusivity paraded by the oldest houses at the head of the retail drapery structure in England.

Occupying a central position on the front page, this large expensive advertisement contains a number of points of interest to the argument. Firstly, there were prices given. Secondly, the clothing as listed was that worn by the working classes if

and when they had money to spend on wearing apparel. Thirdly, the unusual step was being taken of selling for cash only. While this did mean it enabled proprietors to trade with smaller overheads, it was also an enormous break from tradition as far as all social classes were concerned. It meant in this case, possible loss of clients who could just not scrape together enough of the ready. Shops by appointment to royalty had borne the cost of upper middle and middle class credit in England. Hawkers there had supplied credit to the poor. The decision to stop giving credit was much debated at all levels of the trade in both England and the colonies. The fact that businesses catering to the working class in the colonies were able to take the step of trading for cash only is a very powerful argument for working class purchasing power and consumer interest. The fourth and last interesting point about this advertisement is the fact that it gave notice of a sale.

At this time in the history of the retail drapery trade, sales were very dubious affairs indeed, definitely associated with the tawdry little businesses at the fag end of the trade and most probably dishonest affairs from start to finish. Ablett's descriptions of sales leave no doubt that they were shoddy under-hand affairs, and described the classic "burnt" and "flood" sales in which articles were deliberately singed or water-soiled to justify the fractional lowering of their prices.[34] So strong was the effect of the tradition of trust and honesty in the trade that even when this began to break down, vestiges of it remained in the fact that there was always a reason given for the holding of a "selling off". Moreover, in many cases these reasons were true. There was also a certain style of pseudo-confidentiality in advertising which seemed to be the logical outcome of so many accusations of dishonesty in the trade. In these kinds of advertisements, the customer was supposedly made privy to the inside secrets and deepest workings of the retailing world by the technical explanations of the whys and wherefores of the step about to be taken. In some cases the public was decidedly deceived as in the Cheapside House advertisement. As we know with hindsight that the

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34. Ablett, op cit., pp. 20-23 and 30-41.

business continued to run under the same name and proprietors for at least another three years, we can definitely call the advertisers' bluff and assume that there was quite a bit of "puff" and probably relatively little "sacrifice". We must, however, admire the careful wording of the advertisement. The owners implied that they were selling out to return to England but made no mention of whether this was a permanent or a temporary measure. Thus they had a water-tight reason for holding a sale while leaving open the question of their return to do more and profitable business in the colony. The fact that there was an eighteen month gap in their advertising implies not just that they went back to England but that they judged opportunity in their line of business in the colony to be well worth their return. By 1 March 1845, the business interests and clientele of D. and S. Benjamin were very clearly indicated in their advertisement of that date (see Clipping 2). Their business catered to the lower socio-economic groups of the colony and it was expanding to the point that they had to extend their premises. Quaintly, they claimed - as did many others - to be "the OLDEST Establishment in the Colony". Batman would have been quite startled had he learnt of the strength of his phantom business rivalry! Like many other businessmen, D. and S. Benjamin were not in the least coy about advertising openly that they would sell to the trade, to hawkers and to up-country storekeepers.

Another business which catered for a lower class public and was the first to publish advertisements with long detailed price lists, was A. Somerville's Scotch Warehouse. By advertising in this way, businessmen like Somerville made it possible for potential clients to shop from the security of their homes through the comfortably anonymous columns of the newspaper before fronting up to the shops. The citadels of consumerism had been experienced in their recent past in England as forbiddingly exclusive. Now lower class people could enter them knowing the price and quality of goods available and were thus less at the mercy of the shop assistants. (In writing the history of Marks and Spencer, G. Rees wrote that on Marks' stall

> his merchandise was displayed in open baskets with the price clearly marked, so that the customer could inspect each article and know without asking what it would cost ... He classified his merchandise according to price, and placed all those costing one penny in one section



CHEAPSIDE HOUSE

(The OLDEST Establishment in the Colony)

OPPOSITE COWELL'S, ROYAL HOTEL.

D. & S. BENJAMIN

Beg to notify to the Settlers and Storekeepers, that on account of the great increase of business they have experienced this Season, they have been compelled to make large additions to their already extensive premises, and have fitted-up

WARE ROOMS,

IN WHICH WILL BE FOUND

EVERY ARTICLE REQUISITE FOR SETTLERS & DEALERS.

D. AND S. BENJAMIN

Have also received an excellent Assortment of Goods per "PARKFIELD," among which are the following, to which they would particularly invite the attention of the Settlers:—Navy Blankets, Serge Shirts, Twilled Scotch ditto, Striped Cotton ditto, Woollen and Cotton Cord Trousers, lined and unlined Moleskin ditto, besides Orleans Cloths, Hosiery and Prints—also,

FLOOR CLOTH,

WHICH THEY CAN SUPPLY IN ANY QUANTITY.

Clipping 2. The Port Phillip Gazette, 1 March 1845

> and all those costing more in another, where the prices were marked. Above the penny section hung a board with the slogan, 'Don't ask the price, it's a penny'. This proved to be one of the most successful advertising slogans ever invented ... it corresponded to a genuine popular need. 35

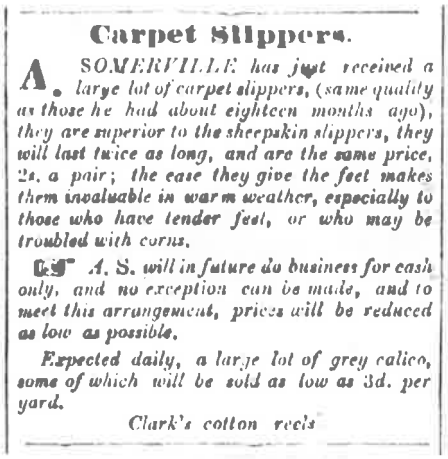
Marks did this in Leeds in the 1880s.) To return to the colony of Victoria in the 1850s, the list of cloth for sale at Mr Somerville's with its calicoes, longcloth and osnaburgs, huckabacks, navy blue prints (extensively worn by "the common people and servant girls" at this time[36]) and ginghams show that he was catering for a working class custom. Certainly, there were some muslins for sale but this should be interpreted as a sign of working class affluence rather than as an effort to secure the custom of ladies. Silks, brocades and woollens were conspicuous by their absence. Somerville had a delightfully direct and to modern eyes quaint and amusing advertising style as is evidenced by his advertisement for a rather special line he had for sale in carpet slippers (see Clipping 3).

The first examples of advertisements whose content was more than purely informative appear by 1849 to 1850. The Temple of Fashion, another large Jewish

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35. G. Rees, St Michael. A History of Marks and Spencer, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969, pp. 6-7.

36. Ablett, op cit., p. 102.



Carpet Slippers.

A. SOMERVILLE has just received a large lot of carpet slippers, (same quality as those he had about eighteen months ago), they are superior to the sheepskin slippers, they will last twice as long, and are the same price, 2s. a pair; the ease they give the feet makes them invaluable in warm weather, especially to those who have tender feet, or who may be troubled with corns.

☞ A. S. will in future do business for cash only, and no exception can be made, and to meet this arrangement, prices will be reduced as low as possible.

Expected daily, a large lot of grey calico, some of which will be sold as low as 3d. per yard.

Clark's cotton reels

Clipping 3. The Port Phillip Gazette, 14 March 1846

working class oriented business, gave notice on 15 December 1849 that it would open on 17 December and contained advertising copy of distinctly political overtones. It also appealed to a knowledge and interest in fashion among its working class clientele. As early as 1840, a William Empson had advertised that he had imported some French bonnets,[37] giving evidence that long before the gold rushes, the people of Melbourne were avid for the latest in fashion and could afford to pay for it. Another business which advertised with that peculiar blend of high and low class appeal which characterized colonial advertising precisely because it was addressed to the lower classes, was William Williamson's Beadalbane House. Probably only in the colonies was there such consistent and widespread use of advertising copy which mentioned "FASHIONABLE NOVELTIES in dress" and "extensive stock of SLOP CLOTHING" in the one breath. To return to the Temple of Fashion, the goods which were to be offered formed

> an EXTENSIVE STOCK selected in London, Paris, Bohemia and Other Continental Markets .... Arrangements also [were to be] made for regular periodic shipments of everything new and useful, to suit the tastes of the inhabitants of VICTORIA, in order that when SEPARATION

37. The Port Phillip Gazette, 17 August 1840.

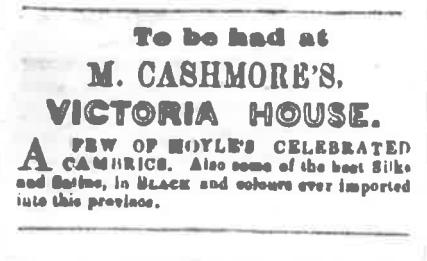
> be granted, and Melbourne became the SEAT OF GOVERNMENT, the Aristocracy, Gentry, Merchant, Tradesman and Mechanics may be supplied with 'All that Fancy can suggest and Art supply'. 38

The list of goods offered for sale by the Temple of Fashion once again makes it clear that it was aiming for the tradesmen and the mechanics rather than the aristocracy and the gentry. However, this public - unlike its counterpart in England - was conceived of by the businessmen advertising to attract it as aware of fashion, interested in and able to afford novelty, and, already, having some kind of pride in the colony of Victoria.

A business exemplifying all the arguments contained in this chapter to date was Mr Cashmore's Victoria House (see Clipping 4). Mr Cashmore advertised to try and attract both ends of the market but the general tone of his copy shows him to have been basing his business on the increasingly wealthy mechanics and labourers. While he was proud to say he stocked silk mercery (the absolute pinnacle of the trade), he was writing in the same breath that no other house could undersell him in the vending of the same. In this way, it could be claimed that the pride retailers now take in not being under-sold - to the extent of altering their prices - had its origins in the advertising campaigns of businesses based on working class custom. Mr Cashmore's advertisement of 13 November 1844 (see Clipping 5) displayed a feature of the colonial retail economy which could be very advantageous to the working class consumer of luxuries. This was the oscillation between glut and dearth of consumer goods. Given that surplus clothing was still a luxury and that the purchase of a few pennyworth of ribbon or flowers could re-make women's clothing at least, into the latest fashion, it sufficed to wait until the colony's auction rooms and retail drapery shops were brim-full and businessmen started under-cutting each other in an effort to turn-over their stock. Hence Mr Cashmore's advertisement of 26 March 1850 (see Clipping 6) which purports to take the public into his confidence against the methods of his rivals and asks them to rely on their own judgement by visiting his shop. His

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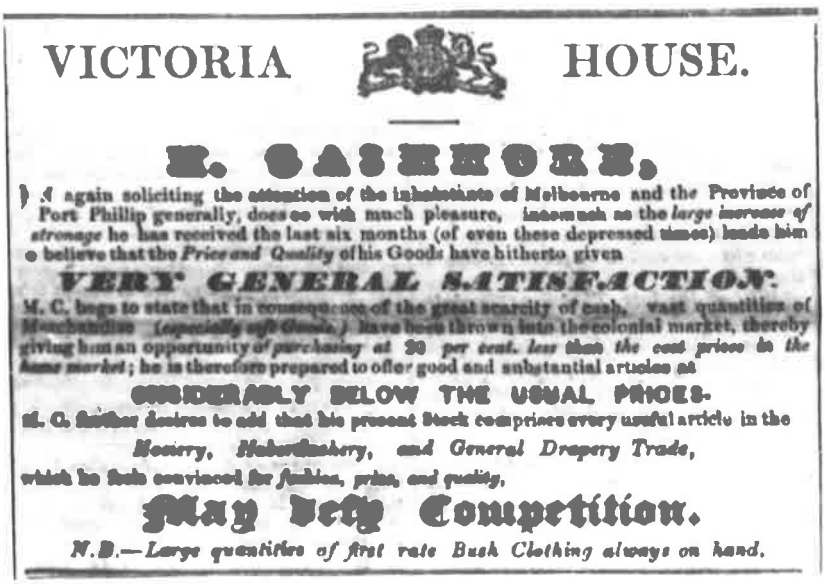
38. The Port Phillip Gazette, 15 December 1849.



To be had at
M. CASHMORE'S,
VICTORIA HOUSE.

A FEW OF HOYLE'S CELEBRATED CAMBRICS. Also some of the best Silks and Satins, in BLACK and colours ever imported into this province.

Clipping 4. The Port Phillip Gazette, 23 September 1846.



VICTORIA HOUSE.

M. CASHMORE,

Is again soliciting the attention of the inhabitants of Melbourne and the Province of Port Phillip generally, does so with much pleasure, inasmuch as the *large increase of stronage* he has received the last six months (of even these depressed times) leads him to believe that the *Price and Quality* of his Goods have hitherto given

VERY GENERAL SATISFACTION.

M. C. begs to state that in consequence of the great scarcity of cash, vast quantities of Merchandize (*especially soft Goods,*) have been thrown into the colonial market, thereby giving him an opportunity of *purchasing at 20 per cent. less than the cost prices in the home market*; he is therefore prepared to offer good and substantial articles at

CONSIDERABLY BELOW THE USUAL PRICES.

M. C. further desires to add that his present Stock comprises every useful article in the

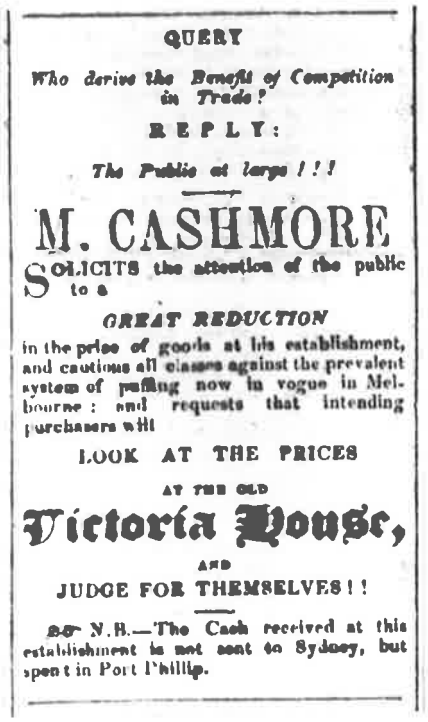
Mercery, Haberdashery, and General Drapery Trade,

which he feels convinced for *fashion, price, and quality,*

May Defy Competition.

N.B.—Large quantities of first rate Bush Clothing always on hand.

Clipping 5. The Port Phillip Gazette, 13 November 1844



QUERY

Who derive the Benefit of Competition in Trade?

REPLY:

The Public at large!!!

M. CASHMORE

SOLICITS the attention of the public to a

GREAT REDUCTION

in the price of goods at his establishment, and cautions all classes against the prevalent system of puffing now in vogue in Melbourne: and requests that intending purchasers will

LOOK AT THE PRICES

AT THE OLD

Victoria House,

AND

JUDGE FOR THEMSELVES!!

☞ N.B.—The Cash received at this establishment is not sent to Sydney, but spent in Port Phillip.

Clipping 6. The Port Phillip Gazette, 26 March 1850

injunction to note well that he was economically loyal to the colony of Port Phillip presages the Sydney-Melbourne rivalry and introduces an element of parochial patriotism in his advertising. His advertisement of 19 August 1846, repeated on 23 September 1846 (Clipping 4) like Somerville's notice of muslins for sale are an indication rather of working class purchasing power than an attempt to secure even middle class custom (Hoyle's prints succeeding navy blue prints in popularity among servant girls in the colony some twenty years before the same trend emerged in England).

Brief mention should be made finally of W. Ferguson whose "Emporium of Fashion" Commerce House was advertised towards the end of 1850. Ferguson went on to advertise in The Argus (see Clipping 7) and his style was very modern with its lavish use of space, variable layout, price listing and the development of a distinctive advertising style which went beyond the mere need to inform. Already in The Port Phillip Gazette he was taking up over a column with his advertisements and claiming, among other things, that he was selling at London prices. The irony of this claim is that those who were drawn in by it could never have afforded the same goods new, at London prices.

IMPORTANT TO THE PUBLIC.

FERGUSON'S

Grand Emporium of Fashion,

AND GENERAL

CLOTHING DEPOT,

COMMERCE HOUSE,

SWANSTON STREET.

NOW OPEN.

W. FERGUSON, being fully determined to meet the wants of the daily increasing population of Port Phillip, and to enable the colonists to secure to themselves clothing of the best materials and newest styles, combined with the most fashionable cut, and first-class workmanship, with pleasure announces the opening of his

READY MADE CLOTHING

AND

BESPOKE DEPARTMENT.

In which will be found the most reasonable materials ever imported into the colony.

In introducing this department to attention, the Proprietor would impress upon the public that the goods for this, as well as the other Departments of the house, have been selected by the home buyer, from the first manufactories in the United Kingdom, whilst the Continent (happily now in a state of quietude and repose) has afforded striking proofs of the beauties of her manufactures. In fact, the Proprietor has been indefatigable in selecting every novelty which perseverance and capital could command.

The list of Prices which is annexed will be found to offer undeniable advantages; and every care will be taken to produce only articles that will bear comparison with those of the first

West-End Houses of London.

The CUTTING DEPARTMENT is conducted by an artist, of 10 years successful experience in one of the first London Houses, whose business it is to inform himself of every new style that makes its appearance in either London or Paris, so that parties may have their clothing cut in any style; and in strict keeping with their favorite National Costumes, thus presenting to the requirements of all, a desideratum of the highest import; and it is particularly requested that no garment will be returned unless it affords the most complete satisfaction.

In addition to the extensive stock of ready garments constantly in Stock, there is every variety and style of

BOYS' AND YOUTHS' CLOTHING,

from the smallest size, to that verging on manhood, also at prices nothing above London rates.

MOURNING SUITS

In every size always on Hand, or made to order in a few hours.

W. Ferguson in reference to this department, would assure the public, that it will never be found wanting, so that parties may place full reliance on the resources of his establishment for providing them with mourning garments within the shortest possible notice.

PRICE LIST FOR 1850.

Gentlemens Dress and Surtout Coats.

	£	s.	d.
Black or colored dress or Surtout coats from	0	19	6
Superior ditto ditto	1	6	6
Extra fine ditto ditto	1	11	6
Saxony Wool ditto ditto	1	15	0
Imperial ditto ditto	2	2	6
The very best Elastoral West of England finished in the first style of workmanship for	2	12	6

Gentlemen's Cloth and Fancy Doeskin Trousers.

	£	s.	d.
Black cloth dress trousers from	0	9	6
Superior ditto ditto	0	12	6
Extra fine ditto ditto	0	14	6
Saxony wool ditto ditto	0	16	6
Very best West of England	1	1	0
Dark fancy patterns, Doeskin trousers	0	7	6
Choice ditto ditto	0	9	6
Elegant fancy ditto	0	12	6
All the newest patterns, tweed, doeskins	0	17	6
Superfine elastic and best fancy Kerseymeres	0	19	6

Gentlemen's Cloth Dark and Light Fancy Pattern Vests.

	s.	d.
Black cloth roll collar vest	5	6
Superior do	7	6
Extra fine do	9	6
Saxony wool do	10	6
The very best West of England ditto ditto	12	6
Plain and figured satin vests	5	6
Elegant do do	7	6
French black satin, plain and figured	10	6
An immense assortment of light summer vests	2	6
Scholefield's best summer cashmere	3	6
White Quilting and Marcella do	5	6
Dark striped and figured patterns	2	6
Rich and choice Designs	5	6
Choice cloth Paisley and Persian patterns	9	6

Gentlemen's Light Over Coats,

Clipping 7. The Argus, 18 September 1850. This was a full column advertisement and is continued overpage.

AND

TROPICAL CLOTHING.

	£	s.	d.
The Sylphide in various colors, made from fabric de laine ..	0	7	6
Cashmerette over coats	0	10	6
The Mercury made from Sardinian cloth	1	2	6
The Mercury elegantly made lined throughout with silk ..	1	12	6
Superfine light Saxony doeskin trousers, plain and military..	0	18	0
White and fancy drill trousers..	0	3	6
American drill trousers.....	0	2	6
Summer vests in satin jean, bombazine, zephyr cloth, &c..	0	5	6

Gentlemens Riding, Fishing, Shooting, Lounging, Garden, and Office Coats.

	£	s.	d.
The Royal Albert check riding coat	0	3	6
A capital gardening coat	0	4	0
Useful coat for office or library..	0	6	6
Black riding or shooting coat ..	0	15	0
Very superior quality, do. do....	0	18	6
A splendid quality black or colored	1	5	6
The very best doe or Moreumore do do	1	10	0
Obg bed, striped and mixture doeskin coats	0	13	0
First-rate, do do.....	0	18	6

Boys' vests and bazaar suits, under clothing, shirts, hats, and fancy caps.

In this department the skill and taste of the managing artist, will be exercised to the full satisfaction of parents and guardians, and the want of a competent and tasteful boy's tailor will be no longer felt in that locality.

The stock of boy's ready made clothing in BLACK and MOURNING as well as fancy styles, will be found at all times most complete.

Private rooms provided for the fitting on of adults and children's clothing, so that the certainty of a GOOD FIT may be fully assured.

W. FERGUSON,

Outfitting House,

Beaconsfield Buildings, Parliament-street, Melbourne.

Clipping 7 continued. The Argus, 18 September 1850

Before concluding with an analysis of changes in advertising style as developed in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette between 1838 and 1850, those same columns can be culled for corrobarative evidence of working class interest in spending their surplus earnings on clothing. Paul de Serville described the attempt to get up select assemblies which failed lamentably because of lack of agreement over who was select enough to be invited to the ball.[39] With access to all this fine clothing, the working class in Melbourne developed a passion for balls, which were advertised frequently in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette and occasionally described as happy affairs. Having bought a fine suit or a stylish dress, the next step was to find an occasion on which to wear it. While we have in de Serville, a chronicler of the abortive upper class attempts to create the festive venues in which fine clothes could be shown off, a similar study is wanting of working class organization of balls, fancy dress balls, Masonic balls, Queen's Birthday balls, tradesmen's balls and "select balls"-with-supper held in hotels. There were advertisements for dancing lessons in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette carefully worded so as not to frighten off those whose incomes and lifestyles had not hitherto afforded them the leisure or the means to learn this delightful pastime.

> Dancing! Dancing! Mr Jacobs ... Ladies and Gentlemen from the country who have never learnt, or who have not acquired the present fashionable style, may be instructed on a plan to qualify them with the greatest facility to join the most polite assemblies, and their attendance made convenient to themselves ... 40

No more ingeniously-worded advertisement appeared in the columns of The Port Phillip Gazette. With little effort of imagination one can see Mr Jacobs mopping his brow as he sought to teach the polka to middle-aged men accustomed to wearing heavy boots and not over-used to having to distinguish their left foot from their right. However, thanks to the labours of the Mr Jacobs, the Mr Chambers[41] and the

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39. de Serville, op cit.

40. The Port Phillip Gazette, 11 April 1846.

41. The Port Phillip Gazette, 23 May 1846.

Professor Smarts[42], sufficient numbers of mechanics, labourers and their wives and sweethearts began to enjoy themselves at the sorts of recreational pastimes which were beyond the means of their counterparts in England. To pay for dancing lessons and to buy a new costume for a special occasion was an opportunity for human dignity and pleasure conferred on the working classes by life in the colony. The point to be stressed is that far from lying in drunken multitudes around hotel doors and in the gutters, couples were handing each other in the doors of hotels to partake of select balls and suppers at ten shillings and sixpence a ticket. On 15 September 1847, The Port Phillip Gazette reported a Tradesman's Ball

> ... where youth, health, beauty and elegance were conspicuous, the utmost harmony pervaded the assembly throughout, and it was gratifying to witness and experience the happy and bewitching smiles that basked upon the angelic countenances of the sylph-like forms as they wound their aerial flight amidst the masses of the dance .... Such an evening's amusement is rational, it is creditable, it is improving to society.

It had been more than forty years since the first press report of the social gatherings of the lower classes in the colonies. Those forty years had shown most of the working classes enjoying the fruits of consumerism in irreproachable ways for most of the time. The same forty years had also been chronicled by upper class observers who for various reasons were unable to accept this fact. The difference between the tongue-in-cheek, almost waspish account of the marriage in the Rocks written up in the Sydney Gazette and discussed in Chapter 2, and the account of the trademen's ball in The Port Phillip Gazette is a difference made possible by the consumer habits of the working classes which in turn gave these people definable social self-esteem. It was this self-esteem, rough and ready though it may have been at times, which formed a tangible element in the emerging Australian colonies and was appreciated or angrily misinterpreted as such by the relatively few English visitors who found their way out there and returned home with reports of life in the colonies. As has been shown in Chapter 4, however, even fewer of those visitors and reporters were able to recognize it for what it really was, let alone compare favourably with the

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42. The Age, 1 February 1864.

English case, this intangible quality which has nevertheless been important in the formation of Australian society.

It is perhaps to this quality of self-esteem that the change in advertising style, even before the gold rushes, can be attributed. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, British retail drapery advertising grew more "pushful" until it teetered on the verge of dishonesty, frequently over-balancing into most dubious sales and tricks. Relatively little evidence of such dishonesty in the colonies has been found by this writer. Yet some changes in the style of colonial advertising have been documented in this chapter and more will be examined in Chapter 6. By postulating the growing lower class market, we can see that for those drapers prepared to cater for this trade, there was relatively little need for changes which involved deception or trickery. The sorts of changes we have seen, the open referring to cheapness, the outright listing of prices, the appeal to fashion sense and even the political appeal to parochial pride and public spirit, all these were new advertising gambits possible because they were directed to a new potential public. Evidence of the expansion of working class oriented tailoring and retail drapery business has been given often enough in this chapter to support the assertion that catering to this public was a sound business initiative which made changes in advertising policy very lucrative indeed. The men writing advertising copy to sell certain kinds of material and goods were successful because they had a clear image in their minds of that public and they undertook business initiatives with the preferences and needs of that public in mind. So we have seen by studying the advertising columns of The Port Phillip Gazette that long before the gold rush, the increased purchasing power and consumer interests of the lower classes in Victoria had caused changes in business methods, changes which benefited those classes by making the process of shopping more accessible and therefore more pleasurable.

CHAPTER 6

DIFFERENCES IN THE ADVERTISING POLICIES OF THE AGE AND THE ARGUS

SYNOPSIS

A detailed study of the drapery advertising columns of The Age and The Argus from their inception to the late 1860s showed The Age to have been aiming at a middle to upper middle class readership and The Argus to have been addressing the working class. A gradual reversal of this occurred in the late 1860s. These twenty years also showed an increase in the use of emotive, colourful and persuasive advertising, a trend initiated by drapery businesses competing for working class custom. Discussion of specific businesses and their advertising policies as evidenced by the drapery columns of the two newspapers.

In Chapter 5 we have seen how the style and techniques of drapery and related advertisements in The Port Phillip Gazette showed a predominance of businesses catering for the taste and purchasing power of the working classes. Literary evidence as discussed in Chapter 4, showed that the women and men of the working classes were very much to the fore as customers in drapery shops. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, it was argued that the developments in advertising showed the colonial drapery trade moving away from the style of business thought proper in Britain. It was also emphasized that these changes - with all they imply for the standard of living and way of life of the working classes - began taking place in Victoria before the gold rushes. As Melbourne became more established, there was an increase in the number - though not the proportion - of the businesses which had exclusive and upwardly-mobile pretensions in direct imitation of British firms. In Chapter 4, it was shown that these businesses could not keep themselves inviolate from working class custom, as, with the discovery of gold, one of the first things people wanted to spend their money on was fine clothing. It is an important part of the argument of this thesis, moreover, that these businesses were never to assume the predominant social and economic place in the retailing trade of the colony that their counterparts in Britain held at least until the First World War.[1] However, the advertising style of these businesses remained

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1. Trevor Wilson, The Myriad Faces of War, Polity/Blackwell, Cambridge, 1986, p. 724, records that thanks to reasonably well-paid work provided by the First World War, young women had a regular disposable income for the first time in the history of people of their sex, age and social class. Thanks to this economic revolution, sales of soap increased markedly "in part because of the increased purchasing power of working class women". Trevor Wilson pointed out that this newly-acquired capacity to fulfil their desires for personal cleanliness, attracted less comment than the working girls' purchases of luxury clothing which provoked censure or mockery as evidence of their thriftlessness. It is notable for the argument of this thesis that firstly, such spending patterns provoked comment at all, being a novelty in working class life in England more than one hundred years after it was an accepted part of working class life in the Australian colonies. Secondly, as has been argued throughout this thesis, working class attempts to imitate upper class luxury consumption patterns automatically attracted censure or derision from upper class commentators - whether they spent their money on drink or attractive clothes, working class men and women were derided - if they also managed at the same time to stretch the budget to food and soap, no comment was made by contemporaries. We are indebted to the work of historians of the calibre of Trevor Wilson for drawing to our attention a balanced view of their spending patterns.

very exclusive in the colony and acted as a counterpart to the style and layout of the more numerous businesses catering for the working classes.

The main argument of this chapter is that by examining in detail the drapery advertisement columns of The Age and The Argus, we can see a polarization of advertising in the two newspapers according to the socio-economic class the businesses hoped to attract. The most exclusive shops advertised in The Age throughout the 1850s and 1860s and it will be demonstrated that the style and layout of the drapery advertising columns of The Age were clearly aiming to attract the middle class (or even those with upper middle class pretensions) and were therefore closer to the British model of retailing. The most unashamedly working class businesses advertised at length and in a completely different style in the columns of The Argus. Where a business advertised in both papers, it will be shown that quite clearly it suppressed or added copy according to the newspaper in which the advertisement was to appear. A secondary argument of this chapter will be to establish that the astonishing range and number of drapery businesses operating successfully, as witnessed by their continued presence in the advertising columns over many years, is of itself a powerful indication of the consumer power and interests of all classes in Victoria. Lastly, it will be shown that the evolution of advertising itself was strongly influenced by working class consumer interests. It is an interesting and hitherto unstated contention by historians of the 1850s and 1860s in Victoria, that simply by studying the drapery advertising columns of Melbourne's two principal newspapers, we can find corroborative evidence about the political and social convictions of their editors. This was only possible because the per capital standard of living in the colony was high and consumption patterns continued to stress clothing as the priority consumer item, particularly for the working classes. Thus both working and middle class tastes were catered for and reflected in newspaper advertising at a time when in Britain there was no question of the working class having the consumer power to influence the retail drapery trade in any significant way at all. Towards the end of the 1860s there was a change in the type of drapery advertisement placed in The Age, showing an

increasingly working class bias, and by the early 1870s there was a complete change in the drapery columns of The Argus. They became less informative, less copious, more exclusive and generally more upper middle class oriented.

The same twenty years which saw a swing in the social class orientation of The Argus and The Age through their drapery advertising columns, also showed an increase in the use of emotive colourful and persuasive advertising. It is contended that this type of advertising was begun by drapery businesses competing for working class custom. Advertisements became more detailed, more informative and gradually came to contain copy not immediately related to the actual description of goods for sale. This was a trend which had emerged by 1850 as was shown in Chapter 5 by an analysis of advertising in The Port Phillip Gazette and it continued throughout the 1850s and 1860s mainly in the columns of The Argus. That this development in advertising should arise in the manner of conducting businesses trying to attract working class custom was, of course, a logical development from the British model. As was argued in Chapters 4 and 5, the more exclusive a firm was in England, the less it resorted to advertising. In Victoria, the very structure of the retail drapery businesses was being changed by the purchasing power and inclinations of the working classes and this was reflected in the amount of advertising, the newspaper chosen to advertise in, the style of advertisements and the changes and developments in advertising methods.

It was argued in Chapter 4 that the literary sources provided ample evidence of the importance of clothing as a consumer item in Victoria. The observations of Richard Twopeny published in 1882 at the end of the period under discussion, constitute parallel literary evidence of the changes in the colonial retail drapery trade as witnessed in newspaper advertising. The importance of clothing as part of the desired and expected way of life of the working classes as witnessed by Twopeny was further corroborated by the accounts of businesses such as Langley's at Horsham which showed shop assistants, both men and women, spending the major part of their weekly wages on clothing and/or its component parts.[2] The visual impact of the taste in dress on the part of the working classes in Victoria as described by Twopeny and echoed in

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2. Manuscript Accounts of Langley's, Horsham. Melbourne University Archives.

newspaper descriptions of public events, was a statement of the standard of living and way of life in the colony that had evolved over forty years. Undoubtedly it was accentuated by the gold rushes but a major argument of this thesis is that it was a force in the social life of the colonies begun by the choice of working women and men to spend surplus income on clothing from the very beginnings of settlement in Australia. What Twopeny stressed over and over again about the taste of the working classes in the colonies as he saw it in the late 1870s was the result of about eighty years of a higher standard of living. Over that time those classes had chosen to exercise the consumer bent which had led them to acquire the taste that struck him so forcibly. Historians who see the gold rushes as a starting point for the sorts of consumer developments which raised expectations regarding the minimum acceptable way of life, have ignored the ample evidence that businesses in the colonies had prospered by catering for these consumer tastes since the 1790s. Those historians who persist in stressing alcohol consumption in the colonies ignore the economic reality that millions of pounds were being spent annually on clothing and its materials by a relatively very small colony whose capital city did not even reach a population of 250,000 by 1875.[3]

Before turning to an analysis of newspaper advertising in the Melbourne press, it is worthwhile reiterating a few of the many observations made by Twopeny about the standards of dress in the colony. He wrote, for example, of servant girls asking their mistresses for a loan of their dresses so that they might have them copied by their dressmakers:

> The greater part of the high wages which servants get is spent on dress. If ever they condescend to wear their mistresses' left-off clothes, it is only for work in the house; but the trouble they take to copy the exact cut of their mistresses' clothes is very amusing ... [4]

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3. Dingle, op cit.

4. Twopeny, op cit., p. 155.

This should be compared with the fact that in England a place in service was looked upon as a vital source of cast-off clothing[5], and that part of servants' annual pay was the material with which to make their uniforms. The resultant social consequences in England of either the human degradation of being obliged to wear one's employer's old clothing or the economic deprivation of being forced to accept payment in kind of serviceable rather than fashionable or pretty materials, gives strong social evidence to explain the independence of colonial servants so bemoaned by English observers and employers. The phenomenon of second hand clothing being a normal part of the experience of the poorer classes in England lasted until at least the First World War, which raised women's social and economic prestige by turning her into a wage earner outside the context of domestic service, where payment was nugatory and often in kind or other forms of wage earning where exploitation was so excessive that it robbed the pittance earned of any economic importance in a discussion of consumerism. Without a disposable income, working women in the nineteenth century could not consume such luxury goods as new clothing. She became an important economic factor both as a producer and a consumer. The working class woman, and particularly her daughters, began to feel it a mark of inferiority to wear the soiled and cast-off clothes of other women.[6]

There was an overwhelming consensus of opinion regarding the high standard and dress of servant girls in the colony. Thus the nursemaids Mrs Aspinall noticed with their charges in the Melbourne Botanical Gardens were in all probability not gentlewomen fallen on hard times, which was the immediate rather romantic explanation that appeared to her cast of mind.[7] They were probably just young working women

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5. F. Thompson, op cit., p. 32.

6. Rees, op cit., p. 100.

7. Aspinall, op cit., pp. 92-93 wrote that she was struck by the particularly nice-looking nursery maids she saw in the Botanical Gardens, who dressed in clean muslin dresses, brown straw hats, and with parasols in hand, looked very superior to the ordinary class of servants; "indeed, I heard of several nursery maids who had not been born to servitude, but who had been reduced to it by the adverse circumstances of their parents who had emigrated to the colony".

with good taste who lived in a social and economic environment in which some fifty years before it was the case in England, they were able to pass on their love of pretty clothing to their daughters. As Twopeny mused:

> How they [the women of the 'first generation of Victorians' who had shown 'a disposition to abandon the ugly'] can afford to dress as well as they do, they and their mothers best know ... the mere fact of being able to cut out a dress so as not to look dowdy shows natural taste. It is the rarest of sights to see a real Melbourne girl look dowdy. Her taste sometimes runs riot: it is exuberant, and becomes vulgar and flash; but even then the vulgarity and flashness are of a superior type to those of her equals across the ocean. (my emphasis) 8

Over and over again the fact that struck Twopeny was that the working classes were well-dressed. Corroborative evidence for his observations lies in the Customs statistics detailing imports and in the most ample evidence remaining to us concerning the retail drapery trade: newspaper advertising. Twopeny's insistence on the standard of dress among the working class was a result of the inevitable contrast that he himself made repeatedly with his English experience -

> In every town the shop girls and factory girls - in short, all the women belonging to the industrial classes - are well dressed ... 9
>
> But it is not among the grand monde ... that you must go to discover taste. I am not sure that, class for class, the rich do not show the least taste in their apparel.... Compare the Melbourne with the Birmingham or Manchester factory girl, or the young lady in a Collins Street retail establishment with the shop-girl in any but the most aristocratic part of London; the old country will come out second best. 10

And yet Ablett writing almost contemporaneously remarked on the improvement in the standard of living of the poorer classes in England as expressed by the greater pleasure they could afford in more and better quality clothing:

> Recalling the memory of those days [the 1850s], I cannot help comparing the abundance of clothing that even servant girls now possess [the 1870s] to the scanty equipment that the poorer people of decent station had to put up with then. There was always a great demand for the Hessian wrappers, in which our goods came packed ... and Reece [his employer]

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8. Twopeny, op cit., p. 76.

9. ibid.

10. Twopeny, op cit., pp. 75-76.

> could always ... collect a mob of old women round the door by turning a bundle of these on to the pavement, and would generally manage to get full price for them. 11

A final example of Twopeny's observation about the difference in dress in the colony concerns the effect of the climate on what people wore and the resultant diminution of externally evident class distinctions:

> In summer, suitable concessions [to the climate] become obligatory, and dresses are made of the thinnest and lightest material.... It is then that the poorer classes are able to dress best, the material being cheap ... during quite half the Australian year the poor meet the rich, if not on an equality, at any rate on much fairer terms than at home with regard to dress. Servants, of course, ape their mistresses' dressed as in England ... but ... are much less dowdy than English servants. 12

The drapery advertising columns of the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s containing almost twice as many advertisements in summer as in winter, supported Twopeny's contention. This was an interesting aspect of the effect of the Australian climate on the way of life of the working classes.

* * * * * *

The process by which the poorer classes acquired the taste which sprang so often to Twopeny's notice can be inferred by analysis of newspaper advertising. As contended in Chapter 5, it was not merely the drapery columns which provided evidence of working class expectations, but also the advertisements for fireworks evenings, balls, supper dances and the like. Even the price of theatre tickets was not prohibitive to those on lower incomes and such occasions provided yet another opportunity for an evening out in which to display one's finery.[13] The Argus of 13 August 1859, for example, contained seven consecutive advertisements for the Argyle Rooms Dancing Academy which was to open that evening to the strains of Monsieur Lauscen's

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11. Ablett, op cit., p. 102.

12. Twopeny, op cit., p. 78.

13. The Argus, 8 August 1859. At the Princess and the Olympic Theatre, the prices in the pit to hear Janet Pride and Major Canna were one shilling respectively.

"celebrated band" from eight in the evening to half past eleven and all for the admission price of 2s.6d.[14] However, the clearest and most interesting evidence of the way of life of the Victorians comes from a study of the drapery advertising columns. Those of The Argus will be examined first and then there will be an analysis and comparison drawn with those of The Age.

The best way to approach the diversity of evidence contained in the advertising columns of The Argus is to select a few firms which advertised consistently or wrote unusual advertising copy over the years to the mid 1870s and analyze the style of their copy. At the outset it should be remembered that while The Argus was the more expensive newspaper, it had a greater circulation at this time and its advertising space was considerably cheaper. The decision to offer cheap and plentiful space to advertising was in itself a momentous one for the times and supports Serle's contention that Edward Wilson, the editor of The Argus was "a Radical of the Radicals".[15] Wilson's successor, George Higinbotham (editor of The Argus 1856-59) was also described by Serle as a "liberal radical".[16] There was a conscious - and highly successful - policy to encourage advertising in The Argus.

> THE LEADING JOURNAL The rapid progress of The Argus has now placed its circulation not only far above that of any of the other Melbourne Journals but within a trifle of all of them put together.... Advertisers, therefore will judge for themselves whether publicity will be best combined with economy, by presenting their notices to the same number of readers through the agency of one paper or three [auctioneers especially should advertise] in that which finds its way wherever ["the inferior journals"] do and goes past and beyond them all. 17

We know this policy was successful as The Argus was often obliged to print an apology to the effect that advertisements had had to be excluded because of pressure on

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14. The Argus, 13 August 1859.

15. G. Serle, The Golden Age, A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1963, pp 18-19 "a Radical of Radicals" was how Henry Parkes, a friend of Wilson's described him.

16. op cit., p. 252.

17. The Argus, 2 January 1851.

space.[18] By contrast, the first editorial of The Age reflected the more conservative attitude of the era that advertising was decidedly not "de rigueur":

> A theory of journalism has been locally adopted which makes the newspaper too exclusively a medium for advertisements, and deals with everything pertaining to literary excellence as of secondary importance. 19

As far as advertising was concerned, it was true that for a little over twenty years The Argus devoted more of its total space to it. As for "literary excellence", there was really not much difference in the high quality of journalism in either newspaper.

The first businessman in the colony to exploit the value of advertising in anything like the sense we know of it today was W. Ferguson whose "Grand Emporium of Fashion and General Clothing Depot, Commerce House" was advertised in The Port Phillip Gazette and, with the publication of The Argus, extensively in this later newspaper. Ferguson did not advertise in The Age. At three shillings an inch, Ferguson's full-length column front page advertisements in The Argus indicated that as a businessman he considered that money spent on advertising was a good investment. Some fifteen to twenty years later there were still businessmen in the colony whose business methods were modelled more strictly on the British principles and who were therefore reluctant to spend any money whatever on advertising. One such businessman was Walter Hitchcock whose understanding of how best to conduct a retail drapery business was a hybrid of the colonial and British principles and will be discussed in Chapter 7. To return to Ferguson. Aspects of his advertisements, such as the full description of garments with prices clearly listed, and the type of garments themselves in the ready-made clothing department, show him to have been aiming for a large lower class market. In addition, the language of his advertising was most reassuring. He declared himself ready at the minimum prices

> to enable the colonists to secure to themselves clothing of the best materials and newest styles, combined with the most fashionable cut, and first class workmanship.

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18. The Argus, 6 September 1858; 27 September 1859.

19. The Age, 17 October 1854.

Moreover Ferguson wrote that

> it is particularly requested that no garment will be retained unless it affords the most complete satisfaction.

Lastly, he assured his potential clientele that there were

> Private rooms provided for the fitting on of adults' and children's clothing, so that the certainty of a GOOD FIT may be ... ensured. 20

Having brought his business to the eye of the public by the length, detail and style of his copy, Ferguson was not a man to rest on his laurels. He continued to spend money lavishly on advertising space in The Argus and his emphasis on fashion and novelty was an indication that these luxuries were coming within the grasp of the working classes. At 10½d. a shawl at the bottom of the range and 2s.10½d. at the top, Ferguson was definitely aiming to establish his custom among those at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Yet there was sufficient money to be made from working class custom to warrant this copious advertising, the language of which was designed to entice working class women and men into the delightful feeling that they too had the right to follow fashion. If Ferguson was competing with pub-owners for the surplus spending power of the lower classes, the enormous amount of money and space he spent on advertising in The Port Phillip Gazette and The Argus argues that he had secured a majority of that spending power. The language of his copy was usually more high-flown than the prices of the garments advertised would have warranted, but as already mentioned, he also made concessions to any potential insecurity about entering his Commerce House by emphasizing that he had made "remarkably cheap purchases" in certain lines and that any garment could be returned if it did not give perfect satisfaction. These advertisements and others like them, such as W. Williamson's of Breadalbane House (who also did not advertise in The Age) (see Clipping 8)[21] were offering a range of goods to the lower class market before the discovery of gold in the colony. Williamson declared on 24 November 1850 to "The Melbourne Public, Country Settlers and Storekeepers" that

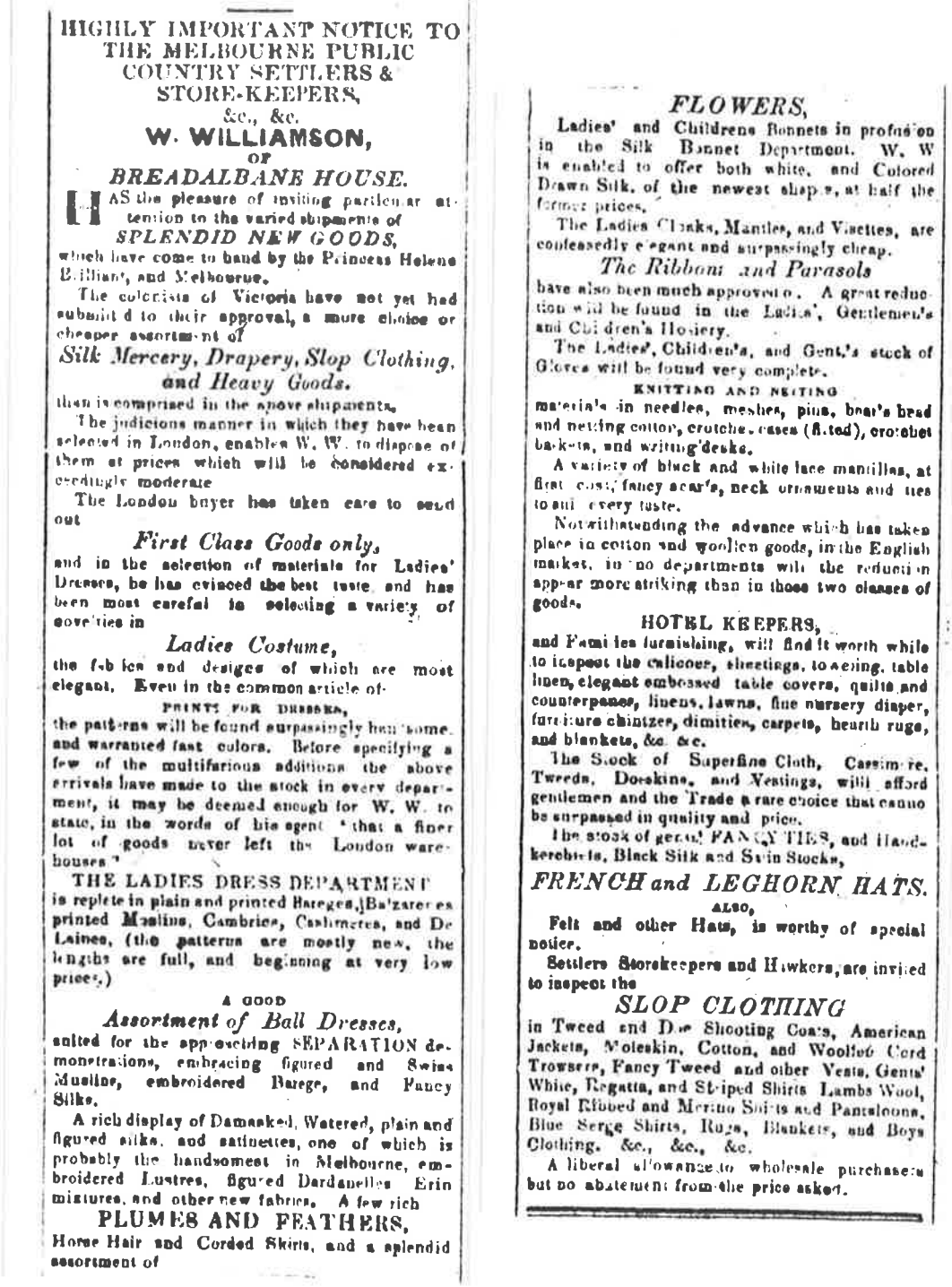
> The colonists of Victoria have not yet had submitted to their approval, a more choice or cheaper assortment of Silk Mercery, Drapery, Slop Clothing and Heavy Goods. 22

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20. The Argus, 22 November 1850.

21. The Argus, 24 November 1850.

22. ibid.



HIGHLY IMPORTANT NOTICE TO THE MELBOURNE PUBLIC COUNTRY SETTLERS & STORE-KEEPERS, &c., &c.

W. WILLIAMSON,

OF

BREADALBANE HOUSE.

HAS the pleasure of inviting particular attention to the varied shipments of

SPLENDID NEW GOODS,

which have come to hand by the Princess Helena Brilliant, and Melbourne.

The colonists of Victoria have not yet had submitted to their approval, a more choice or cheaper assortment of

Silk Mercery, Drapery, Slop Clothing, and Heavy Goods.

than is comprised in the above shipments.

The judicious manner in which they have been selected in London, enables W. W. to dispose of them at prices which will be considered exceedingly moderate

The London buyer has taken care to send out

First Class Goods only,

and in the selection of materials for Ladies' Dresses, he has evinced the best taste and has been most careful in selecting a variety of novelties in

Ladies Costume,

the fabrics and designs of which are most elegant. Even in the common article of

PRINTS FOR DRESSES,

the patterns will be found surpassingly handsome, and warranted fast colors. Before specifying a few of the multifarious additions the above arrivals have made to the stock in every department, it may be deemed enough for W. W. to state, in the words of his agent "that a finer lot of goods never left the London warehouses."

THE LADIES DRESS DEPARTMENT

is replete in plain and printed Barèges, Balzarines printed Muslins, Cambrics, Cashmeres, and De Laines, (the patterns are mostly new, the lengths are full, and beginning at very low prices.)

A GOOD

Assortment of Ball Dresses,

suited for the approaching SEPARATION demonstrations, embracing figured and Swiss Muslins, embroidered Barege, and Fancy Silks.

A rich display of Damasked, Watered, plain and figured silks, and satinettes, one of which is probably the handsomest in Melbourne, embroidered Lustres, figured Dardanelles Erin mixtures, and other new fabrics. A few rich

PLUMES AND FEATHERS,

Horse Hair and Corded Skirts, and a splendid assortment of

FLOWERS,

Ladies' and Childrens Bonnets in profusion in the Silk Bonnet Department. W. W is enabled to offer both white, and Colored Drawn Silk, of the newest shapes, at half the former prices.

The Ladies Cloaks, Mantles, and Visettes, are confessedly elegant and surpassingly cheap.

The Ribbons and Parasols

have also been much approved. A great reduction will be found in the Ladies', Gentlemen's and Children's Hosiery.

The Ladies', Children's, and Gent.'s stock of Gloves will be found very complete.

KNITTING AND NETTING

materials in needles, meshes, pins, boar's head and netting cotton, crotchet cases (fitted), crotchet baskets, and writing desks.

A variety of black and white lace mantillas, at first cost; fancy scarfs, neck ornaments and ties to suit every taste.

Notwithstanding the advance which has taken place in cotton and woollen goods, in the English market, in no departments will the reduction appear more striking than in those two classes of goods.

HOTEL KEEPERS,

and Families furnishing, will find it worth while to inspect the calicoes, sheetings, toweling, table linen, elegant embossed table covers, quilts and counterpanes, linens, lawns, fine nursery diaper, furniture chintzes, dimities, carpets, hearth rugs, and blankets, &c. &c.

The Stock of Superfine Cloth, Cassimere, Tweeds, Doeskins, and Vestings, will afford gentlemen and the Trade a rare choice that cannot be surpassed in quality and price.

The stock of genl FANCIES, and Handkerchiefs, Black Silk and Satin Stocks,

FRENCH and LEGHORN HATS.

ALSO,

Felt and other Hats, is worthy of special notice.

Settlers Storekeepers and Hawkers, are invited to inspect the

SLOP CLOTHING

in Tweed and Doe Shooting Coats, American Jackets, Moleskin, Cotton, and Woollen Cord Trowsers, Fancy Tweed and other Vests, Gents' White, Regatta, and Striped Shirts Lambs Wool, Royal Ribbed and Merino Shirts and Pantaloons, Blue Serge Shirts, Rugs, Blankets, and Boys Clothing. &c., &c., &c.

A liberal allowance to wholesale purchasers but no abatement from the price asked.

Clipping 8. The Argus, 24 November 1850.

At a time when the population of Victoria numbered just 72,000, working class purchasing power was supporting a number of large stores like Williamson's and Ferguson's as well as many smaller suburban establishments like Fenwick Brothers of Flagstaff Hill and numerous tailoring firms. With no other evidence but the advertising columns on which to base assertions regarding the size and turnover of businesses like Ferguson's, it is still possible to hazard that the business they did was considerable. On 18 September 1850, Ferguson advertised to "Operative Tailors" that he was "in immediate want of twenty First Class Hands for the bespoke Department". On the same day in yet another advertisement (the fact that he used newspaper space to place multiple advertisements in eye-catching positions also showed him to be a businessman who believed in the value of advertising) he announced

> that the Retail Department of his business has now commenced in the magnificent buildings lately erected by Mr Dawson. Under this arrangement country people and storekeepers will have the opportunity of selecting small lots at the same rates as those purchasing by dozens and pieces, and the City population will be served at London prices which the world knows are small enough. 23

Whether or not Ferguson was selling consistently at London prices - in all probability he sold above them when he could and below them when he had to - the fact remains that he was successfully operating a business catering to the lower socio-economic groups and evolving techniques and language to appeal to those people.

As it was not until after the gold rushes that The Age appeared, it is not possible to compare the style of advertising in its columns from 1850. However, the advertisements in the columns of 1854 form a typical example of the contrast in advertising styles of the two newspapers. While cheapness was occasionally mentioned in the advertisements in The Age, it was but fleetingly touched on and generally the language of advertising copy reflected the deferential tone and upwardly-mobile pretensions still in use in the British retail drapery world. For example, Jones and Thomas Military Tailoring Establishment placed the following advertisement in The Age of 17 October 1854:

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23. The Argus, 18 September 1850.

> Young gentlemen in town ... are requested to observe the wide difference in the style of Slop Clothing [by now sometimes meaning ready-made], and the tasteful garments for young gentlemen made to order by Jones and Thomas. Besides the flagrant difference in style in every article of dress, apparent to the most casual observer, it is well known that the slop clothing is by far the dearest ever worn in the colonies. Jones and Thomas have just received an importation of REAL AGATE COAT STUDS of surpassing beauty. For artistic purity of design and fineness of execution, these studs are unrivalled in Melbourne ...

One imagines that the "young gentlemen" to whom this advertisement was directed were the beaux Clara Aspinall described so admiringly as they draped themselves over the corner of Swanston and Collins Streets, or the immaculately dressed men Kelly saw on the boat who stood out "like dahlias in a cornfield". As such gentlemen were in the minority, so were the drapery advertisements in The Age less numerous and less voluminous than those of The Argus. Where advertisers in The Age were writing of "the artistic purity of design" and "the most recherché style" of their wares, advertisers in The Argus were writing "Thousands in Melbourne will this week buy new suits of clothes".[24] Clearly, two different advertising styles reflecting two different sets of business methods aiming to attract two different classes of clientele were in evidence in the columns of the two newspapers. It is not possible to argue that the cheaper advertising space in The Argus attracted the firms catering to the working class interest and taste in clothing. They used The Argus because they knew what sort of public they would reach through its columns. Likewise, the most exclusive firms such as Alston and Brown and G. and J. Espie used between three and four times as much space in the columns of The Age as they did in the columns of The Argus. It is in fact by an analysis of the difference in the advertising styles of the same firms using the columns of both papers that we can most clearly demonstrate the different readership those newspapers attracted. Then even more so than now, when advertising was still a relatively new and much-debated way of extending business, drapers were not likely to make a mistake by aiming the language of their copy to the class of people who would be antagonized or repelled by their tone.

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24. The Argus, 6 February 1854.

A brief digression here will illustrate firstly that advertising was undoubtedly a controversial way of doing business in England and secondly that this continued to be the case up to and even after the First World War among firms with a highly developed sense of their own tradition of exclusivity. In his history of the firm of Viyella, F.A. Wells noted that in the 1920s "some members of the board were still sceptical about the value of advertising as a means of creating demand".[25]

> The pipe-smoking young men who chat so casually in their Viyella shirt sleeves or pyjamas are obviously men-about-town when fully dressed. The children who "snuggle in bed" between Viyella sheets inhabit a Peter Pan world stretching from their enormous nurseries to Kensington Gardens, a world ruled jointly by leisured mothers and indulgent nannies. For such families Viyella occupied a place as one of the unchanging things they never did without. They bought it because it was the best. 26

In a sense the members of the board who were dubious about the value of advertising were right because they served a clientele with correspondingly traditional views on products and service as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. This manner of doing business was not to predominate in the colonies, although tiny pockets of it survived mostly in the shops which advertised in The Age or in those like Buckley and Nunn which never advertised at all.

The firm of G. and J. Espie affords a particularly good illustration of the argument that the higher class retail establishments used the columns of The Age for their advertisements. The layout, spacing, number and frequency of their advertisements made them the biggest spender on advertising which was one shilling an inch dearer in The Age than in The Argus. Espies was closely followed by Alston and Brown, a retail drapery store which for exclusiveness paralleled Georges of Collins Street today. G. and J. Espies were gentlemen's outfitters in the traditional British sense of retail drapery business. They advertised almost every day in The Age for ten years before stooping to include vulgar price lists of any of the garments they were

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25. F.A. Wells, Hollins and Viyella, A Study in Business History, David and Charles, Great Britain, 1968, p. 129.

26. op cit., p. 256.

respectfully bringing to the attention of the gentlemen of Melbourne. The firm often included in its copy the fact that it was established in 1853 which in the burgeoning social and economic life of Melbourne was decidedly a British anachronism. Furthermore, the language of Espie's advertising copy gave no more than the most respectful minimum information about the goods the firm had received and were now therefore in a position to draw delicately to the attention of Melbourne's gentlemen (see Clipping 9).[27] Most interesting of all was that the firm stopped advertising abruptly on 11 September 1865 and began advertising on 27 September 1865 as Cookson and Brown, successors to G. and J. Espie, established in 1853. In the columns of The Age there was not a whisper of information as to why the business had closed down. No vulgar selling-offs were advertised and it is contended that this lack of information to the public about the whys and wherefores of the business changing hands was typical of businesses which prided themselves on their dignity as furbishers of wearing apparel to the highest echelons of society. The fact that Cookson and Brown advertised themselves as successors to G. and J. Espie and used similar layout and copy with marginally more information and slightly more frequently including prices, indicated that they were proud to continue the tradition established by Espies. Thus the Espies would in all probability have left the colony to go back to England with sufficient capital to last out their wants for the rest of their days or simply have sold out what was obviously a viable busines because of factors such as age or ill-health.

To compare the style of advertising of a firm like Espies or Alston and Brown in the two principal Melbourne newspapers is most revealing indeed. Where Espies were by far the most striking advertisers in The Age in terms of the expensive layout they used (see Clipping 9), they were putting two-line advertisements in The Argus in May 1855. Three two inch advertisements in The Age six days a week would have cost them a minimum of £3 a week at a time when many businessmen were by no means

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27. The Age, 13 April 1859. This is a later series of Espie's advertisements in which, atypically, two references to price are made.

GENTLEMEN'S
AUTUMN
AND
WINTER CLOTHING.

G. AND J. ESPIE

RESPECTFULLY intimate that their STOCK is now complete with every NOVELTY in CLOTHING for the SEASON, comprising West of England BROAD and NARROW CLOTHS, WITNEYS, BEAVERS, SCOTCH TWEEDS, DOESKINS, BUCKSKINS, TREBLE-MILLED DOES, BEDFORD CORDS, &c., all of which have been carefully selected from the Stocks of the most celebrated English and Scotch Manufacturers. Their Tailoring Department is under the superintendence of an experienced and skilful Cutter, who has under his charge an efficient staff of First-class Workmen; and the charges (quality considered) will be found to be the most moderate in the trade.

G. AND J. ESPIE,
CLOTHIERS AND OUTFITTERS,
41 to 43 Bourke street east.
47 84

FASHIONABLE
READY-MADE CLOTHING.
Extensive Stock—Excellent Value

OVERCOATS	MORNING COATS
PONCHOS	LOOSE JACKETS
PALETOTS	TROUSERS
RAGLANS	PANTALOONS
CAPES	RIDING BREECHES
PEA JACKETS	WAISTCOATS.

WATERPROOF OVERCOATS.
YOUTHS' JACKETS, VESTS AND TROUSERS
Manufactured and Sold by
G. AND J. ESPIE,
41 and 43 Bourke street east.
47

DRESS SHIRTS,
IMPROVED SHAPE,
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.

Plain Shapes, 24s to 60s per half dozen.
New Shapes, 30s to 66s per half dozen.

REGATTA SHIRTS. NIGHT SHIRTS.
FANCY WOOLLEN CRIMEAN SHIRTS.
Boys' and Youths' Dress, Regatta, and Night Shirts.
G. AND J. ESPIE,
CLOTHIERS AND SHIRT MERCHANTS,
41 and 43 Bourke street east.
47 84

Clipping 9. The Age, 13 April 1859.

convinced of the value of advertising. It is contended that Espies were well aware of the difference in the reading public between The Age and The Argus as common business sense would otherwise have led them to place their two inch advertisements in The Argus, where advertising was cheaper and circulation higher than their two line advertisements in The Age with its more expensive advertising space. It is therefore logical to conclude that, like the businessmen running Alston and Brown, the Espies' knowledge of the newspaper reading public of Melbourne and its taste in clothing led them - as one of the most exclusive gentlemen's outfitters - to select The Age rather than The Argus as their main outlet for advertising. In the early 1860s Espies did start to put more detailed advertisements in The Argus, and interestingly in July 1859 included the prices for some of the garments advertised as well as making reference to the fact that their clothing was "moderate in price", which they never quite stated thus openly in The Age. In October 1860 there appeared an advertisement in The Argus the like of which was never to appear in The Age, appealing as it did to the sentiments of a totally different public:

> COLONIAL MADE CLOTHING - the subscribers in order to give encouragement to native industry, have been engaged for some months past giving employment to good workmen in making up a large STOCK of COATS, Vests, Trousers etc suitable for spring and summer wear, which will be found much superior in quality and workmanship to the English slop goods that are imported and sold in this market, while the prices are equally as moderate. Inspection invited G. and J. Espies. (my emphasis) 28

The irony of this advertisement was that like all other businesses in the colony with upwardly-mobile pretensions, Espies had hitherto prided themselves as "importers" of the best quality piece goods from England. However, the winds of colonial patriotism were beginning to blow so strongly that even Espies' business principles and style were having to bend before them, at least in advertisements its management thought worthwhile to place in The Argus. By 1863 Espies were still advertising in The Age in a discreet style, more like the English firms than the brash colonial copy.

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28. The Argus, 8 October 1860.

> The Newest Coatings, Vestings and Trouserings ... Ready made clothing Department of our own manufacture which we confidently recommend to Gentlemen who prefer Ready-made Goods, for excellence in cut and Durability, being of a superior class to the usually imported English slops ... Shirts and Collars, Improved Shapes, Perfect Fit Guaranteed. 29

The questions that must be asked about such an advertisement are firstly how much was the well-recognized colonial penchant for men to under-dress responsible for a firm like Espies stooping to include in their business a ready-made department for "Gentlemen who prefer Ready-made goods"? No English "Gentleman" of this era would have dreamt of wearing ready-made clothing. Secondly, to what extent were Espies trying to attract a lower class of customer than they had hitherto attempted to secure? The answers to these questions can, of course, only be conjectural in the absence of manuscript letters regarding the running of the firm. However, what is certain is that the retail drapery trade as it was inter-connected with the colonial society which formed its custom, had gradually but perceptibly changed the style of a firm like Espies. In The Argus they began advertising including the prices of some articles, by 1859. In The Age, they admitted to selling slop or ready-made clothing by 1860, a mode of business which a retail drapery firm of similar status and pretensions in England would never have dreamt of operating, let alone advertising. Furthermore, Espies advertised in every issue of The Age for twelve years, rarely ever mentioning the price of any article they were offering for sale. The clients they hoped to attract through their advertisements in The Age were obviously not so bound by considerations of price for Espies to have to stoop to mention this.

It is worthwhile selecting just one more drapery business catering to the upper end of the market and comparing its style in the two newspapers before turning to a detailed examination of the difference in advertising style of businesses catering to the working class market and which used the columns of both newspapers. Like Espies, Alston and Brown occupied the most space advertising in almost every issue of The Age until 1869 by which date their advertisements - and those of Cookson and Brown,

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29. The Age, 1 October 1863.

successors to Espies - became fewer and the general tone of the drapery advertising column lower, with more of the cheap businesses using the columns. In The Age, the tone of Alston and Brown's advertising was the typical deferential one of British drapery firms. Their advertisements were more frequently addressed to gentlemen and a typical example was that of 14 January 1859, in which the firm

> Respectfully [invited] the gentlemen of Melbourne and its vicinity to inspect a very large assortment of clothing made expressly to their own [Alston and Brown's] order .

In other words, Alston and Brown had - like Espies - stooped to having a ready-made or slop clothing department but were not prepared to word their advertisement to say so outright. Also, like Espies, they never once mentioned the price of any articles they had for sale until March 1864 when they listed the prices of some dress lengths they had recently received from England. More typical of their style was an advertisement which appeared on 7 September 1860 in which they announced that

> Having just received ... their first shipments of novelties for the approaching season, consisting of Mantles, Millinery, Dresses and Silks ... [they] propose showing them on Monday next ... Alston and Brown invite special attention to these goods, as they have been selected by Mr Alston during his stay in England and France, and will be found on inspection to be of the newest and most recherche description.

Here is the style of upper class English drapery establishments par excellence. No vulgar urging of the gentlemen and ladies of Melbourne and its environs to come and buy, come and buy. Merely a respectful request to draw to their attention some basic information about the conduct of their business. A final example of the deferential tone of Alston and Brown's advertising in The Age. The firm never advertised anything so vulgar as a "selling-off" or a sale but always "offered" their stock at "reduced original prices".[30] However, by January 1866 the firm did actually resort to using the word "sale":

> Alston and Brown ... have made very considerable reduction in the price of their present STOCK to make room for extensive shipments.... The SALE will continue during the month ... [31]

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30. The Age, 22 February 1864.

31. The Age, 11 January 1866.

All over Melbourne the number of sales increased dramatically through the late 1850s and into the 1860s until even the most exclusive shops succumbed. While undoubtedly there were many dishonest drapers who deceived their customers, there were equally, genuine "fire" sales and even such tempting sales techniques as offering free trimmings for bonnets purchased at James McPherson's, 5 Bourke Street next to the Post Office.[32]

According to Ablett, sales were regarded in England as distinctly underhand affairs. Some drapers tried holding sales but in Ablett's opinion the customers thought them

> deceivers and counterfeits. They [the drapers] thought the glaring coloured bills and the noisy advertisements did the business. They neglected to provide some really cheap leading goods that were actually under price and which satisfied customers that they were getting more than the value for their money ... we never took advantage of customers, but were really anxious for our own sakes to keep up the delusion and sell as cheaply as possible to every one. [33]

Clearly, Ablett had a mental picture of his customers as people who knew the true value of goods and as not so simplistic as to be carried away by noisy advertising and false bargains. This view of the customer would have been just as apt, the lower the client was on the socio-economic scale. When one has less money to spend, one may well become more conscious of its "true" purchasing power. Whether or not he grew more idealistic as he ruminated over his sixty years' experience in the British retail drapery trade, his considered opinion was that

> The 'selling off' delusion has now ... [the late 1860s] exploded and the large drapery firms that have grown up in each suburb of London, where business is conducted upon fair and honourable principles [i.e. without recourse to shoddy vulgar 'selling offs'], sufficiently attest [to] the impartial judgement of the public. [34]

How far Ablett was correct in his assessment that by the 1860s sales were no longer a part of the business practices of British firms of equivalent status to Alston and

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32. The Argus, 10 January 1865.

33. Ablett, op cit., pp. 42-43.

34. op cit., p. 43.

Brown, is outside the scope of the argument of this thesis. It is likely that in fact many of the exclusive British firms had not even begun to hold sales in the 1860s. Suffice it to say that the exigencies of the colonial drapery business world competing for the consumption power of a wider class base, made sales an inevitable and regular part of colonial business life by the 1860s. Walter Hitchcock, the London buyer for and partner in the business of Bright and Hitchcocks of Geelong had difficulties accepting his brother and partner George's on the spot decision to hold sales. From Walter's English vantage point this was economic and business suicide. The conflict between the brothers on the subject of sales - among many other aspects of how best to conduct a drapery business - will be discussed at length in Chapter 7. Walter's attitude would tend to attest to some sort of consensus among conservative higher class English retail drapers that Ablett's view of sales as not quite the done thing, was still fairly generally accepted in the 1860s. As already stressed, the realities of the colonial business world were such as to make even the most respectable and conservative of establishments hold occasional sales. They were held when economic necessity dictated or some genuine reason like moving to new premises gave them the excuse to try and turn over stock faster. Of course, at the bottom of the conflict over whether or not holding sales was something a respectable firm might resort to were two diametrically opposed views of doing business which in turn implied the desire to attract the custom of either the highest or the lowest social classes. The one view which had held good in England for centuries was that business was done for large profits over a small turnover. Such businesses attracted the aristocracy and the upper middle class who were given long credit which was accordingly added into the profit the retailer expected from his slower and lower turnover. The other view which was beginning to cause controversy in England by the 1850s was that business should be done for small profits on quick returns with a much faster turnover. In general, this latter view began to prevail early in the colonies largely because of working class consumer power and spending habits.

How then did Alston and Brown's advertising in The Argus compare with that in The Age? The most immediate and striking difference was that the firm advertised far less often in The Argus. Fewer advertisements were placed yearly in The Argus than were placed monthly in The Age. The second difference was that in each advertisement from the very first to appear, a reference was made to the fact that the stock was being offered "at very low prices", "very much under value", "at considerably less than the English prices", "at the lowest prices", "at reduced prices - terms cash", "at greatly reduced prices" or was "purchased at a discount in London and will be offered considerably under [its] value".[35] This last reference was to some black lace mantles and checked silks and the identical wording did also appear in The Age during November 1864 with a long discourse on current London fashions. However, the first advertisement to include a list of prices was placed in The Argus on 1 January 1863 whereas it was not until March 1864 that Alston and Brown considered it more important to advertise thus crudely than to continue their infinitely more discreet style that had hitherto been used in The Age. Even thereafter prices were only rarely listed in The Age. There were two advertisements placed in The Argus of 30 June 1870 and 23 July 1870 which were written in the deferential and indeed almost obsequious style that was used in The Age. However, this confirms what was already contended at the beginning of this chapter that from a study of the drapery advertising columns alone, a distinct change in political adherence could be seen in the two newspapers by the late 1860s and early 1870s.

One final difference in the advertising style of Alston and Brown as it appeared in the two papers was that in The Argus the firm offered gimmicks to attract custom in a way it never did in The Age. Two examples of this were that the public would have the chance to view ball dresses for the Queen's Birthday Ball in the windows as they would be illuminated "on Tuesday next and following days". Thus the less well-off members of the Melbourne public would have a chance to view the delectible dainties

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35. The Argus, 8 June 1861, 17 April 1872, 23 September 1858, 12 April 1858, 21 June 1869, 15 November 1864.

Alston and Brown would tempt them with, without actually having to enter the shop and be intimidated by a sales assistant. Here also is window-dressing used as a form of advertisement in itself. Many English firms would not do this into the 1870s and 1880s for fear of giving away information about their manner of doing trade or their best buys. Walter Hitchcock in London advised his brother in Geelong not to display the best model frocks in the window where they could be seen and copied but to keep them inside the shop. Here with the issue of window-dressing, as Ablett pointed out, we have the watershed between the old and new way of doing business, the one seeking to attract new customers at whatever the cost, the other far more cautious in its approach. The other example of a tempting drawcard was contained in an advertisement of 23 February 1867 in which it was stated that the new autumn goods had arrived and patterns would be sent free by post. (In those days patterns meant small pieces of material, as samples, rather than the pieces of tissue paper used today to cut out a garment.)

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Before going on to discuss the advertising styles of two businesses catering to the lower end of the socio-economic scale - the Monster Clothing Company and Nicholl the Tailor - it is worthwhile making some general observations about the differences in the drapery columns of the two papers during the 1850s and 1860s. As has already been mentioned, the columns of The Age were dominated numerically and physically in terms of total space occupied by the advertisements of Alston and Brown and G. and J. Espie. By contrast, The Argus carried the advertisements of many small firms either continually or on an occasional basis. Where some of these small firms did advertise in both papers, there was a marked difference in the slant of their copy. A good example of this was the advertising policy of a firm called Clelands which sold second-hand clothing. (Notably this was the only business selling second-hand clothing which advertised in either paper in the 1850s and 1860s.) On 26 July 1864 Clelands advertised as follows in The Age:

> Ladies and Gentlemen's left off wearing-apparel of every description bought. Letters punctually attended to.

On 5 June 1865 Clelands advertised in The Argus:

> To the working class - second hand clothing, miscellaneous goods of all descriptions, bargains. Clelands.

Clelands placed an advertisement similar to this one in every issue of The Argus also saying that they hired out clothes,[36] but such advertisements only appeared very intermittently in the columns of The Age.

If further evidence is required for the contention that many small drapery firms catering to the working class taste and interest thought it worth their while to advertise in The Argus rather than The Age, the occasions of the Annual Queen's Birthday Balls and the visit of Prince Alfred to the colony provide examples of this phenomenon. As an obvious corollary, they attest - along with the advertisements in the amusements columns - to the interest working class women and men displayed in their self-appearance and the amount of money they were able and prepared to spend on clothing. There was a business called Fenwick Brothers, a sample of whose advertisements is worth quoting as a brief digression to support the second argument of this chapter, namely, that competition for the surplus purchasing power of the working class increased not only the number of firms which thought it worthwhile to advertise but led business people to be more adventurous about the style of their advertisements. From being purely informative, advertising came to include wit, gimcrackery and any temptation the writer could possibly devise to advance the claims of his or her goods over those of rival businesspeople.

Fenwick Brothers were advertising in The Argus from at least as early as 1854 (they rarely advertised in The Age) but it took quite some years to evolve the distinctive style which culminated in their business - which normally sold Blucher boots, moleskin trousers and flannel shirts - actually advertising costumes for the grandest social occasion of the year, the Lord Mayor's Fancy Dress Ball of 1867. Up until the

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36. The Argus, 6 August 1863.

end of 1857, there was nothing particularly rivetting about the way Fenwick Brothers attempted to draw their wares to the attention of Melbourne's working men. But from 1858 onwards, the firm began to place short but compelling and even amusing advertisements in The Argus. A large selection of these will be given to illustrate the argument that businesspeople in the colony were beginning to believe in advertising as a legitimate way of advancing their affairs.

> FACTS for ALL - BLUCHERS, 5s6d; Wellingtons, 10s6d; patent Half-Wellingtons, 12s6d. Fenwick's.
>
> TO MEN of Large Understanding - the largest WELLINGTONS in the colony. Fenwick's.
>
> ADVICE GRATIS - BLUCHERS, 5s6d; Balmorals 10s6d; Wellingtons 10s6d, Fenwick's Melbourne clothes exchange.
>
> HEALTH secured for 2s6d - Fine Flannel Shirts 2s6d; Flannel Drawers 1s6d. Fenwick's.
>
> ADVANTAGE OF SMALL FEET - Springsides 10s6d; WELLINGTONS 10s6d, Fenwick's.
>
> ANOTHER CRASH - BLUCHERS 2s6d ... Fenwick Bros.
>
> ABSOLUTE SALE of Men's BLUCHERS 2s6d, per pair Fenwick's.
>
> ADVANTAGEOUS AND NOT EXPENSIVE - Men's BLUCHERS, 2s6d Fenwick Bros ... request purchasers of BLUCHERS at 2s6d to come early.
>
> ANOTHER WARNING - BLUCHERS 2s6d. Only 500 pairs left. Fenwick's.
>
> All approve of Men's BLUCHERS at 2s6d; Flannel Drawers 1s6d. Fenwick's.
>
> COURT DRESSES, all complete, George Second, Charles Second, Elizabethan. Apply immediately. Fenwick Bros. 37

Lest it be argued that between 1861 and 1867 Fenwick Brothers of Flagstaff Hill went up-market, let it be understood that this was by no means the case. Their catchy two-line advertisements went on appearing in The Argus until the grand occasion of the Prince's visit. As has already been argued in Chapter 5, far from being the

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37. The Argus, 4 June 1858; The Argus, 23 July 1858; The Argus, 24 August 1858. The Age, 12 October 1858; The Argus, 5 February 1859; The Argus, 15 March 1861; The Argus, 4 April 1861; The Argus, 18 May 1861; The Argus, 1 June 1861; The Argus, 25 June 1861; The Argus, 13 November 1867.

uncouth, drink-sodden mob that myth has made them out to be, the lower classes in Victoria - as indeed in New South Wales - took every opportunity to enjoy themselves wearing their fine clothing to balls, suppers, picnics and fireworks displays. If there was one event which clearly delineated the difference in the type of firms advertising in the two papers, it was the occasion of the first visit of a member of the Royal Family to the colonies. The Prince arrived in November 1867 but advertisements began appearing in The Argus on behalf of small drapery businesses catering for working class custom as early as August 1867. Enoch Taylor, a bootmaker definitely connected with the lower end of the trade and who was a regular advertiser in The Argus, placed the following advertisement on 5 August 1867:

> HRH PRINCE ALFRED IS EXPECTED SHORTLY - buy your BOOTS in time to receive this worthy son of the Royal House at Enoch Taylor's.

From then on, the columns of The Argus were filled with drapery advertisements placed by the whole gamut of the trade, including some who had never used its columns before. (This was also the case whenever there was a major fancy dress ball. In August 1863 the mayor held a fancy dress ball and on 21 August sixteen out of the twenty-one drapery advertisements in The Argus were directly related to this event.) It was not until three months later, 9 November, that the first - and one of only two or three businesses - advertisement relating to the Prince's visit and the Lord Mayor's Grand Fancy Dress Ball appeared in The Age. The same businesspeople, such as Madame Decourtet and Mrs Hill, for example, who exploited the advertising value of the Royal visit to its fullest in The Argus, did not think it worth their while to advertise in The Age. The explanation for this phenomenon is simple and is reflected in the style of journalism used in reporting the visit in the two papers. Members of the upper classes, such as Georgiana McCrae and her friends, would have material for their gowns sent to them from England if they did not condescend to shop at Alston and Brown's. They would then have had this material made up and fitted on them in their own homes by discreetly selected private dressmakers. This was a well-recognized social fact, so well-recognized indeed that on the whole businesses at the upper end of the drapery retail trade in the colony did not think it worth their while

advertising their goods in the columns of The Age in connection with Prince Alfred's visit.

As far as the style of reporting of the visit in the two newspapers was concerned, there were passages in The Age which revealed a very condescending attitude to the lower classes. There were also, notably, references to the fact that the people, especially the children, were respectably dressed.

> There were ladies in galore; ladies fair and young, dressed in the height of prevailing fashion.... Surely such a number of well-fed, well-dressed children speaks volumes for our prosperity. Here, no pinched features and threadbare garments. All are redolent with health, and all are respectably clad; some of them even have pretentions to foppery. (my emphasis) 38

However, the editorial of 23 November contained a slightly craven apologetic tone. While obviously displaying pride in the wealth of the colony, it was over-conscious of the standard of behaviour of the lower class colonials.

> [His Royal Highness] can submit without wincing, or at all events without any outward show of uneasiness to the infliction of torments provided for him by the well-meaning but thick-headed family of bores ... 39

The editorial continued by discoursing on the different sentiments felt by the lower and upper classes towards Royalty. That this should have been an issue at all was a complete contrast to the reporting in The Argus which glowed with patriotic pride and made continued references to the well-dressed, well-behaved nature of the crowds waiting to catch a glimpse of the Prince.

> If the typical nobleman of the CARLISLE or the HERBERT stamp is altogether wanting here, so also is the typical mendicant at the other end of the scale. If we cannot boast of our [noble families], we are not called upon to deplore the existence of the misery and squalor, the ignorance, discomfort and discontent which they have made such munificent efforts to alleviate. Something of the grace and refinement which distinguish the upper class or the middle class may be missing in Victoria, but our people practice a hospitality that is without stint, and exhibit a cordiality that is the more charming in proportion as it is the less ceremonious. 40

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38. The Age, 26 November 1867.

39. The Age, 23 November 1867.

40. The Argus, 23 November 1867.

While the editor of The Argus was thus writing, the drapery columns of the newspaper continued to carry notices to the effect that Clelands were hiring out fancy dress costumes and Gentlemen's Dress Boots could be procured for 8s6d at Mowlings of 29 Bourke Street East.[41] Two thousand eight hundred people were invited to the Ball and two thousand five hundred went (including some of Melbourne's leading drapers and their spouses whose costumes and names were listed in The Argus in the pre-photographic reproduction era). However, the amusements column of The Argus gave ample evidence of parallel entertainments which were obviously enjoyed by all those who had responded to the copious drapery advertisements placed in its columns. One last extract from the reporting in The Argus to evidence the connection that was even then being drawn between the fact that people (as opposed to "the lower classes") were well-dressed and thus well-satisfied:

> We hope our Royal visitor was struck with the beauty of our women, for assuredly the display of them was enough to impress the hardest mind as they stood upon balconies, window-sills, roofs and verandahs and all manner of places, secure and insecure, gorgeously dressed, and resplendent in their Australian charms ... A Victorian crowd does not seem to partake of the feeling of boisterous excitement which we sometimes hear as being evinced by large gatherings in older countries ... the spirit of order appeared to be ... impressed on our population.... The people ... were content to discuss among themselves the improvements made in the bridge, the triumphal arches, and the topic of the day - the arrival of the Prince. (my emphasis) 42

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There were many large firms catering to working class custom. Among these were G. and F. Bullen's Sebastopol House, the Leviathan Clothing Company, the Beehive Clothing Company, Barnes' Crystal Palace, Waterloo House (boots and shoes), W. Hickenbotham's, Wymond and Vasey's, James Macpherson's, Glasgow House, the Monster Clothing Company and Nicoll the Tailor. All these firms illustrate both major arguments of this chapter, namely, as caterers to the clothing requirements of the masses, they chose to advertise exclusively or mainly in The Argus and secondly, that

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41. The tradition of hiring out fancy dress clothing continued into the 1870s. See The Argus, 23 July 1870 and 30 July 1870. By this time the market supported quite a number of firms hiring out second-hand fancy dress costumes for balls.

42. The Argus, 25 November 1867.

the tone of their advertising copy became more amusing and less purely informative by the 1860s. It is interesting to speculate on the difference between colonial and British society on this point. It is contended that a larger proportion of all classes of society in the colonies read the two newspapers[43] which were then agreed by all to be of a very high standard. Secondly, in the nineteenth century, novel-reading was not quite regarded as the done thing. People of all social classes had pressure exerted on them to spend their free time reading improving literature of a morally uplifting - and proportionately dreary - nature. Interestingly, Twopeny happened to notice during his visit to the colony that

> More leisure has also produced novel-reading with its consequent affectation of aristocratic ideas and prejudices and disproportionate estimate of essentials and superficials. (my emphasis) 44

It is argued that the effect of even mildly emotive or amusing advertising copy on a public relatively innocent of emotive writing would have been considerably greater than we might imagine today, assaulted as we have been by the full weight of media advertising over the last thirty years, in particular since radio and television have provided outlets for advertising.

Although there was a general tendency for all firms catering for working class custom to use emotive copy towards the end of the 1850s and during the 1860s, two only will be given to exemplify this, the Monster Clothing Hall and Nicoll the Tailor. In July 1859, the Monster Clothing Hall placed the following advertisement in the The Argus

> PROCLAMATION - ARM! ARM! ARM! - ACCOUTREMENT AND UNIFORMS ready-made and made to order. We by this proclamation give notice, that henceforth we will make a reduction of 2s. in the pound on

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43. Adburgham, Shops and Shopping, p. 128. "The average woman did not read newspapers and magazines. An advertiser in The Illustrated London News would be out for the carriage trade." See discussion of low-key nature of advertising in top English weeklies in Chapter 5. cf. Aspinall, op cit., pp. 80-81 [in writing of The Argus], "I have seen young ladies pouring over it with avidity, leading article and all, before settling down to their morning avocations. The editor of this newspaper, who possesses great ability and an accomplished mind, does not fritter away his talents altogether upon the bickering strife of colonial politics" (author's emphasis).

44. Twopeny, op cit., p. 104.

> our remaining portion of our winter stock of clothing; we shall (if the French, Russians and Austrians permit) make similar reductions at the end of every season. On the principle of reducing all our goods are marked in legible figures, so that purchasers may be certain that they will obtain good articles at moderate prices; from these figures the reductions will be made. 45

Despite intense colonial identification with Britain in time of war, no colonial contingent had actually fought in the Crimean War. The connection between the sentiments aroused by bringing up this threat and the holding of annual drapery sales was a tenuous one indeed. Tenuous it may have been but at the time it could be relied on to call on emotive feelings of patriotism and its obverse, fear of an enemy. The advertisement ended with a stirring "God Save the Queen!" and made the style of G. and J. Espies or Alston and Brown seem very tame indeed. The point is clear, however, the people buying material by the piece at Espies or Alston and Brown read The Age, and as a businessman responsible for the advertising policy of the Monster Clothing Hall, Mr M. Marks (who was fifty years ahead of his better-known English namesake, see Chapter 5) knew what he was about in placing this advertisement so worded in The Argus. We have seen in Chapter 5 that this type of advertising was heavily censured by the British retail drapery establishment as reflected in the columns of The Draper and Clothier but there was no comparable force influencing the colonial retail drapers' business style. Although 1859 was relatively early in the history of advertising in its modern sense (being the use of any emotive visual or audible means of drawing a product to the attention of the public), Mr Marks' advertisement also showed that he had little to learn from his post World War II successors. Any American businessman advertising during the height of the Cold War would have regarded Marks' wording and offer of price reduction with professional approval. The reference to price tags with reductions marked on them is an early and an interesting one. As has already been amply demonstrated, in the late 1850s most high and even middle class drapers in Britain would not consider ticketing their goods, let alone altering those figures to lower ones for the sake of a faster turnover. As Walter Hitchcock wrote so often to

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45. The Argus, 23 July 1859.

his brother George in Geelong, such a step would have been regarded as business suicide. However, for people on lower incomes, this was a boon. They could and did read the newspapers and it is reasonable to conjecture that they would have begun the exercise of comparative shopping in their own kitchens or at their own firesides. In that case they would have been aware, for example, that the price of the same boots at Fenwick's came down three shillings a pair over less than three years. They would also know to the penny, how much the Monster Clothing Hall had been pricing its goods. What they could not be sure of, as consumers, was the quality. But even this aspect began to emerge as an issue between retailer and consumer by the 1870s as we shall see in Chapter 7.

One more example only shall be given of Marks' style of copy, also in 1859, to show just how quickly some businessmen had seized upon and exploited advertising to its maximum limits before the introduction of printing techniques made illustrations cheap.

> HARD TIMES - Why is that so universal a complaint is heard of hard times? Is it that money is scarce, that the land is unproductive, or energy wanting? No, it is simply that expenses press too heavily - rent, food, clothing ... The plan to be adopted is to lessen these expenses. The landlord is very hard to move ... In food you are at the mercy of the seller; but in clothing you have an opportunity of effecting a vast saving. M. Marks and Company, seeing the nature of these heavy demands on all, hasten to the rescue ... [there followed a list of items for sale with prices alongside each item]. 46

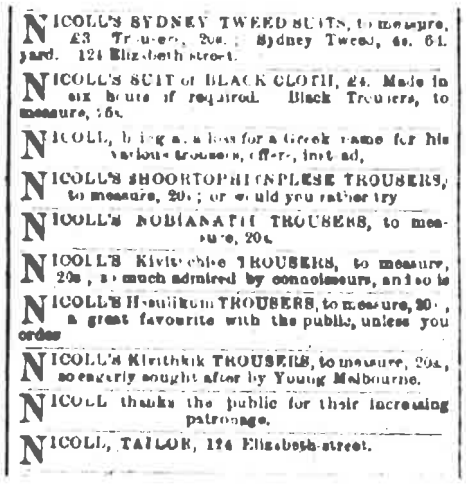
This showed very modern advertising techniques indeed. Simply by assuming that the lower classes had the right and the expectation to more and better quality clothing (in the sense that they were buying it new off the peg instead of being grateful for hand-me-downs as their contemporaries were in England), Mr Marks was generating more business for himself. The facts that his assumption was correct and that he and all the other companies advertising for working class custom in The Argus remained in business for many years, even into the twentieth century, is a profound statement about the standard of living and the way of life of the working classes in the colonies.

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46. The Argus, 22 December 1859.

Incidentally, the Monster Clothing Company (as it was called after a reshuffle of partners) also advertised dress coats, superfine dress trousers and dress suits for levees and balls.[47] For this writer, such advertising is adequate evidence that people lower on the socio-economic scale could afford to and did enjoy themselves much as did those who would have been their "betters" in the Old Country.

The advertisements of the Monster Clothing Hall were chosen as an example of the type of copy that was being used by the larger emporium-style shops catering to the working class interests. (As opposed to the Alston and Brown, Buckley and Nunn style of drapery firm - which latter firm, incidentally, did not once advertise clothing or piece goods in either The Age or The Argus in the years to 1875). However, there were also many tailors and bootmakers who catered for working class custom and a brief examination will be made of the technique of just one of these, Nicoll the Tailor. His copy grew more and more witty, conversational and intimately persuasive over the years he advertised in The Argus, but for the purposes of this argument, only two examples will be selected (Clippings 10 and 11).



NICOLL'S SYDNEY TWEED SUITS, to measure, £3 Trousers, 20s.; Sydney Tweed, 4s. 6d. yard. 124 Elizabeth-street.

NICOLL'S SUIT of BLACK CLOTH, £4. Made in six hours if required. Black Trousers, to measure, 16s.

NICOLL, being at a loss for a Greek name for his various trousers, offers, inst ad,

NICOLL'S SHOORTOPHILOPLESE TROUSERS, to measure, 20s.; or would you rather try

NICOLL'S NOBIANATH TROUSERS, to measure, 20s.

NICOLL'S Kivitchloe TROUSERS, to measure, 20s., so much admired by connoisseurs, and so is

NICOLL'S Hoolikum TROUSERS, to measure, 20s., a great favourite with the public, unless you order

NICOLL'S Kivithkik TROUSERS, to measure, 20s., so eagerly sought after by Young Melbourne.

NICOLL thanks the public for their increasing patronage.

NICOLL, TAILOR, 124 Elizabeth-street.

Clipping 10. The Argus, 7 December 1863.

47. The Argus, 20 June 1861.

I and my friend Brown were lounging round town, taking a survey of things in general. You know Brown, a pleasant fellow, very dressy, you know, and always looks well in what he wears. Brown had on a Melton cloth coat, pockets under flaps, to fit the body, but not too tightly, as if he had been baked in it, but just showing as much of his fine manly form as gives ease and elegance combined. But his choice of trousers and vest are the admiration of every one, and he is constantly asked, "Where did you get them?" "Oh (says Brown), I can find none but NICOLL, 124 Elizabeth-street, to do the precise thing. You can have beautiful goods, well cut, and at moderate prices, there." Says I to Brown, "The tailor's art is not much inferior to the sculptor's; for a tailor will take the rough unhewn material chance may throw in his way, and so adorn, polish, and embellish it, as to hide the original altogether. Take, for instance, the gentleman walking as leisurely before us. An earthquake would not startle him. Behold the beautiful suit of blue cloth he has on—white gloves forming a pleasant contrast always to blue. Look! Yonder you see another gentleman, dressed precisely the same, wedging himself into the middle of the crowd yonder. Now he has gained the centre, and is as cool in the midst of the hubbub as a surgeon about to dismember a body; and may be will get 40s. for a mythical derangement of that beautiful suit of blue. None will blame him for it. I met that gentleman under different circumstances, on the quay at Liverpool. He then had on cord knee breeches, worsted stockings, highlows, blue-tailed coat, with brass buttons; an indescribable hat with a pipe in it. Now," says I to Brown, "who effected that change but a tailor? Why, if he returns to Ballywick from Robingstan his mother would not know him." Brown says, "Come along, I am going to Nicoll's for a silk coat to measure; it's only two doors from Bourke-street, in Elizabeth-street." We strolled along, noticing compassionately how many would do well to go to Nicoll's. Brown's a free-trader, I am sorry to say, but we are excellent friends. He raves about King Solomon being an out-and-out free-trader, encouraging trade with every nation. I scream out, "That was in the dark midnight ages, man; come down to the present time—look at the United States; what protection has done for them. You surely would not compare King Solomon to Brother Jonathan? I guess," says I, "it requires a very long head to apportion the taxation among half a million of people; you may call them thickheads, and insinuate their love of power, and say they are ashamed of protection, and want to get out of it by bamboozling the people about the right of taxation." But I tell you, says Brown, "it would puzzle and bewilder Mr. Gladstone himself to hear diggers and stonemasons shouting, roaring, fighting, to have their breeches and boots taxed." We had just got up to Nicoll's when out comes Jones. I had hardly knew him, he had just moulted and was newly feathered; his appearance was very imposing; he said it was all due to Nicoll, and says he "Robinson is inside, being measured for a suit of linen drill for £2—such a nice pattern." I and Brown at once walked in and were measured for suits a piece. It is quite a first-rate shop, you know. Where is it? Don't you know? NICOLL, tailor, 124 Elizabeth street.



NICOLL'S SUMMER SUITS to measure, £2; trousers, 15s. Well shrunk. 124 Elizabeth-street.

NICOLL'S TWEED SUITS to measure, £3; trousers, 20s. A great variety.

NICOLL'S SUIT of BLACK CLOTH to measure, £4; trousers, 25s. Made in six hours, if required.

NICOLL'S flannel CRICKETING SUIT to measure, £2; trousers, 15s. Washed before made up.

NICOLL SELLS TWEED from 2s. yard; any length cut. Patterns of any garment cut, 1s.

NICOLL, TAILOR, 124 Elizabeth-street, two doors from Bourke-street.

NICOLL, TAILOR, 124 Elizabeth-street, two doors from Bourke-street.

The top clipping is the correct one.

Clipping 11. The Argus, 16 December 1865

This is an example of Nicoll's early advertising style taken from The Argus of 7 December 1863 (Clipping 10). It can be seen that by placing ten short advertisements in succession in The Argus drapery column, his advertising was very eye-catching. Thus placed in the context of the whole column, it occupied a very imposing section indeed. By 1865 his style had evolved considerably as the following chatty but very cleverly worded advertisement shows (given contemporary colonial interest in the debate on free-trade versus protectionism) (Clipping 11). It also nicely appeals to the innate vanity in every man - as well as in women. It is just that during the nineteenth century a process evolved whereby it became de rigueur for ladies to go out shopping on their own, and from that it was a short step to the stage where men began to talk about women's vanity of personal appearance.

> No lady, of course, shopped after dark: nor did she shop in daylight except accompanied by her maid, her footman, or a page. Even those streets which were not regarded as actually dangerous or unsavoury were, for a gentlewoman, unseemly, and it was considered indiscreet for a lady to be in Bond Street in the afternoon. Bond Street for the first half of the century was very much a man's street. 48

Compare this with Kelly's observations of colonial practice:

> In the fashionable centre of Collins Street, the increasing number of unmistakable ladies was perfectly obvious, settling down to their

48. Adburgham, Shops and Shopping, p. 7.

inherent avocation of shopping in a very natural and becoming way. (my emphasis) 49

By the 1860s total numbers of advertisements concerning women's clothing finally began to exceed those devoted to men's. Up to the eighteenth century beaux wore make-up and dressed their hair or wigs with as much care as any woman. It is interesting to speculate on how much the colonial (both American and Australian) penchant for the male to dress down contributed to the myth that it is only women who are vain about their personal appearance. Nicoll, at any rate, knew just how to word advertisements which he placed at great expense in The Argus. No businessman would have continued to advertise at such length and in such a style if it did not result in increased custom, particularly in an era in which many were as yet unconvinced of the value of advertising (see discussion of William Bright's and Walter Hitchcock's views on advertising in Chapter 7). From this reasonable assumption, much can be inferred about the readership of The Argus, its tastes and its purchasing power.

While both the Monster Clothing Company and Nicoll the Tailor advertised in The Age as well, there was a distinct difference in the tone used in their advertising copy and a greater restraint in the pricing of their wares. Mr Marks, for example, put in much shorter advertisements, never listed prices and placed the emphasis on the fact that his goods were "colonial made" rather than that they were cheap. Educating the public to wear ready-made clothing was a process which took many generations. It was, however, begun by such firms as the Leviathan, the Beehive and the Monster Clothing Company. Prejudice against ready-made clothing was deep-rooted, as ready-made - or slop clothing - was a stigma of poverty. Gradually, as the effects of the Industrial Revolution percolated downwards to the lower socio-economic groups, the quality of slop clothing improved. By the 1860s, certainly in Melbourne, ready-made clothing was becoming competitive with tailor-made clothing particularly for men. As consumer power grew, so did the cut and quality of ready-made clothing improve. However, it was quite clear by an overall examination of the drapery columns of both

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49. Kelly, op cit., p. 277.

The Age and The Argus that there was a distinct preference for bespoke rather than ready-made clothing at least until the 1870s. That is, the higher the class a drapery firm had pretensions to serve, the less significant economically would be their ready-made department. However, evidence that by the 1870s and 1880s ready-made clothing for men and women in the colonies was becoming competitive, comes from the fact that high class drapery businesses were beginning to have difficulties making a profit by the tailor-made department of their businesses.[50] It is contended that the reason why the big emporiums and the drapery advertising columns of particularly The Argus but also The Age had a bigger percentage of advertisements aimed at men than at women, was more than the simple demographic fact that there were more males than females in the colony. It is linked to the more complex colonial phenomenon that while gentlemen could and did dress less formally (or "beneath" their status as some observers would have it)[51], women of all social backgrounds could and did dress themselves more handsomely. Men thus began to wear ready-made clothes and therefore became the targets for advertising of such, while women were still having their clothes made to measure by the little dressmaker down the street or making it themselves. This perceived masculine need to under-dress, rather than to stand out from the crowd by being too well-dressed, was something peculiarly colonial and began to be noted by observers of the colonial scene quite early.

> The doctor, who having on a new pair of knee boots, was asked how much he'd take for them, whether he ever had paid for them, if he had not stolen them, and how kind it was of his mother to look out for his keeping his feet dry; he being rather green in the Colony, and not accustomed to Colonial chaff, got into a most furious rage, which caused more delight amongst the mob. (author's emphasis) 52

Another observer of colonial life found his fellow passengers on board ship

> a mixed and motley lot, principally of the class below the middle order ... [except] a triumvirate ... who constituted a marked and amusing

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50. See Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Melbourne University Archives, letter from William Bright to George Hitchcock, 26 December 1861.

51. de Serville, op cit., p. 89.

52. Rudston Read, op cit., p. 13.

> contrast to the great majority, leaning on slim, attenuated umbrellas, dressed with almost mathematical precision in faultless West-end habilements, patent leather boots, and French kids that showed the shape of the finger-nails, and would have revealed their crests had they been engraved on them, so accurately did they fit ... with all their nonchalance, they did not appear to be at ease, looking as much out of place as a trio of dahlias in a cornfield. 53

Kelly was a man accustomed to enjoying and appreciating the good things in life - including service from members of the lower orders, the lack of which he did not appreciate in the colony. Yet he remarked the three gentlemen in question as being over-dressed. He also noted that in Ballarat

> respectable men had [to muster] up moral courage to wear frock coats, and merchants [to venture] to the Chamber of Commerce in the regular British 'bell topper', some of the nattier going to the length of sporting kid gloves. 54

Together with the doctor's experience, these pieces of literary evidence tend to corroborate the social fact that life in the colony had a levelling effect on men's dress. De Serville quotes an example from The Port Phillip Patriot (The Port Phillip Gazette) which described disparagingly a young man at the races who "sought to shield his complexion from the ravages of the Australian sun by

> carrying a parasol, the only one claiming the honour of manhood who indulged in that effeminate article. 55

De Serville's description of the demise of the Regency dandy or exquisite as resulting from his inability to "survive the impertinent, pervasive intrusions of the Antipodes: the sun, the flies and the dust", does not help us to understand the phenomenon he mentioned himself, "the utilitarian spirit of Melbourne"[56], nor does it help explain the new colonial social reality of men beginning to under-dress while women, relatively, were over-dressed. One would have thought, perhaps, that the problems of dust in summer and mud in winter for ladies wearing long skirts with a minimum of five yards

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53. Kelly, op cit., pp 31-32.

54. op cit., p. 268.

55. de Serville, op cit., p. 45.

56. ibid.

of material in them were at least equal to those experienced by men who wanted to kit themselves out in frockcoat, bell topper and patent leather boots. Enough literary evidence has been cited already to show that "even" servant girls, shop girls and factory girls were well-dressed. Here then we have the reason for the greater quantity of men's ready-made clothing for sale in the drapery businesses of the colony. A man might go to the trouble of having one or two suits tailor-made, but if he could get one which fitted reasonably well, he was not going to take the trouble to have all his clothes tailor-made. This social revolution in dress happened more quickly for men than for women and it is argued that one of the reasons why it happened was the new social phenomenon of men under-stating their wealth by dressing less carefully and over-stating it by having higher expectations of the standards in dress among their women and children.

Paul de Serville wrote that the appearance and behaviour of gentleman squatters

> shocked observers expecting more from men of their rank. Many of the gentlemen squatters wore clothes of a material, cut, and colour hitherto reserved for working men. That was not the only social taboo, they wore beards - at a time when society was clean-shaven ... The unfashionable beard signified the freedom from the constraints and conventions of society enjoyed by squatters. 57

There is another interpretation of why the squatters dressed "beneath" them and wore beards. Given the literary evidence cited above concerning the disastrous social results of displays of dandy-ism in Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s and which de Serville noted himself[58], the squatters could have been seen to be bending to fit in with socially accepted norms of dressing dictated by the lower classes. No one likes to be held up to public ridicule because of their appearance and it would only have to happen to a man once or twice for him to abandon his bell-topper, frock coat and kid gloves, unless he was a person of considerable strength of personality. On the basis of

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57. de Serville, op cit., p. 89.

58. op cit., p. 45.

de Serville's work[59], we cannot conclude that many of the gentlemen of the colony were exceptional in this regard.

If we accept the contention that more working class people were reading The Argus up until the early 1870s and more upper class people reading The Age, this also accounts for why the drapery columns of The Argus contained so much more detail about men's clothing than women's. Women of all social classes were still buying material by the piece, selecting their own trimmings and having their dresses made up by their own seamstresses or making them up themselves. In general, as well, the businesses run by women specializing in clothing for women, children and babies, tended to advertise differently in the two newspapers. In the following and final section of this chapter, some such businesses and their advertising policies will be analyzed in detail.

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Overall, more evidence about women's involvement in the making and selling of clothing can be gleaned from The Argus than The Age. Throughout the 1850s and 1860s single advertisements appeared constantly in The Argus for a girl of "respectability" wanted in a drapery store in Kilmore, or of dressmakers' businesses when they changed hands, wanted to take on new hands or to let women know that their materials could be "made up in their residences". There were few such advertisements in The Age.

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59. There may not have been "any fundamental weakness of those civilized standards the gentlemen strove to maintain", P. de Serville, op cit., p. 169, but it is this interesting claim de Serville's book fails to come to grips with, detailing rather, countless examples of where the attempt to uphold civilized standards resulted in futile bickering and dissolution of social and economic effort. One suspects that the amorphous qualities which constituted genteel behaviour in nineteenth century England allowed of interpretation by many rather of their form than their substance. The resultant shallow ambitions and petty snobberies documented, for example, in de Serville's account of the establishment of the Melbourne Club or the attempt to instigate select balls, may have had their origins in the code of honour of gentlefolk but showed in their form just how quickly this code could degenerate away from civilized behaviour on the part of a group of people who set themselves up as the best judges of such behaviour.

However, there were women who advertised their businesses in both newspapers and whose pushy advertising tactics showed them to be worthy descendants of Sarah Packer and Elizabeth Hordern. In Victorian England there was one territory a businesswoman could retreat to and safely call her own; the manifold and jealously-guarded secrets of ladies' underwear and corsetry was an area few men could readily invade. Naturally men were attempting to get a toe-hold on this vital market from the manufacturing end, but Victorian England being what it was, they found it almost impossible to get in on the fitting end. Another branch of the clothing trade in which women could make an impact was in millinery and the sale of related accessories including gloves and parasols. This may have been also related to Victorian English taboos about the touching of women's hair and hands which accounted for women's hairdressers and manicurists taking so long to supplant the discreet lady's personal maid. It is an interesting side-line to the argument of this thesis that the attack on such taboos also came from the decision of those unknown women too low on the economic scale to afford a maid, who yet decided - with what social courage - to have their hair dressed by a male hairdresser.

There were a number of important and well-known businesswomen in Melbourne of the 1850s and 1860s. These included Mrs James Finlay, Madame Victourine, Mrs Thomas Hill, Madame Decourtet (sometimes referred to as Madame Soulie Decourtet), and Miss Sawtell. Various aspects of all these women's business methods will be touched on. Firstly, the bulk of information we have about them comes through the manner and style of their advertising, thus showing them to have held progressive views on doing business, and secondly, they revealed themselves as a group to have embraced whole-heartedly the bustling colonial style of doing business with its window dressing, holding of sales and readiness to advertise, as opposed to the more reticent British manner which might have been expected to appeal to "the gentler sex". As a group they advertised as frequently, as forcefully and as advantageously as the then terms of advertising could serve a business. Apart from these regular advertisers

about whom more can be known, there were a great many more women who used the columns of The Argus rather than The Age on an occasional or one-off basis.

Miss Sawtell opened a Magazin des Modes at 73 Collins Street east on 22 December 1856.[60] Her first rather discreet advertisement after her opening announcement appeared quite some time later on 19 September 1857, again with The Argus. Miss Sawtell for some reason or another was to drop discretion as a business method, and from early 1858 open-heartedly to embrace the maximum potential of advertising. Not only did she decide to go in for advertising but at the same time there began a sequence of breathtaking sales at her establishment which were to roll one upon another with most undecorous rapidity. The impetus behind all this may have been the announcement contained in her advertisement of 24 April 1858 that "in consequence of the Provident Institute having purchased the premises, the whole of [the] stock must be cleared forthwith".[61] She then listed the stock in this advertisement in The Argus including 3,000 pairs of best Paris kid gloves, 4s quality at 2s9d. A consideration when renting premises is the length of tenure one may have of them. Perhaps Miss Sawtell was unaware that the owners intended selling the building in which she had set up shop. Be that as it may, once she did know, she derived maximum benefit from her circumstances. While under the threat of eviction, she continued to advertise half price sales, clearing out sales, 25% reduction sales, and she also continued to get in stock, engage a French milliner and diversify her advertising campaign. The most money ever mentioned was in the advertisement for a half-price sale in February 1858 in which she offered £1,000 worth of French flowers. The greatest amount of stock ever advertised was in November 1858, when she advertised 8,000 pairs of French kid gloves. Having given notice of a clearing out sale in April 1858 because her premises were to be sold, Miss Sawtell announced a sale of ladies' and children's underclothing in November 1858 at 25% under the usual price.

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60. The Argus, 22 December 1856.

61. The Argus, 24 April 1858, p. 292.

> Excellent Assortment of LADIES' and CHILDREN'S UNDERCLOTHING. Miss Sawtell's knowing the inconvenience ladies daily apprehend in having to purchase such articles at crowded shops, and where every description of clothing is sold, has induced her to appropriate a special department to these particular goods, where ladies can without annoyance make their selections and give their orders, soliciting for it that patronage which she has received in the millinery branch of her business. 62

In other words, under the threat of eventual eviction, Miss Sawtell was expanding her business from gloves and millinery (she engaged a French milliner in January 1859) to ladies' and children's underwear. She used multiple advertising, frequently placing two advertisements, and sometimes even four or five in the columns of The Argus. Her advertisements in The Age were rarer and lacked the breathless rush of business which was evoked by the manner of advertising in The Argus. They were, however, always expensive (occupying two column width) and conspicuously placed at the top of the page rather than hidden away in the dress and fashion column. Moreover, as befitting the general style of advertising used by most small businesspeople in The Age, her advertisements contained some kinds of details which never appeared in The Argus. This, it is argued, is because Miss Sawtell saw a clear division of Melbourne's reading public, to some of which she owed greater loyalty - in the traditional British sense - and in her colonial way felt she owed some of her customers an explanation of why she was selling up and going back to England (see Clipping 12). This explanation, it will be noted, was not in any way related to the fact that back in April 1858 she had received information that her premises were to be sold. Was Miss Sawtell's health really impaired, or had she come out and in less than three years added to her capital to the extent that she could return to England £6,000 or more the better off for her trials in the colony? It is unlikely that she was exaggerating the value of her stock. Evidence from other businesses carrying the same kind of stock and advertising in much the same way as Miss Sawtell suggests that businesses this size were owned by people - often women - worth £10,000. While this is a far cry from Buckley and Nunn's turnover

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62. The Argus, 17 November 1858.



RETIRING FROM BUSINESS.

RETURNING TO ENGLAND.

UNPRECEDENTED SACRIFICE FOR IMMEDIATE CASH.

£6000 WORTH NEW WINTER MILLINERY.

MISS SAWTELL,

73 COLLINS STREET EAST,

IN announcing her intention of Retiring from Business, respectfully intimates that her Stock, value £6000, must be sold immediately, consisting of the undermentioned novelties and other Goods, viz. :—

Ladies' and Children's Felt Hats (Grecian and other shapes)
Millinery Bonnets, the latest Parisian novelties
Fancy Straw and Crinoline Bonnets and Hats (new shapes)
French Flowers, Wreaths, and Bouquets (unusually choice)
Opera Mantles of elegant designs
Ball and Evening Dresses
Silk Velvets, superior quality, 8s 6d per yard
Silk Plushes, in all colors
Ribbons and Feathers in great variety
Velvet Ribbons and Millinery Trimmings
£200 worth Parasols
Ladies' Lace Jackets and Scarfs
Maltese Collars, Sleeves, and Handkerchiefs
£300 worth Honiton Lace, viz. :—Collars, Sleeves, Lappets, Coiffures, Berthes, Handkerchiefs, Edgings, and Flouncings
Infants' Hats and Bonnets
Ladies' and Childrens' Under-clothing, Hoops, and Corsets.

The Sale commenced on Monday, 11th April, and will continue daily, until the entire Stock is sold. The Goodwill of the business will be also for sale.

Merchants, warehousemen, and others requiring Fancy Goods purchased in London or Paris, can, by entrusting their orders to Miss Sawtell, secure the benefit of her Melbourne experience.

Impaired Health is the cause of the above resolution. 52 91 ap 13 16

Clipping 12. The Age, 13 April 1859

of £120,000 in 1859[63], the number of these small businesses and the relatively large amount of capital in them, testifies to the wealth and consumer interests of the colonials. To sum up Miss Sawtell as a businesswoman, she moved fast by using advertising to keep her customers abreast of all the developments in her business likely to catch their interest. She advertised more frequently in The Argus than The Age and her choice of paper and her choice of language when advertising indicated that her clientele came from lower rather than higher on the socio-economic scale. Despite this - while we do not know how much capital she brought to the business - she managed to make a healthy sum of money in a very short time by the use of business tactics which would have been frowned on in England. Her constant calling attention to sales, to reductions and her use of any possible excuse so to do was representative of the norm in Melbourne but would not have met with Ablett's approval. It is argued

63. See Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, letter from William Bright to George Hitchcock, 26 December 1861.

that a woman with similar capital and connections (i.e. none that we know of) could not have done so well in such a short time in a city of 200,000 people in England in the late 1850s. Questions as to how such a person would have run a business at this time and in what manner they might have advertised in what sort of newspaper, bear investigating. However, it is unlikely that the purchasing power of the lower classes in England at this time would have given the Miss Sawtells of this world sufficient scope to exercise their talents.

There was another businesswoman whose methods were very similar to those of Miss Sawtell - a Mrs Thomas Hill (not to be confused with Mrs A. Hill, formerly of Buckley and Nunn's who opened a "MAGAZINE [sic] de PARIS" on 7 March 1860). Her business methods were so similar that she will not be discussed in detail. Like Miss Sawtell, her story is to be gleaned mostly from advertisements in The Argus, and like Miss Sawtell she used every event to affect her business to its full - compulsory eviction sales, fire sales (there really was a fire - not one of Ablett's singeing in the cellar affairs)[64], final clearing sales, the fact that her colonial-made goods must be cheaper because of the tariff, and that they were cheaper than ladies could make themselves at home (this last suggesting that recourse to sweated labour was not the prerogative of male businesspeople). Mrs Hill's business may have been slightly larger but her techniques in using advertising in keeping her name before the reading public of The Argus were very similar. She also used catchy little tricks to get customers to just walk by her shop, such as an invitation in an advertisement of April 1867 to come and see the engravings of the newest styles of underwear. Her business only lasted for six years when she too announced that her business was for sale owing to ill health. The fact that three out of the four businesswomen to be discussed here retired from ill health or actually died quite young in life indicates that the stress on business-women in the mid-nineteenth century was no less than it is today.

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64. The fire was reported in The Argus as having been caused by a fault in the gas jets lighting the windows and as doing considerable damage to Mrs Hill's stock which was insured.

Mrs James Finlay died suddenly at her residence (above the shop) at 17 Collins Street east on 13 March 1865 aged 39 years. From all accounts, mostly in The Argus, Mrs Finlay was a very respectable woman and left property to be held in trust for her three sons worth nearly £10,000. One cannot help but wonder whether Mary Mills Finlay had been feeling the pressure of business and thought to make a will in consequence, as she died less than two years after she drew up her will, a very clear, grave document, evidencing the sort of neat mind which caused advertisements to be placed in The Argus and very occasionally in The Age which had little in common in terms of style or frequency with those of Miss Sawtell or Mrs Hill. Mrs Finlay's language was more decorous, her general business style less pushy yet even she - albeit in a very dignified way[65] - held annual clearing sales. She was not above using her reputation for quality to create a division in the ranks of the drapers and milliners by wording her advertisements so as to give dignity to her manner of doing business while repudiating that of others:

> GREAT AND IMPORTANT SALE ... Mrs FINLAY respectfully invites ... Mrs F. [sic] being fully aware that she could not recommend the attention of the public in these days of "cheap sales", without making reductions of no ordinary character, and it being imperative that the stock be disposed of without delay, she has thus been led to submit to such unprecedented reductions as cannot fail to lead to the speedy realisation of the object in view. An early call earnestly solicited. N.B. Terms cash. 66

Mrs Finlay seemed to have an eye out to her rivals or any sort of underhand competition for on 28 July 1863 in connection with the then talk of the town, the Lord Mayor's Fancy Dress Ball, she advertised

> Designs for fancy dresses and court costumes from the time of the Norman Invasion to the present date. The latter for the use of bona fide purchasers only. 67

She advertised her summer stock as "recherché and varied" and when she died, Appleton and Littlewood wrote thus of her stock as they were advertising its auction

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65. The Age, 11 February 1864.

66. The Argus, 15 January 1859.

67. The Argus, 28 July 1863.

> The late Mrs Finlay's stock was so well-known as a first-class and highly fashionable one, that it needs not a single word from us on that point, but would merely notice that it consists of all the newest and most fashionable goods for the present and approaching season ... 68

Mrs Finlay then represented the top end of milliners' and dressmakers' advertising in The Argus (very few except those already advertising in The Argus advertised in The Age over these twenty years) and Miss Sawtell the bottom. To one side of them was the little Parisian dressmaker.

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, connections with Paris fashions went back as far as the 1840s. Miss Sawtell, though not running a huge business, engaged a French milliner. How French that milliner was we have no way of knowing - milliners were hard to engage at the best of times - but she must at least have had an accent with which to flatter Miss Sawtell's customers. From the early fifties through to the 1870s, The Argus contained occasional or one-off advertisements for French dressmakers testifying not to an early colonial cultural cringe, but an early colonial self-confidence in selecting that of European tradition and civilization it found diverting and relevant. There was a Madame Pradier, milliner, who advertised in a very distinguished tone in October 1856; there was a Mrs Munroe who claimed to have a French connection with one Madame Besure, Rue Richelieu, Paris, who advertised in November 1867; a Madame Oudet in September 1871 and a Madame Vincendon Petherick who advertised in September 1872.[69] A more constant advertiser was a Madame Victorine who was active in Melbourne from 1856 until 1864 but the businesswoman who really capitalized on her connection with the highest temple of fashion, Paris itself, was Madame (Soulie) Decourtet.

Madame Decourtet began advertising in 1858 and had a shop at 90 Russell Street. By March 1861 she opened another shop. Like the other women in this section, she advertised almost exclusively in The Argus. Unlike them, she claimed to have a representative in Paris. A buyer in London who went occasionally to Paris being the

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68. The Argus, 17 April 1865.

69. All these advertisements appeared in The Argus.

most that big stores like Buckley and Nunn's, Ball and Welch's, Bright and Hitchcock's could afford, Madame Decourtet must have been a skilful businesswoman indeed. On 8 October 1864 she advertised that she had just received her latest stock.

> Ladies who prefer receiving their toilettes direct from France have only to intimate their wishes to Madame Soulie, who has her representative in Paris, and who will ever be happy to do her best for her numerous patronesses. 70

It was not an accident that Madame Decourtet placed this, the acme of desirable advertising in The Argus. Those who had upper class pretentions were still receiving material by the length from England and having it made up by dressmakers chosen for their discretion. It was from such people dressed in the London rather than the Paris fashions which Madame Decourtet and her ilk were making available to the Melbourne public, that we hear jibes about the nouveaux riches.

> She [the rich woman] can import dresses from Worth's ... and if they should be really admirable, who is to appreciate their superiority to the surrounding fashions. 71

Twopeny's implication that the ignorant colonists were no judge of costume was one he himself gave ample evidence of refuting. With no traditions - family or otherwise - about how to dress, it is not surprising that many women with money turned to Madame Decourtet. It would have been surprising had she failed to make something of them. In October 1867 she placed three advertisements about stock she had just "received from Paris". Her business in Melbourne must have been going very well and her business links with Paris more real than imaginary, for in January 1869 she advertised that she herself was going to Paris and would "execute commissions" for her clients. She lost no time there for on 12 October 1869 the following advertisement apeared in The Argus:

> Madame Soulie Decourtet is NOW ON HER WAY BACK by the 'Sussex', expected in a few days. The express object of Madame Soulie Decourtet's visit to Europe was the selection of all the LATEST and MOST FASHIONABLE NOVELTIES OF THE SEASON and immediately on her return she will be in a position to execute any orders by which she

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70. The Argus, 8 October 1864.

71. Twopeny, quoted in Flower, op cit., p. 2.

> may be favoured in such a style of elegance and finish as has hitherto been unexampled in the Australian colonies.

It would have been a hard heart indeed that could have resisted such fresh temptation and Madame Decourtet was sufficiently the businesswoman to know it. She was still advertising goods just received from Paris in December 1874[72], some sixteen years after her first advertisement appeared in The Argus. Always to the fore at the time of fancy dress balls, Madame Decourtet represented yet another way of doing business which, although it had some things in common with the other businesswomen already discussed, chiefly perhaps with Mrs Finlay, relied less on the holding of sales and the reduction of goods and more on a convincing and popular connection with Paris. Each of these women was a successful businesswoman. Evidence of their business methods comes mainly from their advertising in The Argus. They each catered for a slightly different clientele and worked hard using every possible business ploy to earn their money. These were the milliners and dressmakers who in catering for the colonial clamour for purple, had found their gold-bearing lode.

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72. The Argus, 30 December 1874.

CHAPTER 7

A CASE STUDY OF COLONIAL BUSINESS PRACTICE: BRIGHT AND HITCHCOCK OF GEELONG

SYNOPSIS

Success of businesses in the colony of Victoria depended on the extent to which they were able to meet the needs and wants of new classes of colonial consumers. Discussion of two Victorian retail drapery businesses, Bright and Hitchcock of Geelong and Ball and Welch of Melbourne. Discussion of the business values and attitudes of William Bright, Walter Hitchcock and George Hitchcock, partners in the firm Bright and Hitchcock. Walter Hitchcock's social pretensions and their influence on his business values; his opposition to the holding of sales; his attitudes to banks and finance; his failure to come to terms with and cater for colonial taste; his opposition to advertising; his opposition to buying in Melbourne and his strong advocacy of the prestige of importing from England. Comparison of his business style and values with those of his brother George Hitchcock. Brief comparison with aspects of the retail drapery business as exemplified by the Ball and Welch correspondence.

The one aspect of the drapery business which has not been mentioned, as it lies outside the subject of an analysis of the retail drapery trade, is the operations of the wholesale houses and the auctioneers in Melbourne. Nevertheless these operations, extensive as they were, were important for two reasons. Firstly, they kept prices of clothing and its materials down and in so doing provided a service unwittingly or otherwise to the lower middle and working classes. Secondly, because of the extent of their operations, made possible by the higher per capita income in the colony of Victoria, they helped to create market conditions which certainly by the 1870s paralleled London and England in their complexity. In this chapter we shall discuss the operations of two firms as revealed by their colonial-British correspondence and argue that their success depended on the extent to which they were prepared and able to recognize the validity of the forces of the colonial market. By the colonial market it must be understood not only the Melbourne world of auctioneers, warehousemen, retail drapers and clothiers, tailors, seamstresses and the whole complexity of the procuring and selling of clothing, but most importantly for the argument of this thesis, that of the consumers and their clothing requirements. It is by understanding the pressures exerted by the colonial consumers that we can come to understand how quickly the colony had reached social, economic and political maturity.

Most of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the colonial retail drapery trade as revealed by the correspondence of the firm of Bright and Hitchcock in Geelong. This firm was to develop into the largest department store in Victoria outside Melbourne and as such will provide an example of a colonial business which was successful outside the metropolis. However, a brief comparison will be made with one of the many successful Melbourne retail businesses which was also to survive well into the twentieth century, that of Ball and Welch. While it would naturally be impossible to indicate with any accuracy the social background of the clientele of both these stores, a couple of points should be made about this. Firstly, both firms had definite upwardly-mobile pretensions within the colonial hierarchy of the trade at the time. Secondly, particularly in the case of a country concern such as Bright and

Hitchcock, while the tone of the establishment was tuned as high as possible, it was not practical in the business world of the colonies to pitch it too high. Competition to sell clothing was keen, the market was continually overfull and retailers were forced to keep prices down by the price wars - unscrupulous in terms of the British traditions - of the Melbourne warehousemen and even some retailers. In addition, the very nature of the colonial economy meant that those in society who were traditionally (in the British sense) supposed to set the tone, were often without the means to do so. Colonial traditions about the extension of credit did not necessarily benefit the upper classes in the same way and to the same degree as in England. George Hitchcock remarked ruefully on 31 January 1870 in a letter to London that trading in the colony was overdone and nobody was making anything

> ... we have depression in the three great interests of the colony, mining, squatting and agricultural. Mechanics, labourers and servants are apparently the only classes doing well. [1]

These were the customers whom George openly referred to as "second rate people"[2], and Walter Hitchcock's social pretensions were even more marked. However, these were the people for whom businessmen like George Hitchcock had to - and did - learn to cater for. He mourned the loss of one or two "good accounts" to Melbourne and hoped to provide the conditions whereby he could get them back[3], but subconsciously or otherwise, he began running his business from the 1870s onwards to attract the very "second rate people" whose custom he affected to disdain. Hence the success of his firm during his life-time and the establishment of business traditions which were to endure long after his death.

In fact the firm of Bright and Hitchcock provides a tailor-made example of how the colonial customers taught businessmen to revise their values and business traditions or go to the wall. William Bright was already in Geelong in 1852 and in 1853

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1. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Melbourne University Archives, letter from Geelong to London, 31 January 1870.

2. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 15 August 1868.

3. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 27 November 1866.

joined partnership with Walter and George Hitchcock who had strong English connections with the drapery trade and with professed Christian principles. Both these English connections they brought with them to the colony and both were to be modified by life in the colony. Their uncle was George Hitchcock of the firm George Hitchcock and Williams in the premises of which the first meeting of the Young Mens Christian Association was held. Mr Williams was also highly regarded in the London drapery world and was appointed as a member of the committee for carrying out the objectives of "The Association for suppressing the practice of goods falsely labelled".[4] In the colonial partnership, William Bright was the older man. He retired to England leaving his share of capital in the firm and from the correspondence appears as the poor old fellow who had to be protected from the anguish and worry consequent on the "new-fangled" methods of doing business. Walter Hitchcock did not remain long in the colony, returning to London in 1863 to act as the firm's London buyer. His copious, repetitive and often highly critical letters provided a marked contrast to those of his brother George which by comparison were a model of restraint in many senses. Although in fairness to Walter, he was capable of acknowledging that he was in the wrong on a point of business principle, he was never to acquire the entrepreneurial flexibility that George learned - or was taught - by life in the colony.

Spanning as they do over twenty years, Walter's letters give us an insight into every aspect of his character and his views on doing business. Being by nature an unventuresome man, he needed to reassure himself as to the nature of the proper modes of doing business even though - or perhaps because - his conceptions were inflexible. He found George's management gradually shifting away from the tenets he had always strongly held. To reassure himself, he wrote out his criticisms at length, writing several letters on the same subject in the same month, and also reported to his brother in Geelong conversations he had had in London with other respectable drapers and merchants who saw things his, Walter's, way, rather than in the strange new ways

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4. The Draper and Clothier, Vol. VII, November 1859, 210-212.

they were evolving in the colony under George's management. George's letters reveal a man very busy with the daily management of a large business in Geelong who just had time to dash off essential communications, rather too brief and terse to Walter's liking. Unfortunately, the records of the Geelong correspondence continue but intermittently into the 1870s and not at all past 1876. In the face of Walter's ceaseless barrage of repetitive advice delivered so lengthily and with the alleged support of the English side, George Hitchcock must have been strong in his convictions to continue. The colonial business world so far as the selling of clothing was concerned must have already evolved powerful and convincing traditions of its own, perhaps more limited in the English view of success but nonetheless persuasive to George.



1 centimetre = 125 kilometres

	1854	1861	1871	1881
Population of Melbourne	53,235	139,916	206,780	282,949
Population of Geelong	20,115	16,613	22,663	20,149

Figure 9. Relative Location and Population of the Cities of Geelong and Melbourne

George Hitchcock's determination must have been strong indeed, as going his own way eventually by 1877 added up to a departure from the English manner of doing business sufficiently striking as to cut himself off from credit that had hitherto been willingly advanced through his uncle's firm.[5] The point that must be made here is that there clearly were two ways of doing business and they were perceived as such by drapers like the Hitchcocks at the time. The more "modern" way had already been in

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5. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 28 September 1876.

operation in Melbourne for ten to fifteen years in such businesses as that of Nicoll the Tailor, Miss Sawtell, Mrs Findlay and others discussed in Chapter 6. This, it was argued, was because a large proportion of the clientele of these businesses was lower middle class and working class and therefore it was relatively easier to break with tradition, there being fewer traditions to break with. The struggle between the brothers Hitchcock which culminated in Walter giving up his share in the business in 1881 came about because their business had decided pretensions to do a middle class trade and a study of their correspondence reveals that there was a strong conflict about the way this should be done. This conflict in turn was caused by the fact that while the store had pretentions to a middle class trade, not all its customers - as George on the spot could not fail to see - fell within the desired social category. These less desirable customers, whatever percentage of the total business they generated, had to be catered for in the colonial world and as George evolved the means to do this, following business trends already firmly established in Melbourne, so he was subject to increasing criticism from his partner in London.

The three partners exemplify the stages of thought about the conduct of business between the purely British and the purely colonial. Mr Bright's few letters to George reveal him to be completely at a loss with regard to George's methods which he found "unbusiness-like".[6] The senior partner, a man much older than the Hitchcock brothers, Bright criticised George for buying in the colony (as opposed to importing everything), for carrying heavy Book Debts, and for putting out printed advertising circulars:

> Any tinpot house could do the same as you have done with just as much effect and you show them what you are at, and to advertise cheap Millinery is to advertise rubbish. 7

Here we have the classic British draper's view on advertising in a business catering to the middle classes. Advertising was a means of conducting business peculiar to the lower class trade and businesses with any pretensions to exclusivity guarded their

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6. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 September 1867.

7. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 December 1861.

trade secrets jealously. William Bright retired from the business in 1865 and the Hitchcock brothers became sole partners with only Bright's capital remaining in the business until his death in 1874 after which they bought it out.[8] Bright was also highly critical of George for spending money on alterations

> I deeply regret to find that you have again laid out in alterations on the premises the very large sum of £446.4.11 and in such a year as the last when we required every shilling to meet our engagements ... if this alteration had been very desirable under the circumstances it was highly improper to do it at the time [of financially straitened circumstances]. 9

George was doing business in the hinterland of a colony in which it was already

> an accepted maxim in commercial circles that money spent on buildings ... is amongst the cheapest forms of advertising a rising business and keeping an established business going ... [the Australians could not understand] how wealthy merchants can work in the dingy dens which serve for the offices of many a London merchant prince. 10

Bright's views were those of the conservative British retail drapery trade as described in Chapter 4. He saw business based on a low turnover at large profits and was loathe to outlay money in any way which might upset this status quo. Thus expenditure on advertising, on improving the premises, on carrying too much credit in the business - all these measures - threatened to change the nature of business as Mr Bright knew it. At the same time, and crucial to the argument of this thesis, these new methods of business into which George appeared to slide so effortlessly in the colony, implied a new class of customers with a new set of wants. Bright spoke of George's management as being

> contrary to all my knowledge and experience of what a retail trade should be and what circumstances in the colony may make it right ... I can offer no opinion. 11

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8. In point of detail, the article in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. IV, 1851-1890, pp. 401-402 on the firm of Bright and Hitchcock, is inaccurate about this sequence in the history of the business.

9. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 24 November 1864.

10. Twopeny, op cit., p. 12.

11. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 December 1861.

The last of his criticisms concerned fashion. Mr Bright made the same error as Walter Hitchcock was to go on making for the next twenty-five years; he took English and particularly London fashion as the yardstick by which to determine colonial taste. One of the important points to emerge from the Bright and Hitchcock correspondence is how little William Bright and Walter Hitchcock understood colonial fashion. This, of course, implies that there was a distinctive colonial fashion by the 1860s and indicates clearly that it was beyond the power of the English drapers to mould and direct it into a slavish imitation of British fashion. The number of instances in which English fashion did not "take" in Geelong abound throughout the correspondence to the discomfort of Walter and the irritation of George. For over twenty years George put up with Walter's misconceptions of what people would wear in Geelong until he finally asked Walter not to send a single line unless expressly ordered.[12] We do not know how often George asked Walter to confine himself to orders received from Geelong but we do know that Walter replied to this instruction three times during 1883 in an increasingly injured tone, finally citing other firms who were pleased with his buying and saying

> As you expressly wish I shall send you no line you do not order - though I think this policy a mistake. (Walter's emphasis) 13

Walter always tended to be defensive and never lost an opportunity to point out that some line he had bought had also been bought by Mr Nunn (of Buckley and Nunn) and Mr Brown (of Alston and Brown). Perhaps Melbourne fashion really was a little ahead of that parading in Geelong,[14] but perhaps too, the few things that Walter did stumble on which were tasteful were too small a part of the thousands of pounds worth of goods he sent from England, not all well bought, and the right impression from the few

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12. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 21 September 1863, 19 October 1883, 9 May 1884.

13. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 21 September 1883.

14. The Argus, 3 December 1867, contains a rather patronizing report of the turn-out of the crowd in Geelong on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales.

tasteful novelties could not be created against the background of "jobs"[15] and last season's goods.

As we have seen, William Bright criticised and professed not to understand George's management, so far had it crystalized as different from the English retail business style he knew. And this as early as 1861. Before going on to a survey of Walter Hitchcock's criticisms of George and what they reveal of the two different ways of doing business, let us examine briefly Walter's concept of trade and the mistakes he made in buying for the colony. Like William Bright, Walter Hitchcock did not believe in advertising, he was strongly against purchasing goods in the colonial market, he had definite English as opposed to colonial loyalties, and he was a snob as far as doing business was concerned. In addition, he had a particular horror of the holding of sales. Many of his views on the proper mode of doing business were a direct reflection of those of the more senior London drapers with whom he was in regular contact. Some of his views prevented him from being a good buyer for a colonial retail drapery store and were eventually to come into such conflict with the practice as implemented by his brother in Geelong that he was edged out of the partnership. In other words, the two ways of doing business could not co-exist.

One of the keys to Walter's ideas about what was business-like, was his social pretension. He was continually writing of his surprise that George was ordering such low goods for their trade "but you know best" he would add, implying that this was yet another manifestation of George's "suicidal" business methods. It was this pretension that was at the bottom of the struggle between the two brothers over the place of importing from England in the overall buying for their business. While the other conflicts were interesting and will be discussed briefly, the conflict over the value of importing versus the necessity of buying locally in Melbourne for the Geelong market, was the central conflict which was to cause the split between the brothers. Walter

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15. A "job" was a collection of cheap goods, often last season's, being sold off very cheaply to drapery buyers because the goods in question were out of fashion, damaged, or in some other way unsaleable.

believed that if they stopped importing, "we should at once lose our prestige with the Public and in fancy goods".[16] Many of Walter's social attitudes were alien to the world in which George was operating. While George did not write anything on the subject of importing versus buying locally, his persistent actions in terms of buying steadily and increasingly in the Melbourne market show him to have regarded the rather elusive quality of the prestige of importing as relatively insignificant. There was certainly some prestige in importing as we saw with the success of Madame Decourtet's business in Chapter 6, but this depended entirely on the class of customers the business hoped to attract.

In the case of the Hitchcock business, the issue of importing was clouded by the fact that Walter was not a very good buyer, for two reasons. Firstly, he could never resist a bargain. Season after season he succumbed to the smooth talking of the head of George Hitchcock and William's mantle department and bought at fifty per cent discount goods which had not sold in the London season. Colonial consumers wanted the latest and the best and by the 1870s were far too discerning to be fobbed off with London's leavings. The second reason that he could never be a good buyer was that he just did not understand the colonial environment or have a good idea of the sort of customers for whom he was buying. The net result was disastrous. George tried repeatedly to give Walter specific directions as to buying and a general idea of what kind of people he was buying for:

> As to styles we can adopt well, the newest, any novelty will be sure to sell. Remember also that the bulk of the population are young and therefore ladies dress younger and smarter than Londoners - Dowdy, heavy, flat colourings or mixtures, you may send us patterns of to look at but not buy as we are sure to lose by them. (George's emphasis) 17

While the Melbourne press found the Geelong fashion world rather countrified and not quite up to the mark of the metropolis, here we have evidence that the people of Geelong dismissed English fashions as not quite smart enough. In fairness to Walter

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16. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 25 October 1867.

17. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 25 March 1869.

who time and again found that the "latest" in London did not go down in Geelong, it must be pointed out that the colonial fashion world had already evolved its own criteria and interests. These did not entail a slavish imitation of English fashion by any means and were a factor in diminishing the value of importing. If George's customers did not take to English fashion, the prestige of importing was somewhat reduced.

Prestige, however, was vital to Walter. His concept of prestige was an English one increasingly at variance with colonial values. He wrote to George

> Houses here [in London] have a different regard for an account when one of the Firm resides in England and personally attends to the buying and finance matters of the business. 18

Competition in the Melbourne "rag trade" was already fierce by the 1850s and such considerations were totally irrelevant in an environment where all and sundry were making money out of the colonials' mania for bedecking themselves. Kelly wrote of "merchants" and "commission agents" who

> kept grand independent establishments while the representatives of London, Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow and Dublin hereditary firms roughed it in common boarding houses [these "commission agents"] were not so very imprudent after all. They did their business in true antipodean style. Anticipating the final clearance, they began by calculating their commission, advertising the "grand clearing off sale", merely to ascertain what balance might still remain due to them ... 19

These were George's competitors, the men who operated in the business world of Melbourne and who shared few of Walter's business values and none of his social pretensions. Walter in London was very particular about the men with whom he had business associations. George in Geelong could not afford to be. Reputation counted a great deal for Walter. He would have nothing to do with a man like Zumstein, the Melbourne silk merchant and importer[20], but a firm like the Messrs Peel who were "first class people altogether" could not possibly be guilty of fraud on the basis of their reputation. As "character" was vital in the world of early New South Wales, so

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18. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 24 March 1870.

19. W. Kelly, op cit., Part 1, p. 267.

20. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 4 November 1868.

"reputation" was an intangible but jealously guarded asset in the nineteenth century British business world. In Melbourne it mattered less and less until by the 1880s Twopeny was to write

> The old-fashioned English prejudice against bankruptcy has been improved out of existence by the speculative nature of all business, and the consequent frequency of insolvencies. Some of the biggest merchants have 'been through the Court' ... more than once; and provided there has been no open swindle in the case, no opprobrium attaches. 21

To some extent Walter's reporting of the London business world and its views was a reflection of his own values and the circles he moved in and those conservative values still dominated much of the English retail drapery world in the years 1860-1880. While his brother was in all possibility doing business with former bankrupts, Walter was writing with horror of the consternation felt in London about the failure of Melbourne houses. As late as 1878 he was to write to ask George his opinion on whether he should buy for a Mr A. Miller. Walter wrote that of course his decision would depend on

> whether his [Miller's] standing, mode of doing business etc are all satisfactory

and later that the said Mr Miller

> does not favourably impress me except as a keen businessman. (Walter's emphasis) 22

By the late 1870s Walter's social values had not changed at all, rather they had solidified to reflect those of the London drapers with whom he associated. However, they were totally out of place when applied to the colonial environment to which George had to adapt. In 1878, it suddenly struck Walter that it would be better for business if they dropped the term "Drapers" on their stationery and shop front and used only the terms "Importers" and "Manufacturers". As was his way when he had an idea about the business, he was to write to George about this three times over the next thirteen months[23]

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21. R.N. Twopeny, op cit., p. 192.

22. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 2 August 1871.

23. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 2 August 1878, 4 July 1879, 25 September 1879.

> We again urge you to drop the term Draper from all your Stationery. Your claims come home on Memos which we have to show Manufacturers here, Bright and Hitchcock Drapers, it lowers their opinion of our position at once, and they feel they are doing with a retail house, whereas the word Importers, or Importers and Manufacturers would do much better on your side and on this. 24

As Walter had to keep writing to George on the subject, it was obvious that George did not see the advantage of Walter's ideas and had not changed his letterheads. Because of the brevity and paucity of correspondence from Geelong, we have to infer much about George's views from a knowledge of the overall colonial retail drapery scene. It was this knowledge that Walter could not assimilate. Although he made two visits to the colonies in 1870 and 1880, he never really grasped the fact that the colonial retail drapery trade had become an immense one which ran on principles and assumptions quite different from his own. A name counted for something in the colonies to be sure, and by 1879, the name of Bright and Hitchcock was up with that of Buckley and Nunn, Alston and Brown, Robertson and Moffat. But the distinction that Walter imagined existed in the minds of business people - and which did, in fact exist in England - between retailing and importing was no longer an important one in George's world.

> In the early days there was of course no distinction between wholesale and retail business, and in country towns the largest firms still keep stores where you can buy sixpennyworth of anything you want. Even in the towns the distinction is not firmly established, and many of the wealthier importers still keep shops. 25

Three final examples of Walter's upwardly-mobile social pretensions and their consequences for his view of how business should be done. When considering the extension of the premises by further leasing Walter wrote that

> a question for very careful consideration [is] how far a Malop Street front would be an advantage to us - writer thought for ready-made trade it would do well, as of easy access to country people, whilst the better class for bespoke trade or even for purchase of ready-made goods might much prefer entrance at corner, or in Morrabool Street ... 26

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24. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 25 September 1879.

25. R.N. Twopeny, op cit., p. 190.

26. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 14 March 1879.

Here we have tacit admission on Walter's part that the business was serving two classes of people including those with whom he would personally not have had great dealings. He was capable of recognizing intermittently that the business in which he was a partner served the lower classes:

> I think we would not had sufficient of the lower goods ... 27

> ... It may be a very good Glove for us being so much lower ... 28

but in general as we have already remarked, he did not perceive the lower class consumer as one to be borne in mind when buying and ordering goods even though he admitted that such people might conveniently come in the Malop Street entrance. In response to George's evident query as to why he did not send a certain hat in 1885, he replied

> ... the chenille spotted Felts I saw but refused only low trades sold them here - and I would not touch them considering them (except for a lower trade) a bad line - French goods for a few weeks had a sale here ... but directly were copied in low English goods and the Servants went in for them - it was no oversight on my part. 29

From his vantage point in Geelong, George was prepared and willing to sell hats which Walter thought too low to bother with. By the 1880s with his new partner, Mr Coburn, George Hitchcock's management and business initiatives were really bearing good returns for the firm. After thirty-five years in the colony, George had adopted colonial ways and if there were customers who wanted to buy a certain style of hat, he George was only too willing to sell it to them, "low" or otherwise. This is not to say that George Hitchcock did not have strong views on hats; he wrote twice - very fulsomely for him - to Walter on the subject:

> The Blk [sic] Paris Hats from Stopfords are just up from the "Britain". The shapes are too extreme, too wide ... and the young men for whom they were specially intended will not look at them, low crowns are saleable but much narrower brims than you sent, yours are very extreme, is it possible that you wear such a shape yourself? 30

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27. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 March 1865.

28. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 January 1867.

29. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 10 April 1885.

30. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 12 September 1868.

> The Mens Straw Hats Job c 18/- You could scarcely have chosen a worse line - in either Mens or Ladies - only the newest and nicest goods are saleable and never in extra quantities ... 31

However, in contrast to Walter, George's business style showed a lively inter-reaction with the people and trends that comprised the colonial world, rather than an adherence to pre-conceived fixed notions, based on the values of the British retail drapery worlds.

A last example of Walter's snobbery as it affected the business was his refusal to entertain the idea of extending the range of merchandise offered for sale beyond that of the purely drapery lines. Although he gradually came to buy other items such as pictures, shells for decorating mantelpieces, and a job lot of statues - much to George's annoyance as Melbourne and Geelong had already been inundated with marble[32] - he was strongly against selling things like toys[33] or cutlery[34]. In Walter's opposition we see the beginnings of George's initiatives to reach out and extend the business into what we today would call a department store. This was a trend that had already begun in Melbourne and George had no inhibitions or reticence about trying it in Geelong. The only real reticence he had was where his religious principles were involved but even there he was prepared to condone more than Walter. He drew the line at some nude figures which adorned the outside of some boxes arriving in Geelong[35] and he wrote to the Geelong racing club saying that he would not close on race day[36], but he was prepared to keep costume plates from which ladies could have fancy dresses made up. He answered, obviously to a disapproving remark from Walter

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31. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 13 August 1872.

32. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 18 June 1872.

33. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 7 October 1872.

34. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 7 May 1879.

35. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 15 January 1879.

36. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to Geelong, 28 January 1873 (letter enclosed in Geelong-London correspondence).

> Our keeping either [Costume Plates] or Ball dress materials does not in any way encourage dissipation, we merely supply materials which would be got elsewhere if we hadn't them. 37

While Geelong's leading draper could not be seen to be condoning public race meetings, he was not prepared to condemn fancy dress balls as potentially iniquitous venues in the same category as the races.

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Having analyzed Walter Hitchcock's social pretensions as imbibed by association with the British retail drapery world and remarked on their irrelevance in the colonial context, we must survey briefly some of the other differences between the brothers on ways of conducting business. The central difference, that of importing from England versus buying in the colony, with all it implied, will be discussed last. Of the many differences of opinion between Walter in London and George in Geelong, we shall select the three that caused Walter to react most strongly and therefore most clearly implied the development of a distinctive colonial business tradition; the holding of sales, methods of financing and questions of taste. It must be remarked in passing here that Australia was by no means exceptional in evolving different modes of doing business. This had already happened and was to continue in America, and logically would have happened in any society with a higher per capita income and in which people showed one strong preference in their consumption pattern. The difference between the American and the Australian cases was the way they were perceived by British businessmen. By the twentieth century, British writers on the retail drapery trade were reluctantly and critically examining American business methods.[38] America was physically close and economically more significant so it bore in on the

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37. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 12 September 1868.

38. R. Beynon, op cit., pp. 11, 66 and 107, and J. Ernest Bayley, Drapery Business Organization, Management and Accounts, Pitman and Sons, London, 1913, pp. 40 and 42.

horizons of British retailers. Australia was so far away and so relatively unimportant economically, that the British retail drapery trade in general was not forced to take into account any differences in the style of business operating there. Walter Hitchcock was an interesting case. Despite the fact that he migrated to the colony with his family at the age of seventeen and was not to return to London for thirteen years[39], he was a striking example of an individual who, although he had had direct personal experience of the colonial reality, was unable to incorporate this into his business views. Living in London, he was influenced increasingly by the senior London retail drapers with whom he had frequent contact, especially Mr Bright, Mr Williams and Mr Grieve. In his person, he exemplified the British reluctance to alter business traditions when confronted with an obviously viable alternative set of traditions. While in general it was the American example which was eventually to influence British businessmen, in specific cases like that of the Hitchcock brothers, we see the evolution of parallel differences in the Australian colonies and a similar British reluctance to recognize their potential validity.

One of the reasons for examining Walter Hitchcock's social snobberies as far as they influenced his views on business was that in reflecting the traditions of the conservative British retail drapers, they showed a direct connection between business methods and social class. As discussed already in Chapter 4, the higher the class a business catered for, the greater the reluctance to admit openly the nature of the business transaction. Goods for sale were not marked with their prices, advertising and window dressing were frowned on and the holding of sales was regarded as anathema by the prestigious London retail houses. These were the very businesses admired by Walter and aside from the influence of William Bright, they were a stronger force in the shaping of his ideas than his experience of the colonial world. We have seen that the exclusivity of these businesses and their methods had evolved to cater to the upper classes in England. Although Walter knew the colonies and had lived in Geelong from

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39. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. IV, 1851-1890, p. 401.

the age of eighteen to thirty-one[40], he was not able to acknowledge explicitly or implicitly that the market forces operating on the West End houses he gloried in, were a world apart from those relevant in Geelong. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the influence of Walter's correspondence on his brother. At various points the pressure of his constant criticism and disagreement with George's management must have had its effect, as George offered to give up the business or at the very least proposed that Walter come out to the colonies and see for himself the results of his work.[41] In general, however, the fact that George continued on a course of action despite Walter's violent dissention, indicated that he had a fairly strong and clear idea of what was suitable in the colonial environment.

One of the clearest examples of George Hitchcock's adherence to his perceived notion of the best solution to a business problem in the face of his brother's violent objections, was in the holding of sales. As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the holding of sales was frowned on by middle to upper class British retail drapery firms but as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, was common in the Melbourne retail drapery world from the early 1850s. By the mid to late 1860s even the most exclusive Melbourne houses were holding sales, although they did not always openly refer to them as such. It was not until 1867 that the issues arose in the Hitchcock business and Walter wrote

> I would on no account have a selling off as to do so honourably you must slaughter your doubtful stock and get no profit on your best stock. 42

In 1866 and 1867 the firm over-imported from England, became over-stocked and came very close to not being able to meet its bills. Walter and George saw this as equally an oversight on both their parts but they disagreed about how to resolve the financial dilemma in which they then found themselves. There was that in the colonial environment which made British observers comment on the absence of "honour" in business dealings.

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40. ibid.

41. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 14 August 1869.

42. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 24 July 1867.

> If ... there are fewer of those old-established firms in which strict traditions of honour descend from generation to generation, so ... the smaller size of towns gives less scope for barefaced swindlers. And thus, if the standard of commercial morality is lower here than at home, people are not taken in so easily ... 43

It is argued that there was not necessarily less "honour" in the Melbourne retail drapery world than its London counterpart, rather a difference in style which made the colonial methods unfamiliar at the upper and middle levels and therefore more open to such a charge. The Hitchcock example shows that there was a specific business problem and a number of possible solutions based on one's point of view, no one of which was inherently less honourable than another. However, Walter was unable to countenance the possibility of holding a sale as a way out of the financial difficulties caused by over-importing. Moreover, it was his habit when worried about a business problem to discuss it with all the senior London drapers he knew and to relate their alleged agreement with him to George in Geelong. In 1867 George announced a "great reduction in Prices prior to stock taking" which was a very close euphemism for a sale as far as his customers were concerned but in Walter's mind, while it was unsatisfactory, even a "mistake", such an announcement did not amount to a full-blown sale. The first real sale held by Bright and Hitchcock's, despite Walter's constantly registering his disapproval, was in 1870. Walter wrote immediately

> Mr Bright thinks as Mr Williams and myself do that you have made a sad error in having a selling off - as to consulting your young men how to manage your business, is [sic] simply humiliating - and cannot fail to confirm any rumour however false of our being in difficulties ... 44

Here we see further evidence of Walter's snobbery; management was management and kept its ways and workings aloof from the mere employees. Moreover, to keep one's reputation intact, one necessarily confided as little as possible in one's employees who, by definition, could not be trusted with the honour of the firm. George Hitchcock was pioneering personnel relations and the art of consultation between management and employees. He was aware of Walter's views on sales but he had a greater under-

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43. R.N. Twopeny, op cit., p. 140.

44. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 13 July 1870.

standing of the complexities of the situation because of his personal ability to perceive both the English and colonial views of the problem. Being able to understand two different outlooks and the business reasons for them, gave George Hitchcock greater power to control and resolve difficulties that affected the firm. This is how George described his view of the situation and its best solution in a letter of 21 May 1870 to which Walter replied as above

> ... in consequence of the depressed state of trade, the falling off of business in April which ought to have been a good month, Mr Watt [the floorwalker] invited the heads of departments to 'a council of war' at his house to see what could be done to reduce our stock and improve our business. Looking at the fact of Lonagans and Flynn opening in opposition to us and securing a good deal of the Roman Catholic interest and also to Bartlett opening his own premises next week with a number of cheap lines, they unanimously came to the conclusion that we ought to have a selling off and make a vigorous effort to reduce Stock and at the same time produce an impression upon our customers. Mr Watt and I quite unknown to them had already decided on the same course and today we commence our Sale. I know your objection to Sales - as I feel the same myself, but our present position is exceptional and it is quite evident that our efforts to reduce stock in the regular way has [sic] been quite a failure ... 45

On 18 June 1870 George wrote

> Our sale has been a great success as the following figures show
> 1870 Cash Sales May 21st to June 17th inclusive £5462
> for sale period last year £1991
> The results however up to date convey still more clearly the advantages of the course we have taken. We expect to be busy up to the end of the month.... Of course we have had to buy some low stuff in Melbourne which the glutted state of the market enabled us to do to advantage as you will see by warehouse circulars sent you ... we may mention that we did not dress our windows but covered them with large letters, one in each, square, the words "monster sale" etc. We would also draw your attention to the fact which will no doubt be satisfactory that we indulged in no misrepresentation to the slightest degree and quoted no prices, thanks to a good character for truth, both were unnecessary. (my emphasis) 46

There was nothing dishonourable about George's thought processes or intentions in deciding to hold a sale. Moreover, being aware of his brother's objections to such an initiative in which he admitted he shared, he approached the whole affair in a most thoroughly business-like way. He took into account all the immediate and long-term

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45. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 21 May 1870.

46. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 18 June 1870.

pressures on the firm and decided on two innovations, namely, consultation with the staff and the holding of a full-blown sale to "produce an impression upon our customers". The net result of such innovations was to confirm George's style as one seeking to generate an increase in turnover while aiming for an increase in the firm's share of the market. This was in direct conflict with the British model as exemplified by Walter who believed strongly in the protection of gross profit, the protection of the unit value of merchandise and had a finite view of the class of custom he expected to attract. The two conflicting approaches to business involved two different ways of seeing the customer. Walter's conception of the customers was of those who could and would pay what he had determined was the just price for articles he had determined were tasteful.

> Do remember that most articles customers are entirely ignorant of the value of to five or ten per ct [sic] ... 47

> ... we lead the fashion and must have much to do in leading public taste. 48

In George's view and in that of many other businessmen in the colony, these notions were becoming increasingly untenable. People were aware not only of the value of an article but of the various prices put on it by different businesses. Thanks to frequent newspaper advertising and the common practice of price-tagging, consumers were beginning to be able to determine for themselves where they could find the goods which most suited them and their pockets. Furthermore, the ultimate statement of consumers' views of Walter Hitchcock's taste lay in the amount of merchandise left on the shelves at the end of each season which George had to try and get rid of somehow in Melbourne or even to send back to England.[49]

In George's letter we see the beginning of distinctive colonial enterprise based on the greater surplus consumer power of a wider cross-section of the population.

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47. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 24 September 1867.

48. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 24 August 1865.

49. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 25 November 1863.

Rather than hold sales or sell hats of dubious taste and quality, Walter would not even consider that a business in which he was a partner would stoop to adopt such initiatives. In the colonial context, however, there were probably two or three shops in the same street which would.[50] When George was daily confronted by the competition offered by Lonagan and Flynn and Brennan, and occasionally by Melbourne firms, he made the decision to outface his competitors by attracting the people who would normally be their customers. By offering low goods for sale cheaply, he was producing an impression not merely on his regular customers but others in Geelong were being tempted into spending their spare shillings at Bright and Hitchcock rather than at Brennan. We have repeatedly stressed that this philosophy of the extension of business through the holding of sales, through advertising and window dressing was not one espoused by the higher class retail drapery firms even after the first world war in Britain.

However, the holding of one sale in isolation would not justify the alternative views of business being adopted by an increasingly confident George. Other factors such as buying, the marking of prices and the mounting of advertising campaigns through leaflets, newspapers and shop windows, all these had to be developed. This implied a realization by George that he was seeking to do a greater annual turnover and have a greater and wider share of the market pass through his doors. It took some while for him to grasp this consciously. Thus the immediate benefits of the 1870 sale were cancelled out over twelve months of trading which incorporated too many of Walter's views and influence, for although George did ignore many of Walter's criticisms, he was not able to dispense entirely with his advice and opinions. So Walter was able to look back on the sale and say it was a failure. As a businessman, Walter Hitchcock had a great eye for the minutiae of business, but on the bigger more

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50. All the drapery shops in Geelong during the years under discussion were in the same street. This agglomeration was quite common in Victoria; see also Jubilee History of Brunswick and Illustrated Handbook of Brunswick and Coburg, Melbourne Periodicals Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1901, for details of numbers and location of drapery shops in these areas.

complex issues, tended to see things too simplistically, finding one simple cause and plugging away at that. He was, however, aware that there were conflicting philosophies of how to do business and was terrified that George would abandon that which he knew to be safe and sure

> I may say that the old notion of pushing a large trade at a loss is quite exploded. 51

George was in fact aiming at the new notion of pushing a large trade at a profit. Walter was very worried when their cousin Charles Hardie joined the firm, coming from Sydney in 1878, fearing that his "sanguine and visionary representations ... will bring disaster on us"[52] and adding, for the nonce that Tom Grieve thought so too. Walter was unduly worried about the

> Danger of Charles adopting any Ballarat Melbourne or Sydney theories ... about driving a roaring trade at a reduced rate of profit. 53

A sale was the example par excellence of seeking to do a roaring trade at a reduced rate of profit and as we have already stressed, it implied a different view of doing business because it involved a different philosophy of the customers' wants and needs. Walter was so against the holding of sales that he looked back on the year's trading, saw a small loss of capital and immediately had his ideas confirmed solidly on this subject: "A sale means slaughter all round". George looked back on the experience and as a more complex and flexible businessman, he believed that the experiment was worth repeating as he obviously saw it operating in the wider context of colonial trading. However, when he mooted the idea again,the reply from London left no doubt as to the nature of Walter's views

> We are surprised you speak with any doubt of the fact of a selling off resulting in a serious loss not only of profit but of Capital itself ... it would be a certain and very heavy loss to force off a large quantity of

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51. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 November 1865.

52. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 21 November 1875.

53. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 19 December 1878.

> goods in Geelong ... Mr Bramwell [the London manager of the United Bank of Australia] at once realised the folly of such a course ... 54

So worried was Walter that he discussed the matter again with Mr Grieve

> ... he says tell George on no account to have a sale that would be folly and a heavy loss now and henceforth too for a time ... a sale means slaughter all round. 55

He then went to Mr Williams whose advice was

> on no account have a selling off. 56

In a sense Walter was absolutely right. The philosophy of the inviolate cost of an article and the protection of merchandise at this price (usually high) rather than the idea when buying that an article could afford to be dropped a certain percentage of its value, was a philosophy still apparent in many English and some Australian retail circles in the 1950s. If a dress had cost £150, it stayed in the shop until someone paid £150 for it. We know enough about George's philosophy about buying and selling to be able to assert that he did not have this view on merchandise. To begin with, he was prepared to sell off as job lots goods which did not suit his customers, much to Walter's disapproval. Secondly, when he received the new season's imports, if there was nothing he thought he could make a leading line of, regardless of the marked value of the goods, he did not waste his time trying to push these on to his customers but went straight to Melbourne to buy a few fashionable things at Alston and Brown or Buckley and Nunns.[57] It was his attitude and its consequences, greater expenditure on colonial purchases, rejection of imported goods and a decrease in faith in the value of importing in general, that made it inevitable that George should come to understand and accept the value of holding sales in Geelong.

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54. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 16 February 1876.

55. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 16 March 1876.

56. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 12 May 1876.

57. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 28 February 1873, 22 April 1873.

Not so Walter. After having gathered ammunition in the shape of agreement with his ideas from all the businessmen he knew, he tried to borrow another £5,000 from Mr Williams rather than have a "forced sale". He wrote again in September 1876

> we must on no a/c [sic] have a forced sale which would be a loss of Thousands besides utterly disorganizing our trade. 58

Despite all this, George went ahead and held the sale in early 1877. Walter's reaction was swift. A letter from Drake and Son to Walter M. Hitchcock was forwarded to Geelong on 16 March 1877

> We have perused the partnership deed between yourself and your brother, with reference to the cause of complaint you have against him for selling off the entire Stock in spite of your repeated protests against such a step being taken and it appears to us, that having regard to the frequent and explicit objection made by you to this course your Brother has committed a breach of the 9th Article.... Under the circumstances we advise you that ... you are entitled to claim from your Brother as damages that he shall bear the whole amount of the loss which may be caused by the course he has persued [sic] ... 59

No stronger statement of Walter's disagreement with his brother could be made than getting legal advice on the matter. By the same mail he wrote concerning the sale

> a most painful subject which with the kindest feeling we cannot but allude to fully and with very deep regret.... We fail to see a single excuse for such a suicidal step.... We fear for the disorganization of our trade for the next six to twelve months (as in 1870) consequent on your forced sale in a limited community. 60

George could not have failed to realize that his brother's reaction would be very strong indeed and therefore must have been sure of himself in continuing with business methods which were expressly against Walter's wishes and beliefs. In fact the results of the sale were satisfactory, as Walter was the first to admit in a rather back-handed way:

> after all your slaughter of profit you came out with the largest profit since July 31st, 1874 ... 61

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58. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 28 September 1876.

59. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 16 March 1877.

60. ibid.

61. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 27 September 1877.

Finally, he was to re-capitulate. As we have already noted, Walter Hitchcock was a man who could admit he had been wrong on larger or smaller matters.

> You have done wisely in not having your sale in December to the certain injury of the Christmas trade, our sales are so infrequent and so bonafide that your January return will we doubt not be largely in advance of average Jany [sic] ... 62

Thus only a little over two years after he had taken legal advice and threatened to sue his brother for damages over the issue, Walter was tacitly agreeing that sales were an acceptable way of doing business under certain explicit conditions. Not the least important of these was that the sale should be bonafide. As we have noted in Chapter 5, the respectable English drapery tradition embodied by its journals and by the writings of Ablett, definitely frowned on dishonest sales. Deliberately singeing or staining goods down in the cellar preparatory to a fire or a flood sale was not on. An occasional sale for a valid business reason which could be shared with the customers, was another thing altogether. In all, Bright and Hitchcock held three sales in the years 1870 to 1879, an indication that while a "selling off" had become a possibility for George Hitchcock, he was still not in the class of the Melbourne businesses such as Miss Sawtell's or Mrs Hill's which held regular quarterly sales. However, it was by adopting these colonial business methods - methods which existed to be sure in England, but were despised and distrusted by men of the Hitchcocks' class and background - that the business was to trade itself out of the problems of the late 1870s.

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The second major difference between Walter and George Hitchcock concerning the running of their firm was their attitude towards banks and the proper sources of financing the business. Walter's attitude contained two conflicting elements. A part of his thinking showed him as able to recognize money as a commodity[63] and led him to

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62. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 17 January 1879.

63. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 25 May 1865.

regard the banks and their managers as being there to do what he wanted of them[64]. One would have supposed that such a way of thinking would in its turn eventually have led Walter to the idea that any source of borrowed money was equally acceptable. This was not the case. He believed very firmly that only certain connections - outside the immediately obvious one of the bank - could be activated for the borrowing of money. Not so George. For a while the difference of opinion did not surface as George took no action to demonstrate his view on the issue. The only way we have of knowing how George was managing is through the criticism of Walter's letters. He felt that George did not inspire sufficient confidence in the bank manager and that he did not approach the bank authoritatively enough.[65]

In the late 1860s as already discussed, the firm got into difficulties through heavily over-importing. In 1868, for example, the winter shipments alone amounted to £10,539/17/-.[66] Instead of a two season year as we know it today, retail drapery firms in the nineteenth century operated on a four season year. Bright and Hitchcock's return varied between £45,000 and £60,000 per annum. There was also considerable capital - up to £12,000 locked up in book debts and expenditure on buying in the colony. So it was that this heavy importing resulted in the firm's not only having a considerable and continuous overdraft of between £6,000 and £8,000, but also having to borrow money from George Hitchcock and Williams. The nature of the business world, then as now, meant that bank managers were very cautious about clients with large overdrafts and made it their business to know as much as possible about them. Although Walter urged George to keep as confidential as he could, the fact that Mr Williams was lending them money,[67] there were close connections between the London and Australian branches of banks, and the manager in Geelong would have been aware

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64. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 January 1866.

65. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 June 1867.

66. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 27 January 1868.

67. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 10 July 1873.

of the probability of such a loan. It was all very well for Walter to criticize George for not inspiring sufficient confidence in the bank manager for him to continue lending the firm more money. The colonial world was one that had seen a relatively high number of spectacular business failures and the financial record of Bright and Hitchcock - however Walter might view it - contained little to inspire confidence in any bank manager. Walter had a characteristically rosy view of the reputation of the firm

> we stand now very well here in Credit because we are one of the few Australian houses who have met all their engagements during the past twelve months. 68

Walter overlooked two important factors that would have been uppermost in the bank manager's mind and would also undoubtedly have occurred to George. Firstly, the only reason they had got through the last twelve months and were to get through the next ten years, was that George Hitchcock and Williams had helped directly by lending them money or indirectly by allowing them to present their bills twice. The second important factor was that all colonial houses had over-imported. It was a common mistake following the boom years of the 1850s - and to a lesser extent the early 1860s - which was almost to bring trade to a stand-still by 1870. On the spot, Mr Simpson, the Geelong manager of the Union Bank of Australia, would have been more keenly alert to this trend than Walter was in London. Thus the British and colonial view of the issue were again necessarily very different and despite his knowledge of the colony, Walter was unable to make the leap of imagination required to see the matter from a colonial standpoint. So he was to write disapprovingly to George in 1867 quoting the higher authority of Mr Williams as he so often did.

> Mr Williams said if many [at] home got to know of our giving the Union Bank a Bill of Sale it would shut us up - no one would sell us goods. 69

What he could not see was that the financial record of Bright and Hitchcock in particular and the colonial environment in general, gave Mr Simpson every reason to ask the firm for a Bill of Sale over their goods as security against their considerable overdraft.

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68. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 31 August 1867.

69. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 27 August 1867.

In 1873, the bank in Geelong must have refused to accommodate the firm's requirements beyond the heavy overdraft they carried continually.[70] This led George to investigate other sources for borrowing money and he finally negotiated a loan with a Mr Ibbotson who was a businessman and a Director of the Union Bank of Australia. In a letter of 12 June 1873, Walter had already described Ibbotson as a "shark" but this was nothing to his outrage when he learned that George had borrowed money from him outside the offical channels of the bank.

> We should not dream of using [Ibbotson's] credit.... Mr Ibbotson's conduct as a Director of the Union Bank of Australia in seeking to drive the Bank's customers to them is open to very grave objection ... [it is] the most extraordinary financial operation one can conceive of ... you have fallen into the serious mistake of going to a Merchant for credit - agreed to pay 15% per annum for the use of their money and hypothecate our goods - and now that we have cabled we would not use it[,] you have ... [either the Bank has no confidence in us] or Mr Ibbotson has flagrantly transgressed all rules of commercial morality and injured us at our Bankers to compel us to seek his help.... [I] can see no shadow of reason why because we did not use it at a given time we should pay interest - it is all of a piece with Mr Ibbotson's sharp practice all throughout this disgraceful affair ... 71

Furthermore, to Walter's chagrin, the fact that Ibbotson had lent them money became public knowledge when the money was cabled through to the firm Dalgety's in London.

> Dalgety's partner Mr Sanders formerly Union Bank Manager here told me in the presence of Mr Du Croz when Ibbotson's letter establishing credit reached them that it was strange Bright and Hitchcock should pass by their Bank and open a credit with them or any merchant - you do not seem to realize how much such a step injures our credit ...

To show how repetitive and insistent Walter could be on a point of business principle, we will quote just one more of his letters on the subject before analyzing George's thinking on the matter.

> We much regret you should have been tempted by the 2 pr [sic] cent to have any further transactions with Mr Ibbotson or indeed with anyone ouside our Bankers, they and they alone must furnish us with any loan we may required - I am surprised you do not see how very undesirable such a course is revealing our position to Ibbotson's clerks and Dalgety du Croz clerks here.... it will never do to be at the mercy of any Merchant, beside the injury to our credit here and on your side.... [Ibbotson] is injuring us at our Bankers and then privately taking our Bills himself and

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70. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 1 October 1875.

71. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 3 September 1873.

> actually underselling the Bank of which he is a Director, such conduct is highly dishonorable - beside you know how many firms have been crippled and ruined by his getting hold of the a/c [sic] ... [also in times of panic no private bills such as drafts on Dalgety du Croz] would be so readily discounted even at higher rates as Bank bills. 72

It must be said of Walter Hitchcock the he was inclined to see the worst in any difficult business situation and to even become rather naively melodramatic. On another occasion when the returns were consistently lower than they had reason to expect, his mind swung to the rather improbable - "Is there a thief in the house?"[73] On this occasion, thoroughly discountenanced by George's proceedings, he immediately brought to bear all the cliched horror his conservative background had ingrained in him when confronted by an innovation in the course of financing a business as he knew it. When he wrote of Ibbotson as "a shark" or that "it will never do to be at the mercy of any Merchant", one has difficulty thrusting away some evil image of a Geelong Shylock. In order to dispel that image we must examine George's single and characteristically brief letter on the subject. George's thinking in going to a third and outside source for finance was to buy his business the freedom offered by immediate cash from a non-biased source.[74] The loans from Mr Williams carried heavy commitments to his views, his firm and his way of doing business. Bright and Hitchcock had to remit less money to England in order to reduce their considerable and long-standing overdraft. The bank was obviously no longer a possibility as a source of further money. This George saw quite clearly but Walter did not understand. One's bank accommodated one's interest on the basis of one's reputation. As we have remarked, the financial reputation of Bright and Hitchcock did not bear too close an inspection. Being tied to Mr Williams by financial obligations meant buying more from his firm than was good for business in Geelong

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72. Bright and Hitchcock Correspondence, London to Geelong, 30 October 1873.

73. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 21 August 1879.

74. Ball and Welch correspondence, Manuscript held at Melbourne University Archives, Melbourne to London, 29 October 1869. The London buyer, Mr George Middlecoat had 500 in hand "in case we send - which we shall do - more small orders from time to time, or you may be induced to buy some small line in excess of our instructions".

> We cannot help noticing that ... nearly all our bad stock is from two houses, viz. Hitchcocks and Evans. Anything that is new and might work you do right in sending ... but odd Job lines simply because cheap twice out of three times turn out badly ... 75

Thus, by borrowing money from Ibbotson, George aimed firstly to have to remit less money to London and therefore to begin paying off his overdraft. Secondly he wrote

> Having the command also of Dalgety's credit for cash purchases we hope you will go about and see if an important saving cannot be made in some items and also give you the run of such houses as Leafs, Morrisons, Dents etc which at present you pass by apparently because we have not regular accounts with them. 76

For George, clearly, the source of the money was less important than the freedom it gave in being able to take advantage of discounts for cash and being able to buy from a greater range of English wholesale firms. Such considerations were infinitely more important to him than the question of whether or not Ibbotson's and Dalgety's clerk could be trusted with their affairs. Moreover, George clearly had thought the matter through and did not feel that borrowing money from Mr Ibbotson would injure their credit in any way. Since the gold rushes, it had been quite common practice to go outside normal banking channels to borrow money and in the colonies such a course carried with it no stigma whatever. However, there was a very nice division in Walter's mind concerning proper and improper sources for borrowing money outside of the bank. He was later to borrow money from a Mr Banks who was introduced to him by Mr Grieve. Banks agreed to invest £5,000 in the business and in order to pay for this, Walter did the rounds of the London houses and asked them to agree to present their bills twice, thus increasing the length of time Bright and Hitchcock could avail themselves of their credit. Although we do not have the letter, George must have written saying that borrowing money in this way was essentially no different from borrowing from Ibbotson because Walter replied

> We are surprised you should consider our going to the houses here for extra terms for a time for a very special purpose as at all a parrell [sic] case to your going to Ibbotson or any merchant with whom we have no

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75. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 25 August 1865.

76. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 15 July 1873.

> business transactions whatever to borrow money instead of to our Banker. 77

For George, money really was just a commodity. For Walter, borrowing money was a delicate business to be done as much as possible in the confines of the circles and procedures he knew. For instance, he wrote to George in 1877

> we counsel you not taking any more Drafts in American firms or American Banks, it is a great risk. (Walter's emphasis) 78

George must have tried to explain in detail his reason for borrowing money from Mr Ibbotson but his efforts could not really make much impression on Walter's deeply conservative viewpoint and only succeeded in earning Walter's ill-considered criticism

> Your explanations about the Dalgety credit, the first we have received are entirely satisfactory as to Mr Ibbotson's and Mr Simpson's part in the matter but it makes your own conduct altogether unaccountable. First you have gone outside the legitimate channel for the accommodation required. Second you have paid an exorbitant rate of interest.... We wonder what Ibbotson can think of your throwing away money in such a way as this. 79

It is hard to sympathize with Walter Hitchcock. He was so deaf to alternative ideas and reasoning that differed from that he accepted from the conservative world around him. Moreover, even though he sometimes appeared to concede partially that George may have had a sound business reason for making a particular decision, he still reverted to continual carping criticism and sought refuge in the agreement of other conservative businessmen. In the Ibbotson affair well after he had agreed that George's explanations were satisfactory, his deeply-felt horror at the whole transaction re-surfaced and he wrote again that such a course "would be denounced here by all rules of commercial morality ..."[80] and, happening to bump into Mr Burrows, the agent for the premises they leased in Geelong, he unloaded the whole affair on to him, getting his agreement about the unorthodoxy and immorality of George's proceedings[81].

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77. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 8 June 1875.

78. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 12 April 1877.

79. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 22 January 1874. (The letter from Geelong to London has not survived.)

80. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 November 1874.

81. ibid.

Particular financial circumstances in the colony presented a new combination of variables to businessmen. Those who failed to use their initiative and range outside received British business traditions found it difficult if not impossible to solve the riddles of the new business world and to remain solvent in it. We must see in George Hitchcock one of the successful minority of businessmen who were able to manoeuvre their way through these partially unchartered lands. Moreover, we must note that none of his business initiatives showed any evidence of dishonesty whatever. If Mr Ibbotson was prepared to lend George Hitchcock money in his capacity as a private merchant, knowing the position of the firm from his position as a Director of their bank, George should have been commended for his courage in asking Ibbotson. Furthermore, the transaction provided proof that George was capable of inspiring confidence - and that in a businessman who stood to lose if Bright and Hitchcock went under. There is no reason whatever to suppose - as Walter did - that Ibbotson was injuring their reputation. Then as now banks tended to be more cautious and conservative about the amount of money they were prepared to lend to any one individual or firm and Bright and Hitchcock had reached this limit. Once again then we have an example of George Hitchcock taking a course of which his brother disapproved but which had positive results for the business in time of difficulty.

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Having discussed the difference of opinion between the two parties on the issue of holding sales and financing the business, we turn now to the more nebulous question of taste. Yet again, the difference between Walter and George which gradually became apparent was that Walter had a received idea of what ought to do well and George was prepared to adjust to the reality of his customers' requirements. The fact that Walter proved himself over and over again to be unable to predict the taste of the Geelong market meant that George was obliged to buy increasingly in the colony. This led to the ultimate disagreement between the brothers over which George finally drove Walter out of the partnership.

The only subject which was to sting George into direct criticism of Walter was that of Walter's taste and abilities as a buyer.

> The necessity has again arisen this Spring of buying largely in Melbourne, in Fancy Dresses our selection as imported, would have driven our customers either to other shops or to Melbourne which would never have done. 82

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82. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 10 October 1872.

> We notice that in this ship [The "Lincolnshire"] are £900 worth of Dress goods (exclusive of Merinoes) an execution of our orders for £350 and even with this large amount no variety. (George's emphasis) 83

> The Hair Ornaments sent by mail as we have time to make more enquiries we think worse and worse, no one in the trade in Melbourne will touch them ... 84

> Grenadine dresses we cannot imagine why you send[,] for ... we can buy anything out of season here at a large discount ... we have always too many fancy goods left over ... [we get too much lace from Hitchcocks and the lace department is kept far too heavy]. 85

From specific criticisms, George also turned to give Walter positive advice about buying. In comparison with Walter's incessant volleys of lengthy advice, George's comments were but fleeting and perfunctory in the extreme. However, they show that he too was a master of detail and the kind of detail that was best calculated to please the people of Geelong.

> Have been obliged to buy eight or ten [shawls] from Buckleys (none in the wholesale) very nice goods Kerr Scotts invoiced [amount illegible, say 30/-). This is a house you must not pass. If any novelties of the same character for the summer [are available], light texture or lace, we ought to have them in good qualities, small quantities and always including Black, Blk and White, White and Blk. 86

We have already noted two pertinent facts about the brothers' business views. George showed an awareness of the freedom to buy that could be theirs if they had unconditionally available finance and Walter had a marked tendency to fequent the same business circles and houses on the basis of their reputation. This mean that George was in the position from Geelong to advise Walter on houses in London whose goods would be suitable for their trade as he had an overview of the best that was arriving from London each time he went to Melbourne on business. Later, we know from Walter's offended remarks, that George's new partner, Mr Coburn, was also to give Walter advice on which English wholesale firms to frequent.[87] It was also evident from

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83. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 28 February 1873.

84. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 25 May 1865.

85. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 27 April 1867.

86. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 27 March 1873.

87. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 2 June 1882.

Walter's correspondence, however, that he was by no means aware of all the businesses even in the West End.[88]

The difference between George's advice to Walter and Walter's counsel to George was that while George offered specific suggestions based on his knowledge of what customers were buying in Geelong, Walter gave conflicting and generalized advice which showed that he did not understand colonial conditions because he did not have a clear idea of the tastes of the colonial consumers. Walter simply did not realize or could not comprehend, for example, that people of all class backgrounds were more mobile in the colonies than they were in England. This meant that they would think nothing of making a round trip of 120 miles or so to do some shopping if it was important enough to them. Shopping for clothes and a trip to the big city were a dual attraction and luxury that many people permitted themselves annually or even two or three times a year from Geelong, some going by steamer, others by road. George was well aware of the possibility of losing customers to Melbourne. Walter's correspondence shows no understanding of the serious competition posed by the glowing shop windows of the Melbourne retailers or the well-advertised products of the warehouses. He continually criticized George for being over-sensitive to the prices and sales campaigns of the wholesale houses without realizing that they constituted a serious threat to a Geelong business.[89] In England, of course, Walter would have been quite right as people were far less mobile and advertising did not have the same currency as an acceptable business method of the same widespread influence as it did in the colonies at this time.

The advertising columns of The Argus and to a lesser extent The Age and the circulars put out by the big Melbourne retail houses and warehouses were a great inducement to country people to make a trip to the city in an era in which public holidays and festivities were celebrated by the buying of a new outfit for the occasion.

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88. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 October 1865.

89. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 October 1865 and 26 August 1867.

This had two important consequences for Bright and Hitchcock. Firstly, customers were aware of prices and value for money available in Melbourne. Secondly, Bright and Hitchcock could not afford to be too squeamish or restrained in their advertising. In addition to not understanding the taste of the colonial customers of his business, Walter was also firmly against advertising.

> I believe that your constant advertising does you a positive harm and can by no means do you any good. I see Skirving has his advertisements precisely like yours and placed immediately under yours without any heading looks like the same with his name at the bottom. This advertising only gives to your neighbours the information about your business they so much desire. 90

Walter also took social class into consideration in his thoughts about advertising, exemplifying the difference between traditional British and evolving colonial styles in this domain:

> XIX Century Circular - was written purposely to avoid the puffing style that our advertisements have taken during C. Hardie's term with us, and the writer believes if sent to our Customers as from London to them, it would have done us much good, he submitted the proof to two personal friends, both first rate men of business and they both considered it calculated to very favourably impress anyone receiving it and remove the injury at least to some extent our present style of advertisements must work to a good class of trade like ours. 91

While Walter was gradually to change his mind on this issue, to the extent that he praised the wording of the advertising for the 1870 sale[92], and he was even to come to take advertising for granted[93], he himself admitted that he never understood colonial taste[94].

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90. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 24 April 1866. See also London to Geelong, 25 October 1867, in which Walter describes George's spring advertising circulars as "suicidal".

91. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 20 November 1879. The tone of Walter's remarks suggests to this writer that he may have received a letter from Geelong criticizing the advertisement in question. Note Walter's typical citing of other higher English authorities to bolster his case.

92. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 11 August 1870.

93. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 5 October 1871.

94. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 22 April 1868.

He acknowledged that colonial taste was different from English taste but never succeeded in analyzing the differences and changing the direction of his buying, perhaps because - like many others - he had a deep-rooted feeling that the best in English taste was good enough for anyone. This was not one of the criteria by which the majority of the Geelong customers selected their dress lengths. Walter was often to write defensively as if in response to a criticism from George of which no copy has survived. In 1869 he wrote about some French chintz colours

> here we see them worn by ladies and shows in good houses as one at least of the desirable lines selling - however your sale - not English taste - must be studied. 95

He sometimes showed an awareness of the principle that colonial sale not English taste was the major consideration.

> We have sent three patterns [of linoleum] the best obtainable from stock knowing that dark dingy colorings do not sell with you. 96

Here we no longer have a condescending remark about gaudy colonial taste but an acknowledgement of what is saleable in the market. The drab dingy floor coverings suitable for the English climate and the English temperament were not saleable in Geelong. Walter managed to keep abreast of some of the changes in taste in Geelong but in the buying of dress goods and fancy goods he went on making mistakes for twenty years. To give him his due, buying for such a distant market was not easy in an era when international advertising had not prepared people's minds for some kind of uniformity in fashion look.

> We regret your report on Dress Materials, it is no comfort to know that B & N [Buckley and Nunn] have received same report, your market has evidently been far too full of Dress fabrics, this all parties could not forsee, or they would not have shipped so much the same remark applies to the non shipment of Navy Blue and serges; always for the past five years sold largely here ... you have as other colonial houses found until last season Navy and especially Serges very slow sale, we could not possibly know your demand would at length be for Navy and Serges in particular. Buckley writes as you do, why did you not send more serges? It is the difficulty one has each season in catering for your distant market, for while in some lines you are abreast in Victoria of the home

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95. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 30 April 1869.

96. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 22 January 1873.

> demand - you are not seldom one or two seasons later in adopting what has been a very saleable item here. 97

> We note your remarks ... about dress goods, if your orders come for what is right here, there is no difficulty but often it is quite the reverse - this season you send back slips of check material as too conspicuous - here they would be now thought too tame - checks are now very fashionable - and some very large checks too ... all houses complain of the difficulty of suiting your market with fancy dress goods and the smaller your order the greater the difficulty. 98

Over the years Walter became aware of some of his faults as a buyer and became less susceptible to the temptation to buy job goods.

> we shall not send any more job lines in costumes however cheap ... 99

> we regret the trouble you have had with job Costumes and shall certainly not send another lot even at 50 dis. 100

> I regret sending [the moire and stripe moires] as you evidently could not do with them at all. 101

> I note your report on the job ombre ribbons ... and shall avoid any line of a past season however cheap ... (Walter's emphasis) 102

However he may have tried, even with his visits back to Geelong and Melbourne, Walter was unable to come to terms with fashion or with business morality and conditions in the colony. There was a subtle switch of power in the retailing business which gave the consumer a stronger say but for different reasons. The consumer herself was less likely to be a person familiar to Walter Hitchcock. These customers were not to be talked into or down to when making purchases; their preferences and interests were of serious import to a retail drapery business. They had a fairly strong image of what they wanted to wear and when they were going to dress up they wanted to project that image, rather than one which had been preselected for them by

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97. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 1 October 1884.

98. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 1 October 1875.

99. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 14 May 1875.

100. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 8 June 1875.

101. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 8 September 1882.

102. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 22 September 1882.

London. George on the spot had watched the growth of the image of a Geelong lady of fashion and as a businessman was astute enough to see that this image could be reflected on people of different class backgrounds. In his desire to cater for the tastes of his customers, finding the goods as imported regularly unsatisfactory, his solution was to turn to Melbourne. There he bought increasingly in what was a thriving wholesale and retail market operating on many different assumptions from those prevailing in comparable English circles.

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Walter referred to George's Melbourne purchases as "the canker worm" in their business[103] and said that it was "so unbusinesslike that I cannot understand why you persist in doing it"[104]. As George continued to buy in the colony in the face of Walter's unstinted criticism, Walter wrote of the "infatuation" that had "taken" him.[105] Adverse market conditions in the late 1860s make it difficult to judge who was right on this issue at that time. Walter thought George was just ignoring his views on finance and calmly going ahead spending too much in the colony.[106] George was not a man subject to "infatuations", nor to give him his due was there any evidence that he ignored his partner's point of view. If he persisted in a course it was because his instinct and his observations of colonial conditions combined to keep him to it. Walter rightly perceived that the purchases in the colony crippled the firm's power to remit money for imports or to decrease their overdraft.[107] He went on making such statements as "to attempt to keep our trade with colonial bought goods is simply

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103. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 October 1865.

104. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 May 1866.

105. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 30 December 1869.

106. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 15 July 1869.

107. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 9 September 1868.

absurd,"[108] and spoke of colonial purchases as the "great evil" in their business.[109] To show just how strongly Walter felt on this issue, by 1877 he asked "when will you awake to this ruinous course of managing our affairs?"[110] and referred to George's "excessive Melbourne buying" whereby in April 1877 he bought £6,641 worth of goods in the colony against £12,230 worth of imports[111]. In March 1879, Walter refers to George's letter of January 1879 (not extant)

> in which you seem to have again favored the idea that our interests would be better served by our buying much more in the colony and importing much less than hitherto. 112

and gave vent again to his worry that they would lose their prestige as importers if they bought solely in Melbourne[113]. Right up until his visit to Geelong in 1880 after which he sold out his share in the firm and became its salaried London buyer, Walter stubbornly voiced his objections to colonial purchases.

> we know it may be urged that many lines during past year [sic] have been purchaseable at less on your side than could be landed for, and that is unfortunately true, but that cannot last ... your notion that it would be to our interest to import much less (as a rule) is a very serious mistake. 114

> you seem to be gradually giving up importing and buying more and more on your side.... The writer is not at all convinced that it is better to buy in the colony ... if it is there is no need to have a partner residing here to have so little to do ... 115

There were many aspects of George's management with which Walter could not agree. Moreover, he was continually backed up by men such as Mr Bright and Mr Williams who could not fathom George's style. Both Walter and Mr Grieve were to

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108. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 13 July 1870.

109. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 27 November 1872.

110. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 15 February 1877.

111. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 12 April 1877.

112. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 14 March 1879.

113. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 9 April 1879.

114. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 10 September 1879.

115. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 12 March 1880.

visit the colony and bring back to London the benefit of their first-hand impressions. While this did result in modifying Walter's position on some issues (such as advertising, the holding of sales, and the question of the vast differences in colonial taste), the above quotations from Walter's correspondence taken over fifteen years, show that he was incapable of changing his business philosophy on the issue of importing versus colonial purchases. Before he left for the colony in 1870 he wrote to George

> I cannot withhold from you the fact that Mr Bright's, Mr William's and my confidence in the management of the business does not increase. We each think your advice most unsatisfactory as to your mode of management - your excessive Colonial purchases ... your consultation of your young men as to whether you should have a sale or not - for although done through Mr. Watt - all must have known it emanated from your desire to know their opinion [Hitchcocks] have again saved us from serious difficulty by advancing £3,000, they cannot understand a business like ours being so long under a cloud ... they cannot comprehend how it is you have not acted differently, they altogether regret your having any selling off, as a needless sacrifice of profit and injuring your future legitimate trade ... 116

As has been argued throughout this chapter, there were in operation two distinctly different philosophies on how to manage a retail drapery business engendered by two distinctly different societies. George was committed to business and personal survival in the colonies and Walter to the English frames of reference and way of life. On all the other issues, Walter capitulated to George's management innovations. On this one he could not, as it would have denied the whole concept of business as he knew it from his London experience. It was in vain that he appreciated intellectually the facts that the same goods could be bought cheaper in Melbourne, that there was available a vast range of merchandise to select from; emotionally he was committed to the prestige of importing, the glory of dealing with the great London houses and the traditional English ways of running a retail drapery business. From George's point of view, year after year of opening boxes containing goods he knew would not sell well or fast in Geelong, and knowing that he could buy cheaper and/or more suitable wares in Melbourne, the initial steps must have been instinctive. However, to go from purchasing £8,490/10/10 over seven months in 1866 in the colony

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116. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 13 July 1870.

to £2,200 in April 1868, £6,641 in April 1877 and no imports at all in the three months December to February 1879, George must have consciously calculated that the advantage to the firm lay in buying locally with occasional special imports playing a small role in the overall stocking of the shop.

George did offer occasional brief explanations for his colonial purchases and showed that he realized Walter's opposition

> we cannot avoid these being heavy sometimes but as we never buy for speculation but only for immediate requirements we cannot go far astray. 117

> We send you an analysis of our purchases in the colony for last month. I propose doing so each month for your information as well as ours, we shall do all we can to keep down our purchases here by careful ordering and judicious buying. 118

However, as time went by, George became more confident of the sound business advantages of buying in the colony and he was at the same time by no means bound by traditional links with English firms or ways of doing business. A discussion of the effects of the tariffs on their importing sparked the following - for George - fairly lengthy observations on the issue:

> We notice you still fail to realize the advantages to be realized from buying in the Colony. Recollect that there are, say, twenty warehousemen in Melbourne who have the command of a larger number of sources of supply, with something always offering to either one or other of their buyers <u>below current value</u>, showing frequently in ordinary goods a difference of 10 to 20 per cent. <u>We have the pick</u> of all their united purchases with any advantage they may have obtained and from the excessive competition among them to do business even if bought at specially low terms, they are glad to do business at an ordinary profit. The consequence is that over and over again, we have found that parcels made in Melbourne on which the warehouseman has charged his 25% are even then cheaper than our imports at 10%. This is altogether apart from the fact of their being very large buyers which in many cases must give them substantial advantages, enabling them also to go to the manufacturers instead of general houses as [sic] travelling to any part of the United Kingdom where any difference in price is to be obtained. These remarks apply particularly to plain goods, prints, fcy [sic] stuffs, woollens, etc. Our orders for next season will indicate pretty clearly our present views, which however we shall not hesitate to modify if the future turns out different to the past few years. The slop question we consider quite settled, almost every line in this seasons goods we could

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117. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 23 February 1865.

118. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 25 September 1865.

> have bought either as cheap as/or far less money than our imports; we know of no house now in the colony which imports slops except moles and a few low lines. (George's emphasis) 119

George did not come to adopt this position readily. Like all his other innovations it grew more self-evident as he learnt from his customers and his trips to Melbourne what business in the colony was all about. In the same way that Walter was heavily influenced by his discussions with Mr Bright, Mr Williams and Mr Grieve as well as the traditions and rituals of the English drapery world, so George learnt to manage a business in the colonial environment which encompassed all the factors discussed in this thesis. Not the least important factor in colonial business life was the consumer. Colonial drapers had to abandon many of the English notions of what constituted proper modes of doing business, or what was good taste or who were acceptable customers. George was able to do this. By working upwards from the customers' tastes and requirements he and businessmen like him all over the colonies were taking the first steps in declaring social and economic independence for the people they represented. For George it was not an issue of whether he ought to be loyal to English ways of doing business, English taste and English traditions; these were relevant at times, irrelevant at others. The issue was to do business successfully in an environment in which what England had to offer his customers was just one of the many factors he had to consider to keep them satisfied. Melbourne was so much closer, so much more real - as he observed to Walter

> we are necessarily influenced more by the Melbourne market than by a market 16,000 miles away. 120

Goods and prices as they appeared in Melbourne newspapers and Melbourne shop windows had a greater influence on George's customers and therefore on George than advances in the English cotton market or what was being worn in London. Melbourne was generating its own fashion novelties and it was these George wanted Walter to buy

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119. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 3 January 1870.

120. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 9 September 1871.

> We send you patterns of a few printed Dolly Vardens bought from Pattersons which appear to be the novelty of the season, we have sold several dresses already. (George's emphasis) 121

Melbourne was also generating its own immediate economic considerations which acted on George far more than his partner's censorious advice. The strength of George's position was that he understood both ways of doing business whereas despite his colonial experience and his two visits to the colony, Walter was never to grasp the reality that the colony had generated its own business traditions and values, its own fashion interests and preferences and its own market conditions and economic realities. It was thus not surprising that in the firm of Bright and Hitchcock as in many other colonial businesses, George Hitchcock's ideas and innovations eventually became the accepted business tradition while Walter's protestations and complaints reduced him and the business world he represented to the position of salaried employee of colonial dictates.

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Nineteenth century business records are difficult to find for a number of reasons. Either people did not think them worth keeping or they had definite business reasons for destroying them. An incomplete record of correspondence dating back to the 1880s of the Melbourne firm Ball and Welch survives in the Melbourne University Archives. The correspondence contains among other letters, those written from the Secretary of the firm to Mr George Middlecoat, the firm's London buyer. Three points only need to be made about this correspondence. Firstly, it shows a more typical relationship between a firm and its buyer than was exemplified by the Bright and Hitchcock correspondence. Walter Hitchcock was a partner in the firm for which he was a buyer, the brother of his partner and the nephew of a big London wholesale and retail house which lent his firm money on many occasions. This gave him the freedom

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121. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, Geelong to London, 28 March 1872.

to comment and criticize which salaried buyers did not have although they were powerful and important figures in the retail drapery business world.[122] The Ball and Welch correspondence shows Mr Middlecoat to have had a reasonably equal relationship with the management but the ultimate power and decision making clearly lay with management. His suggestions were welcomed and sometimes acted upon and he was given plenty of freedom of action. "We leave the matter to your good judgement at all times," was a frequent conclusion to the secretary's comments on a particular business issue.[123] The ultimate advice, however, clearly came from Melbourne as it was in Melbourne that the customers were making their requirements and opinions known.

The second contrasting point between the correspondence of the two firms shows in the Ball and Welch letters a ready acceptance of the equal validity of the two markets and the maximum possible communication between management and buyer to make the most out of each market. It was made quite clear to the buyer what the requirements of the Melbourne market were and to what extent he could use his initiative. For example, a pattern (sample) of silk was sent to Mr Middlecoat with the instructions

> You can use your own judgement as to colors but the style must be similar and on no account must the flower be smaller. 124

There was no emotional allegiance to either market or either business tradition evident in the correspondence

> We have to acknowledge the receipt of your telegram 27 Augt. [sic] which we read - Silks and Woollens up 25%: buy in your market. In consequence of this we have ourselves confirmed an order placed with Loblich and Josephson of which we enclose copy, for cashmeres, as we did not like to trust confirmation another six weeks in the face of a rising market. 125

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122. J. Bray, op. cit., p. 108. (See Chapter 4, note 39)

123. Ball and Welch correspondence, Melbourne to London, 3 September 1886, 25 November 1886, 19 August 1887.

124. Ball and Welch correspondence, Melbourne to London, 21 January 1887.

125. Ball and Welch correspondence, Melbourne to London, 3 September 1886.

It was not until 1883 that Walter Hitchcock was able to make a matter-of-fact reference to the fact that it would be in the firm's interest to buy something locally in Melbourne

> I cannot meet with the Cotton Apron Handkerchiefs and so have sent very few, best I could meet with ... this year all are selling ready made, more effective and bear a profit to the Home warehouses, though liable to your high duty - please therefore buy in local market if procurable - some of your Lane firms may have had a parcel specially printed for themselves. 126

If anything, the Ball and Welch correspondence shows a clear preference for Melbourne as the relevant market and business centre. We have documented the struggle between the Hitchcock brothers over this issue culminating in George Hitchcock's victory. However, Walter's rear-guard battles continued even when he was no longer a partner and twenty-odd years of his criticism of colonial ways and advocacy of British traditions were to leave an imprint on the firm of Bright and Hitchcock. It had a character quite different to that of Ball and Welch which must be attributed to Walter Hitchcock's influence, despite his brother's victory in all major business decisions. On the issue of placing insurance, for example, Walter wanted to do some of this in England to free the firm from being in the power of a colonial house.[127] The attitude of Ball and Welch's management was quite different

> if we can get enought [insurance] in the colonies we would prefer to place it here but at the same time 'tis well for us to be in possession of the knowledge as to what could be done your end in an emergency. 128

The point is that for nearly twenty years, while George might have wanted to make such a clear statement of his preference for doing business as much as possible in the colonies, he was unable to give such authoritative advice, as Walter was his partner not a salaried buyer.

The third matter of interest to arise from the Ball and Welch correspondence concerns the growing power of the consumer. It has already been noted that the

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126. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 29 June 1883.

127. Bright and Hitchcock correspondence, London to Geelong, 26 December 1867.

128. Ball and Welch correspondence, Melbourne to London, 27 July 1887.

difference between the Hitchock brothers' attitude to the customer was that George was prepared to procure what his customers wanted at the price they were willing to pay and Walter thought that his personal canons of taste and his concept of the appropriate profit which the business ought to make were more important. Thus George was led to the notion of business with a large and rapid turnover at a small profit and Walter clung to the idea of a necessarily slow turnover to preserve a high rate of profit.

In previous chapters we have seen a link between the changing business methods of the Melbourne drapers and the wider class base of consumers in all retail drapery stores from the most exclusive downwards. In the study of Bright and Hitchcock it has been demonstrated that it was George's determination to do business despite considerations of class, appropriate taste, rate of profit or any other factors which caused him to be sensitive to the customers' requirements and gradually to reject unsuitable imports in favour of buying at first hand the sort of merchandise he knew he could sell. Both firms had the experience that it was the better class of goods wanted by their customers which was unobtainable in Melbourne and that customers were demanding stylish goods at reasonable prices. The secretary of Ball and Welch was to write to Mr Middlecoat concerning prints:

> The value we consider right but we should have been better pleased if you had sent us a larger per centage of really stylish stuff as we can get good jobs in this market but A1 stuff we cannot get. 129

He also wrote concerning croche spot silks

> These are very bad stock in this market and our customers are all wanting faille [a kind of light ribbed silk] and we think they cost too much considering the flat state of the silk trade ... we marked the whole of this line at 4/11 to sell and to our surprise we were told by one of our customers that she could buy the same at 2s1½d and we sent and purchased a length and enclose you the pattern and the bill of the same, we had consequently to mark ours all down to 2/9 which means a big dead loss. 130

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129. Ball and Welch correspondence, Melbourne to London, 30 September 1887.

130. ibid.

Here we have important evidence of a new relationship between customer and retailer which it is argued had not yet arisen in a parallel class of shop in England. Walter Hitchcock's notions of the customer's knowledge of prices and profit were based on the experience of the high class English retail drapery shops discussed earlier in Chapter 4. In these shops, the customers did not question or discuss the prices of articles and the retailers were thus not pressured into considering the matter. This was not at all the case in Melbourne and therefore also to some extent in Geelong. George Hitchcock's attitude to the consumer shows that this anonymous Ball and Welch customer was by no means an exception. All over the colonies customers of all class backgrounds - many of them women - had become more aware of prices and values. An obvious reason for this was that more people had more money to spend and in spending it consistently on clothing, they had generated a new set of shopping traditions and conditions in which they had more power vis à vis the retailer. A single Melbourne customer had activated the whole importing mechanism of Ball and Welch to operate in reverse. A sample of material was being sent back to the buyer in London with a query as to the value for the price. George Hitchcock also returned goods to England when he knew his customers would not find them satisfactory. The people in the colonies were demonstrating a social and economic independence of which they themselves were perhaps unaware by refusing what they believed to be over-priced, second-rate goods. Moreover, they had succeeded in the space of less than one hundred years in generating a whole new set of business values and traditions which had as their impetus the requirements of a wider class-base and a larger proportion of the total population. Clothes were important to everyone and most people could and did exercise their taste in shopping conditions of their own making. There was a greater range of business styles to choose from ranging from G. and J. Espies to Mrs Hill, Bright and Hitchcock to Madame Decourtet, Ball and Welch to Nicoll the Tailor. They all sold new clothing, more people patronized them all more often and even the most trenchant English critics agreed that the colonials were well-dressed. The colonies were clothed and a new society with its own social and economic traditions had been created.

CONCLUSION

This work grew put of a preoccupation with clothing. Clothing, as much as food and shelter, ranks as one of the most central concerns to all human beings, yet it is a subject which has received remarkably little attention from historians. Even for those peoples who wear little or no clothing, personal adornment indicates at a glance a great deal of social and economic information about the wearer to other members of his or her society. Many areas covered by this thesis were necessarily superficial and require a great deal of further research, most notably the comparisons with parallel developments in England. Details of working class purchasing power and its expenditure there, and a thorough study of the consequences of attitudes towards proper modes of doing business for the development of advertising in Britain would seem to be two areas worth further investigation. Likewise, material exists on which to base a study of the early Sydney consumer scene from the point of view of the retailer, thus extending the work of this thesis. A study of private papers and even oral history would uncover fascinating corroborative evidence of the Melbourne drapery world from the point of view of the consumer rather than the retailer.

However, the most important contribution of this thesis is its focus on clothing, and in demonstrating its universal desirability as a consumer item. In discussing some of the social and economic consequences of this, new statements were made about standards of living and the way of life of people in Australia to 1887.

What proved most personally rewarding was the insight that clothing has as a consumer indicative of standard of living and its immense bearing on the way of life of people in any given society. While this thesis has tapped legal, economic, government, personal and business records to demonstrate this connection, much work remains to be done in amplification. Literary and legal sources give evidence of people's thoughts

and judgements about others on the basis of clothing; political[1] and economic factors, business and personal records give evidence of its dominance in every day life. The whole fibre of society, from modes of address and interaction to the balance sheets of profit and loss totalling millions, was and is influenced by people's decisions regarding their clothing.

While this thesis has made new assertions about the standards of living and way of life of most working class people in New South Wales and Victoria during the years discussed, it is nevertheless dedicated to those few who never knew the luxury, the pleasure and the sense of dignity of being able to step out in a new outfit of their own choosing.

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1. It is a matter of interesting speculation, for example, to what extent people's desire to wear new and fashionable clothing influences political and economic decisions in Iron Curtain countries.

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