

REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS OF THE GLASSHOUSE, CLARENCE AND HAY STREETS, PORT MACQUARIE, N.S.W.

Summary of main findings.



Cobbled yard to Cottage 3, cut by the walls of the Town Hall.

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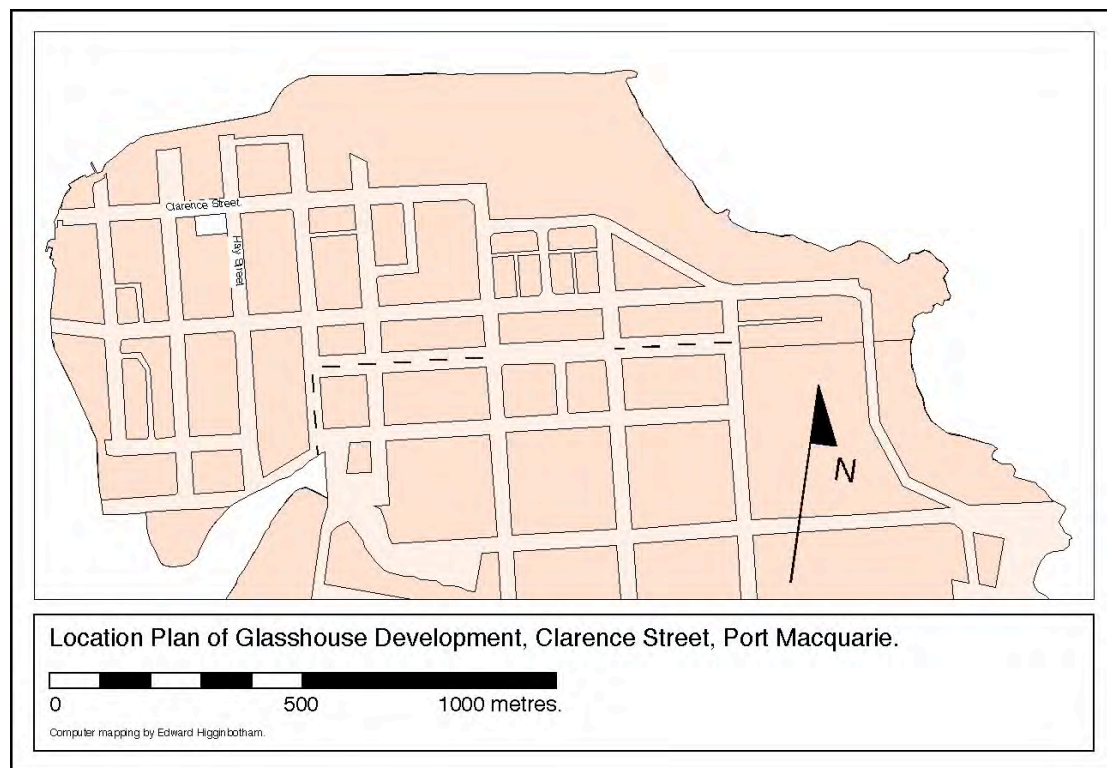
SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS.

Introduction.

The archaeological excavation of the Glasshouse Site took place in May and June 2006, in advance of redevelopment. The excavation was confined to the area of the basement for the new theatre.

Historical research had indicated the presence of a number of previous structures, associated with the Penal Settlement, 1821 to 1832, as well as the late 19th century School of Arts and Town Hall buildings.

The excavation concentrated on the Quarters of the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts (Cottage 1) and two buildings occupied by the Free Overseers (Cottages 2 and 3). The other two cottages (Cottages 4 and 5) on the original Henrietta, later Elizabeth Street frontage were to the west of the excavation area or off site to the west. Only a small portion of the allotment for Cottage 1 was within the excavation area.



The sites of the cottages were assessed as possessing state significance in both the first and second assessment reports, prepared before excavation, the latter being used to obtain an excavation permit (Edward Higginbotham & Associates Pty Ltd. Historical and archaeological assessment for the Hastings Entertainment, Arts & Conference Centre, Clarence Street, Port Macquarie, NSW. Hastings Council. August 2005).

Historical research.

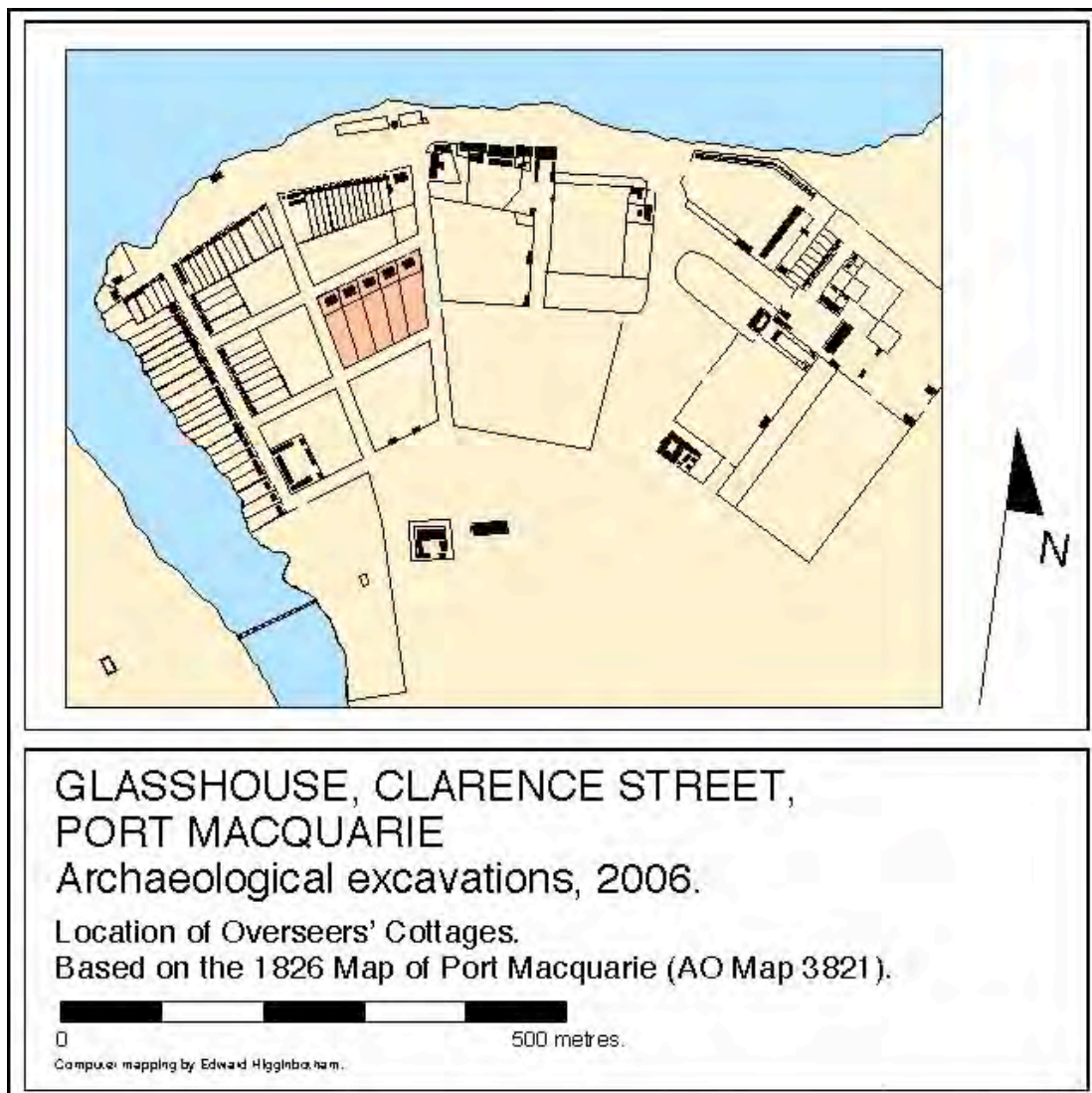
There is no precise date for the construction of the cottages. They are first shown on a map dated to 1824. Additional historical research indicated that the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts and the Free Overseers were appointed in 1823, so it is highly likely that the cottages were built to receive their new occupants in that year.

Port Macquarie was one of a number of penal settlements for the secondary punishment of offenders. Convicted criminals were sent to New South Wales from 1788 to the end of transportation in 1840. If

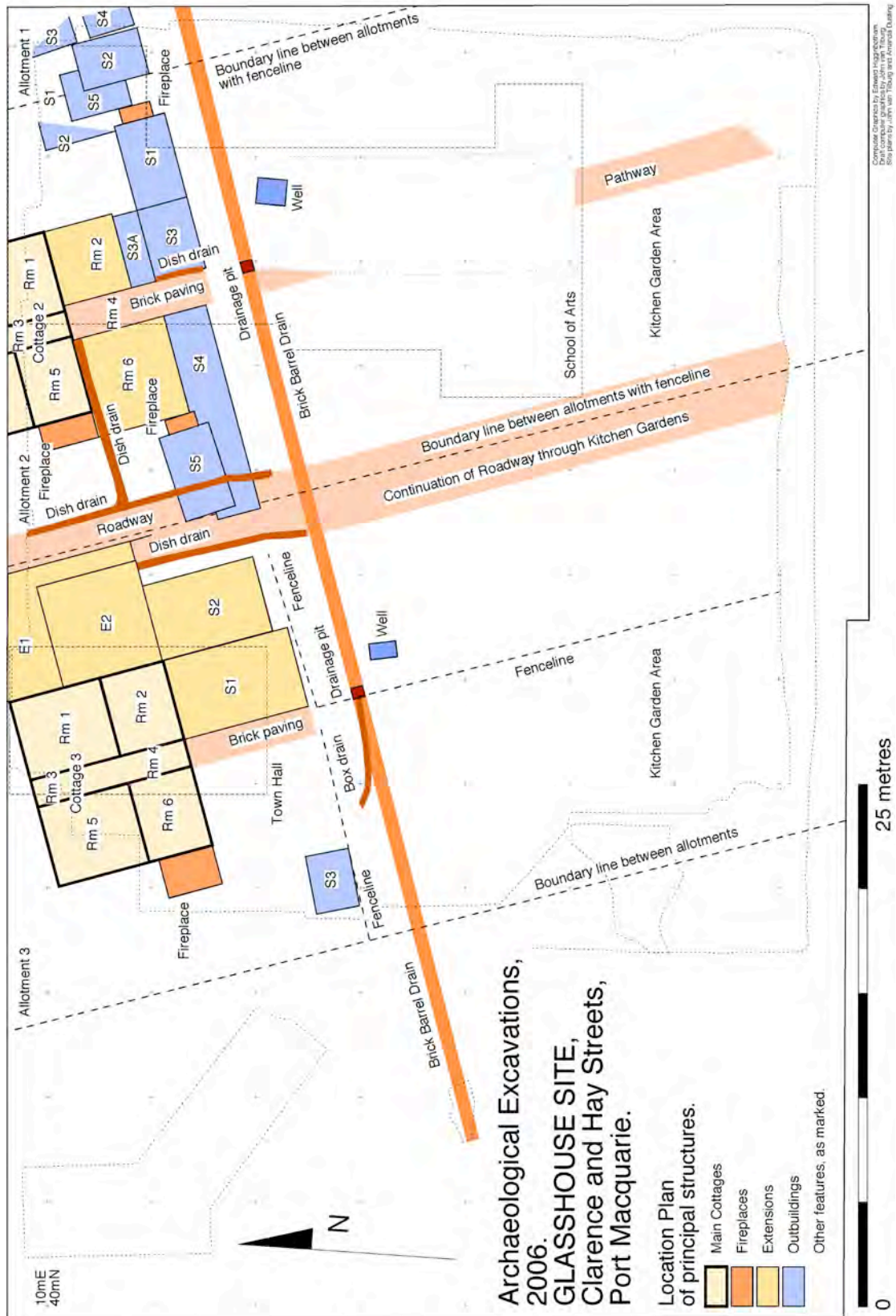
they were convicted of additional crimes in New South Wales, they were sent to places of secondary punishment.

On the New South Wales coast, Newcastle was the first penal settlement for secondary punishment from 1804 to 1824, followed by Port Macquarie from 1821 to 1832 and Moreton Bay from 1829 to 1838. The purpose of these penal settlements was to remove the convict to a place of isolation from the rest of the free population, to keep them at hard labour, as a deterrent to others. Even with the end of transportation in 1840, Cockatoo Island in Sydney was still planned as a place of secondary punishment in 1839, closing in 1869.

Port Macquarie was like most of the other places of secondary punishment, in fact also similar to some of the first penal settlements in New South Wales. They all required a similar suite of buildings and all were divided into Military Department, Civil Administration and Convict Accommodation. The Deputy Superintendent of Convicts and the Free Overseers were part of the Civil Administration and came under the authority of the Superintendent of Convicts. They were responsible for the daily and weekly musters and supervision of the labour of the convicts.



The 1826 plan of Port Macquarie clearly shows the Overseers' Cottages on their allotments.



Site plan of the Glasshouse Site, showing the location of all principal structures.



The brick barrel drain, behind the Overseers' Cottages, was a dominant feature on the site.

Archaeological excavation.

The archaeological excavations of the Glasshouse have made an important contribution to our knowledge of the Penal Settlement at Port Macquarie. While the historical maps showed the cottages on their allotments, divided from kitchen gardens at the rear, they did not reveal the complexity of the sequence of buildings, the extensions and outbuildings to the cottages, showing a period of high activity in the 1820s. The accommodation or floor space of these buildings was doubled or more than doubled by this archaeological evidence. The sequence of changes was particularly well preserved between Cottages 2 and 3, where a roadway to the kitchen gardens was replaced by a fenceline, encroached on by at least two phases of extensions and outbuildings to Cottages 2 and 3 and finally became a metalled yard area in the 1830s.

The allotments of the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts and Free Overseers measured 57 3/8 perches or 1,451 square metres, being 70 feet wide and approximately 223 feet deep (21.3 by 68 metres). The frontage to Henrietta, later Elizabeth Street, was occupied by the houses, the rear by kitchen gardens. The allotments and cottages were numbered 1-5 from east to west. Cottage 2 was of slab construction and Cottage 3 was built using brick. Both buildings measured 25 by 30 feet (7.62 by 9.14 metres) and comprised a central hallway, flanked by two front and two rear rooms. On Allotments 1, 2 and 3, there is archaeological evidence for both extensions and outbuildings, which doubled, or more than doubled the available floor space. On the basis of room size and also living space, the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts and the Free Overseers were housed to a high standard in buildings constructed by convict labour under the supervision of the military engineer or inspector of public works. In fact they enjoyed a standard of accommodation above that occupied by others in a similar social or economic position. The artifact assemblage reveals that the Free Overseers enjoyed a standard of living consistent with others, who could not afford to purchase property, but lived in rented accommodation.

Furthermore the excavations revealed the presence of a previously unsuspected brick barrel drain, running along the rear of the houses towards the east and to the alignment of Allman Street (now approximately Hay Street). The brick barrel drain was obviously part of a network of drains, including another drain previously located on the Henrietta, later Elizabeth Street frontage. This excavation has provided the first opportunity to see how the components of a brick barrel drain functioned and how it related to the buildings it served.



One of two shallow timber lined wells.

In addition the excavation has revealed other features that were unexpected, including two shallow timber-lined wells, taking advantage of the raised water table in this low lying area. The re-used timbers appear to have come from earlier buildings, probably dating from 1821 to 1823. The timbers were raised after the completion of the excavation and will be conserved.

At the rear of the allotments, the fencelines and divisions of the kitchen gardens were revealed by excavation. There was clear evidence of hoe or spade cultivation using convict labour, as well as uncultivated areas used as central pathways or roads.

The powers of the Commandant of the Penal Settlement were formally handed over to the Police Magistrate in 1832, the year following the opening up of the area to free settlement. The penal establishment was not however completely closed and continued to house “convict specials”, invalids and the insane from 1833 until 1847. The residence of the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts and the Free Overseers continued in other uses in the 1830s, but only Cottage 3 survived beyond the end of the penal settlement.

Cottage 1 had been occupied by the Deputy Superintendent of Convicts up to 1830. By 1831 it was occupied by the Superintendent of Convicts, his original residence then being used for other purposes. The last known use during the 1830s was as the Survey Office. It was demolished since it lay within the newly laid out grid of streets. Cottages 2 and 3 were Overseer’s Cottages, probably built in 1823 to house the newly appointed overseers. Cottage 2 was occupied in 1831 by William Branch, who had been an overseer from 1823 to 1832. During the later 1830s the house was used as the Police Clerk’s Quarters, before being demolished, as it too was within the newly laid out street. Cottage 3 was the Post Office by 1831, later also the Police Clerks Quarters and then the residence of the Clerk of the Court, possibly until the 1850s or 1860s.

The artifact assemblage from the site reveals the economic stagnation of the town, brought on not only by the economic depression of the 1840s, but also the departure of the penal establishment and military in 1847. The site was redeveloped in the 1880s as the School of Arts and in the 1890s it was joined by the Town Hall. The assemblages recovered from these buildings reveals a total reversal of fortune for the town, as both these institutions indicate a new level of affluence and wealth, not before seen on the property.

Artifact analysis.

The archaeological remains were divided into a total of 71 different phases to enable the artifact assemblages to be dated and analysed for functional, social and economic information.

The dating analysis reveals an assemblage belonging to Cottages 1, 2 and 3 in the 1820s to 1830s.

The dating analysis further reveals little or no evidence for the continuing occupation of Cottages 1 or 2 beyond the 1830s. Although the evidence is not completely consistent, there is sufficient to suggest that the occupation of Cottage 3 continued up to the 1860s or even 1880s.

The analysis has also shown that a substantial proportion of the 1880s and later assemblages from Cottages 1, 2 and 3 may be dated to the occupation of the School of Arts from the 1880s and the Town Hall from the 1890s.

Phases with similar locations and date ranges were grouped together into the following 7 major Groups of Phases.

Groups of Phases	Name
Phases 001, 002, 066 part.	Yard to Cottage 1, 1820s-1830s
Phases 004-006, 009-017, 023, 063, 066 part.	Cottage 2, 1820s-1830s
Phases 029, 031, 033, 039-046, 049-050, 053, 064-065.	Cottage 3, 1820s-1830s
Phases 007, 008 & 061.	Cottage 2, 1840s-1870s
Phases 044, 047 & 062.	Cottage 3, 1840s-1870s
Phases 003, 018-020, 025-028, 066 part.	School of Arts, 1880s +

Groups of Phases	Name
Phases 030, 032, 034-038, 048, 051, 052, 054-056, 067-068.	Town Hall, 1890s +

A number of phases were excluded from further analysis because of sample bias or lack of artifacts, including:

Groups of Phases	Name
Phases 021, 022, 024 & 039.	Yard 2-3, 1820s-1830s.
Phase 069.	Fenceline between Town Hall and School of Arts.
Phase 070.	Modern services.
Phase 071.	Unstratified.

The seven main groups of phases were then analysed in detail for evidence relating to function as well as social and economic evidence.

The artifacts from each group of phases were described and general findings relating to a number of issues were outlined. These issues included:

1. The presence of women and children.
2. Literacy.
3. Alcohol consumption.
4. The use of casks and barrels.
5. Dietary evidence.
6. Tablewares.
7. Work activities.
8. The evidence for and against residual assemblages.

Women and children. The artifact analysis revealed strong evidence for the presence of women and children in Cottages 2 and 3, but the evidence for Cottage 1 was minimal, possibly as a result of sample bias caused by the small area of excavation for this cottage. There was strong evidence for women and children in the phases associated with the School of Arts and Town Hall.

Literacy. There is evidence for literacy among the occupants of Cottage 2 in the 1820s and 1830s, but for Cottage 3 only in the 1840s-1870s. Cottage 2 served as the Post Office in the 1830s, while Cottage 3 was occupied by the Police Clerk or Clerk of Petty Sessions from the 1830s onwards. Literacy would be expected for both these cottages.

The high incidence of items associated with literacy in the Town Hall phases may be a true indication of the extent of clerical duties in the Council.

Alcohol consumption. The preferences for alcohol consumption show relatively little variation from early to late contexts. Other evidence in the assemblage points to conservatism in the local marketplace, but it is possible that residual artifacts are present in later phases.

An unusual feature of alcohol consumption on this site is the frequency of champagne or wine imports from France. The French imports form between 1% and 5% of the collection of alcohol bottles.

Casks and barrels. Casks and barrels could have been used for alcohol or salt meats. The finding of a brass tap or spigot attests to the use of casks for alcohol consumption.

Dietary evidence. A typical 19th century assemblage was evident, with cattle predominant, except in the 1820s-1830s assemblages from Cottages 2 and 3, where the proportions of cattle and sheep were equal.

Salt meat representation formed a low but significant proportion of the assemblage. Salt meat cuts were generally of high nutritional value.

Tablewares. The analysis of the tablewares reveals a high level of conservatism in the local marketplace up to the 1880s, followed by a new impetus to occupation on the site associated with the School of Arts and Town Hall in the 1880s and 1890s respectively.

Evidence for work and industry. The artifact assemblage provided evidence for a number of work activities, trades and industries, including one or more of the wood trades (tree-felling, sawyer, carpentry or joinery, for example), the moving of heavy items (chains, hooks, pulleys), building construction (plasterer's trowel), leatherworking, horticulture and possibly pharmacy. The evidence for haberdashery, whether dressmaking or simply mending, is usually associated with women. There are a number of industries, which are rarely recognised on an archaeological site through artifact analysis, including the whaling industry and the building and repair of boats or larger vessels.

A circular iron weight was located in the backfill of the well to Cottage 2. Although the context is late 19th century, it is possible the item is residual from previous occupation. It may be the only surviving evidence that the Post Office was located in Cottage 3 in the 1830s.

Overall the evidence points to a number of factors limiting the range of the assemblage after initial occupation in the 1820s and 1830s. These factors may include:

1. A conservatism in the local marketplace after initial occupation in the 1820s and 1830s.
2. Stagnation in the local economy during this period.
3. Periodic or later vacancy in Cottage 3.
4. To some extent the conservatism may be accentuated by residual artifacts.

Nonetheless there is clear evidence for a fresh impetus in occupation and deposition of artifacts from the 1880s, before deposition of artifacts nearly ceases in the 20th century.

The analysis of the assemblage as a whole has provided information relating to levels of affluence, as well as other social and economic factors.

The total number of functions for Cottage 2 and Cottage 3 are 38 and 29 respectively, a number that is below or at the lower end of the threshold for property ownership, namely 34-46 functions, as found on other sites. The total number of functions therefore confirms the nature of occupancy, namely persons involved in penal or government administration and housed by government or with leasehold title.

The later reduction in functions for Cottage 2 has been interpreted as the cessation of occupation, followed by demolition.

The evidence from this site complements that from comparative sites, with 27-32 functions representing a threshold for the presence of women and children.

The evidence for literacy also suggests a similar threshold. On this site the minimum threshold is 33 functions for Cottage 3 in the post 1830s.

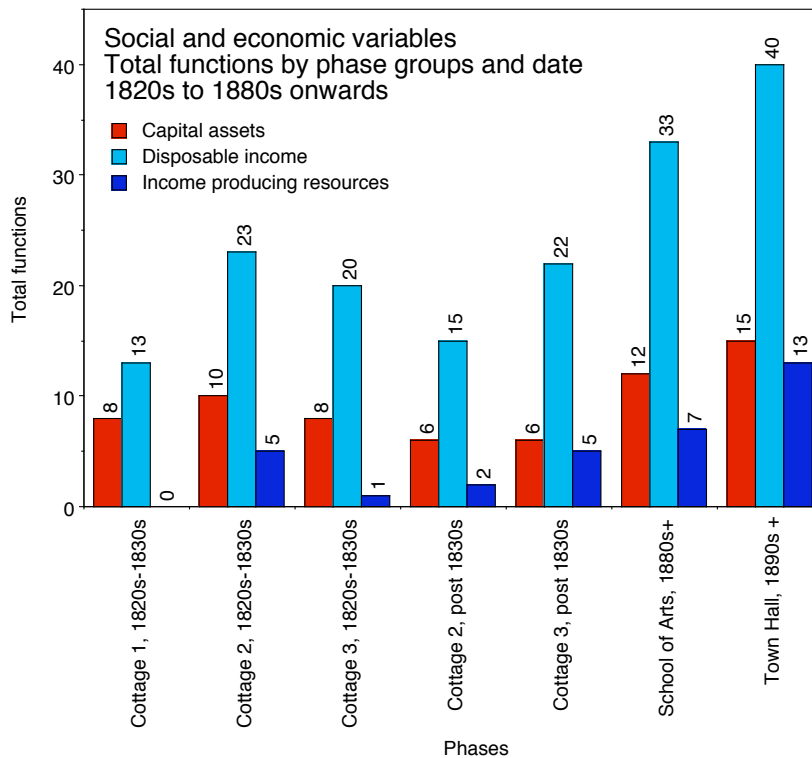
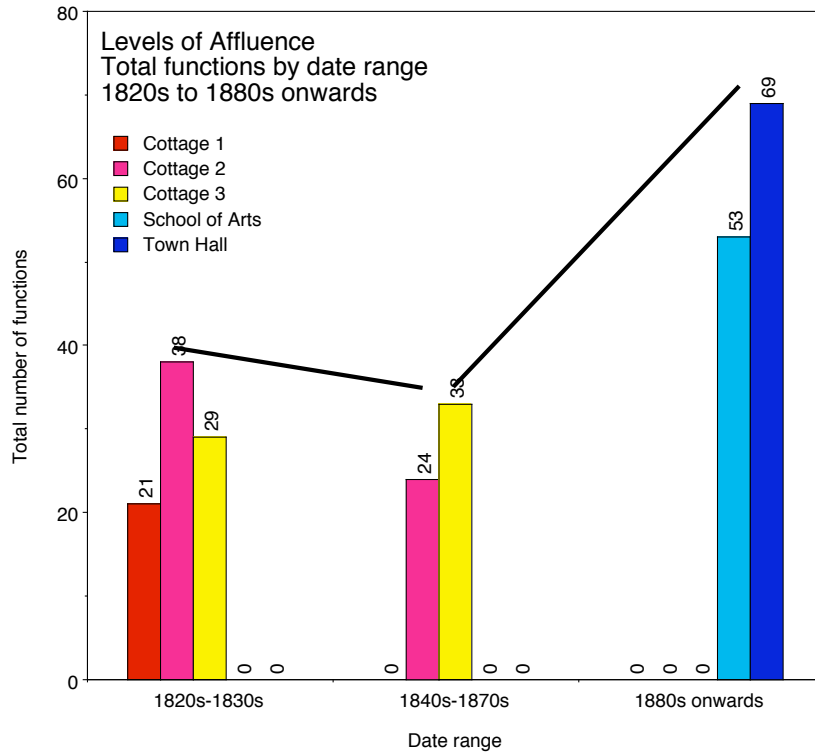
The changing levels of affluence evident from this site can be shown in graph form, by plotting the number of functions from each phase.

The graph shows a relatively high level of affluence for the 1820s and 1830s and is a reflection of the lifestyle of the overseers in the Penal Settlement, housed at government expense. It may also show the standard of living of the 1830s lessees of the buildings.

The likely cessation of occupation and demolition of Cottage 2 in the 1830s influences the results for the 1840s to 1870s.

The slight increase in the level of affluence for Cottage 3 suggests continuing occupation, but not at a much higher standard of living. The evidence may be influenced by discontinuities in occupation or more broadly by the stagnation of the local economy during this period.

The distinctly higher level of affluence for the 1880s onwards may reflect not only the improvement in the local economy in the late 19th century, but also the standard of living of those who worked in or used the new premises. The functions in each assemblage were also grouped according to disposable income, income producing resources and capital assets or expenditure.



The results confirm the evidence derived from the analysis of the total number of functions, but also emphasise changes in capital expenditure, access to income producing resources and disposable income.