

**Vanguards of Empire: the lives of William Dawes,  
Watkin Tench and George Worgan.**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University.

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Unless otherwise indicated, this is my own original work.

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## Abstract

This thesis is a study of the lives of three men brought together in one of the most significant ventures in empire building that Britain undertook: the European settlement of New South Wales. They came together as strangers in this new colony, and for a brief time found common interests and experiences before diverging on vastly different life trajectories. The thesis represents the first in-depth biographical studies of these men.

The thesis also considers these life studies as microhistories. They are small, particular histories during a period of considerable change in British imperial, political, religious and social life. Each man brought his own unique attributes to his experiences and to that extent they are not representative, but the commonality and diversity of their life experiences provide case studies that allow for a close consideration of how those who fall outside the definition of 'great men' contributed to the development of Britain and its empire. The lives assist in understanding how events help to shape individuals and how individuals help shape events. They are prisms through which can be seen a number of significant themes of the period: micro examples of macro influences, movements, and social, political, and economic developments of the period.

The value of biography as a means of better understanding history is examined. These men spent their lives working on the margins of empire, of power, and of society. Operating in small circles within larger groups of powerful elites they made their own personal contributions to the development of Britain and its empire. They displayed a sense of inquiry and an active interest in acquiring knowledge in the natural world as well as the human, and were prepared to challenge authority when they thought necessary. In this they exhibited the influences of their eighteenth century enlightenment backgrounds.

Midway along the journey of our life  
I woke to find myself in a dark wood  
For I had wandered off from the straight path.

Dante: *The Divine Comedy, Inferno*, Canto 1. (trans. Mark Musa)

Distant thunder at long intervals

William Dawes, 'Meteorological journal', 9 Sep 1788.

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## Introduction

Of the almost fifteen hundred individuals who arrived in the new colony of New South Wales in January 1788, a small number are known for their intelligence, endeavour and desire to learn from this new foreign world. William Dawes, Watkin Tench and George Bouchier Worgan were three of that group and this thesis is a study of their lives. Membership of this now named First Fleet allowed them to experience life together in a remote and struggling colony on the other side of the world from their homes.<sup>1</sup> This shared experience was brief, just over four years out of life spans of over seven decades, but it remained a key influence in their future careers and the development of their characters.

The voyage to New South Wales and the subsequent years in the new colony brought the men together, providing the connection and reason for selecting them to study – Dawes and Tench as officers in the Marines and Worgan as naval surgeon on HMS *Sirius*, the fleet's flagship. Dawes and Worgan travelled in the same vessel to the new colony while Dawes and Tench were together on the return journey. Their time in New South Wales was the only period of their lives they shared, as it is unlikely the men knew one another before the journey. Each served during the American war but on different ships, and although Dawes and Tench were both members of the Marines they came from different divisions, Dawes at Portsmouth and Tench at Plymouth. It is likely their first meeting took place during the voyage of the First Fleet but it was in New South Wales the trio found a level of companionship through common interests, spending time together on expeditions into the countryside. There was an active sense of inquiry into the local flora, fauna and particularly, the local indigenous people. How much of this was simply a way of filling in idle time and

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'First Fleet' is used throughout the thesis to describe the expedition that arrived on the east coast of Australia at the end of January 1788. The term is a construct that has been applied retrospectively. As Alan Atkinson has observed, at the time of the fleet being prepared and dispatched, there were no plans for subsequent expeditions. Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia. A History*, Vol.1 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 59-61.

how much reflected the stereotypical English Enlightenment man will emerge in this study.

The general conditions and specific events in the colony are well covered in both the contemporary accounts and by modern historians, the most recent being Grace Karskens' *The Colony*.<sup>2</sup> The men went to the colony as volunteers, and while they were encouraged by the alternative prospect of half-pay and limited promotion opportunities, volunteering was a significant decision. A level of courage and a sense of inquiry were key attributes of their character, aspects of which appeared regularly throughout their lives. In choosing to go to New South Wales, they were also possibly influenced by the general interest in exploration and the great voyages of discovery that took place in the eighteenth century. P.M. Harman argues that those voyages together with the growth in travel writing linked to Britain's expansion of empire, heightened awareness of the less 'civilised' areas of the world.<sup>3</sup>

To place their lives in context I have applied my own markers. Historians have mixed results with artificial delineations of time, especially in relation to century cut-offs. This is often dealt with by using terms such as 'the long eighteenth century', a time-line that can be any period within the extremes of 1688 to 1821. Ludmilla Jordanova has observed that the use of 'rulers and dynasties' to define time frames may be a common approach but one that affirms the importance and superiority of leaders, particularly political leaders.<sup>4</sup> This may be so, but for these lives it is also a logical choice. These men were not the leaders of their day and are not major figures in recorded history and it provides some clarity to place their life spans as broadly between the accession of George III and the death of William IV, a period of considerable change in Britain and its empire. The loss of the American colonies, the beginnings of a second empire, wars

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<sup>2</sup> Grace Karskens, *The Colony. A History of Early Sydney* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2009). In addition to Tench and Worgan, Phillip, Hunter, Collins, King, Clark and Surgeon White all provided officer accounts. The journals of James Scott and John Easty of the Marines provide an occasional perspective from below.

<sup>3</sup> P.M. Harman, *The Culture of Nature in Britain 1680-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 54-5.

<sup>4</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 108.

with Republican and Napoleonic France, and the changes at home in social and religious life seen here in the surge in agricultural development and the influence of evangelicals on the development of empire, all had an impact on the men. They reacted to the many forces influencing and at times rupturing their lives, but in turn made their own small but real contributions to those changes.

William Dawes (1762-1836) was born in Portsmouth and started his working life at seventeen years of age as a junior lieutenant in the British Marine Corps. After active service in the American war he joined the First Fleet to carry out astronomical observations in the new colony, and is also known for his work in preparing a short dictionary of the local language. Dawes' life after New South Wales was mostly spent in Sierra Leone and Antigua, where he was committed to the evangelical support for the anti-slavery cause.

Watkin Tench (1758-1833) was born in Chester and like Dawes was seventeen when he commenced his working life as a junior officer of the Marines. He too served in the American war and spent a short period as a prisoner of war of the Americans. Tench is best known for his two books relating his experiences in New South Wales. After returning to England he continued to serve as a Marine officer, including active service against the French and another short period as a prisoner of war. His experiences as a prisoner in France were related in his third and final book. Tench left the Royal Marines<sup>5</sup> with the rank of Lieutenant General and retired to a gentleman's life in Penzance, Cornwall.

George Bouchier Worgan (1757-1838) was born in London and followed a different course by becoming a naval surgeon. He served as a surgeon in the American war and was a member of the First Fleet as surgeon to the flagship, HMS *Sirius*. Worgan continued as a naval surgeon on a hospital ship after returning to England. After leaving the Navy he became a farmer in Cornwall and is remembered for his conduct of the agricultural survey of the county on behalf of the Board of Agriculture. He had a third and final career as a schoolteacher at Liskeard, Cornwall.

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<sup>5</sup> The Marines were granted the prefix 'Royal' in 1802.

## i. Methodology and sources

This study can best be considered from two aspects. First, there is the original nature of the research. This thesis provides the first in-depth study of the lives of three men who were there at the inception of the European settlement of Australia and my research is a significant addition to the public record. Second, there is the use of biography, particularly the biography of those who fall outside the definition of 'great men', to assist in understanding how events help to shape individuals and how individuals help shape events. The thesis will show the value of examining the lives of those that existed outside the inner circle of official decision makers and policy setters.

Biographers usually have access to the personal papers of their subject before they embark on the exercise, but for these three men a major challenge has been the lack of known items such as diaries and journals or collections of correspondence. Here I take comfort from the words of Alan Frost. In preparing his biographical study of New South Wales' first governor Phillip, Frost was not deterred by the lack of personal papers, noting that:

while this is a considerable impediment to the biographer, it is not a final one, for there are other ways of knowing the meaning of experience and the importance of events.<sup>6</sup>

'Other ways of knowing' includes various official and unofficial documents that can be found in a number of archives and repositories that, as this thesis will demonstrate, allow for a solid understanding of these three lives. A small number of papers and references arising from the Australian Joint Copying Project can be found in some major Australian libraries, and the Mitchell Library within the State Library of New South Wales also contains some papers relevant to Tench.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alan Frost, *Arthur Phillip, 1783-1814. His Voyaging* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1987), Preface.

<sup>7</sup> These comprise a small cache of copies of four letters, some with attachments, gifted to the Library by descendants of the children of Tench's wife's sister. The Library also holds copies of documents from the Board of Longitude relating to the appointment of William Dawes to the First Fleet. The originals used in this thesis are at the Royal Greenwich Observatory archives in the Cambridge University Library.

So, why choose to study these three lives? In New South Wales they were together on four expeditions into the country, spending some twenty days together. It is evident they shared common interests, and their sense of inquiry and their search for knowledge reflect the influences of the Enlightenment on their early development. With this commonality there was also considerable diversity, a motivation for study.

William Dawes was not only one of those transnational lives who were increasingly active as Britain expanded its second empire after the loss of the American colonies, but also a participant in the expansion of empire outside the formal apparatus of government. Dawes' movements were within the sphere of growing evangelicalism and its religious goals. But as it was necessary to work for God, so too Dawes discovered it was necessary to work for Caesar, as compromising as that was to prove.

Watkin Tench's personal narrative encompassed the defence of this growing empire. A dedicated member of the Marine Corps, Tench understood the importance of Britain and its established values and continually demonstrated a devotion to honour and duty. As a committed believer in the institutions of Britain, he was not only able to defend those institutions physically, but would extol their virtues to those he considered he could influence.

George Worgan was part of the movement that strengthened Britain from within. He gave a significant part of his life to improvements in agriculture under conditions that were severely hampered by class structure, but perhaps more by his personal character weakness. For all that, his contribution to agricultural development in the southwest of England was widely recognised and is still acknowledged today.

Contemporary records from New South Wales are generally positive in their comments on Dawes, Tench and Worgan. Daniel Southwell, the Master's Mate from HMS *Sirius*, expressed his admiration of Worgan after the latter visited him at the remote outpost on South Head, and was even stronger in his praise of Dawes. Writing to his mother, Southwell described Dawes as 'a most amiable man' and 'truly religious, without any appearance of formal sanctity' and 'kind to

everyone'. Southwell decided that Dawes was his 'most esteemed friend and confidant, and to his kindness and advice I am much indebted', while he found Tench 'polite and sensible', a 'worthy officer and affable gent'.<sup>8</sup> John Hunter, Captain of HMS *Sirius*, was impressed enough with Dawes' engineering skills that on his return to New South Wales as second Governor he asked the government to consider appointing Dawes as an engineer for the colony 'if he could be found'.<sup>9</sup> It is not known what effort was made to find Dawes who was in England at the time, but nothing came of the request. William Wilberforce also suggested a role for Dawes in the colony as a superintendent of schools. He said Dawes was looking to return to New South Wales with his wife and settle 'for the remainder of his life, employing himself in agriculture', a strange observation given that Dawes does not seem to have displayed any great interest in farming. Wilberforce had mentioned the schools position to Dawes who was 'very sanguine ab't it', preferring to have some land granted to him. Wilberforce said of Dawes 'I don't believe there is in the world a more solid, honest, indefatigable man more full of resources and common-sense'. To add support to this letter he wrote in similar terms to John King, Under-Secretary at the Home Office adding that he had asked Henry Thornton, Chairman of the Sierra Leone Company, to meet with King on the matter.<sup>10</sup>

It was the social and intellectual skills of the three that attracted much attention. Elizabeth Macarthur turned to William Dawes for instruction in her passing interests in astronomy and botany, and George Worgan gave her piano lessons that elevated her skills, if only to playing 'God Save the King' and a short minuet. Tench and Dawes provided much needed social intercourse and lively conversation; they were 'those gentlemen and a few others' who were 'chief among whom we visit'.<sup>11</sup> Included in those 'few others' was George Worgan, whose departure from the colony meant 'a very considerable branch of our society will be lopped off',<sup>12</sup> an opinion shared by one modern scholar who

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<sup>8</sup> David Southwell to Mrs. Southwell, 14 Apr 1790 and 27-30 Jul 1790, *HRNSW*, vol. II, 710 and 719.

<sup>9</sup> Governor Hunter to the Duke of Portland, 25 May 1798. *HRNSW*, vol. III, 391,

<sup>10</sup> William Wilberforce to Henry Dundas, 2 Aug 1794; Wilberforce to John King, 2 Aug 1794, *HRNSW*, vol. II, 245-7.

<sup>11</sup> Sibella Macarthur Onslow (ed), *Some Early Records of the Macarthurs of Camden*, (Adelaide: Rigby, 1973), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Macarthur Onslow, *Early Records*, 29.

believed that the three 'constituted something of an intellectual set' while in the colony.<sup>13</sup> The author of 'A Letter from Sydney' praised George Worgan as 'a young gentleman of approved character and merit'.<sup>14</sup> Even though he expected the journey to be a 'severe business', William Hill, a captain in the New South Wales Corps looked forward to an expedition with Tench and Dawes as the two were 'gentlemen whose minds are highly cultivated, and of great scientific knowledge'. Any 'corporeal hardships' he continued were likely to be outweighed by 'the mental satisfaction I must receive with them'.<sup>15</sup>

Biography and microhistory.

The thesis considers history through the medium of biography and microhistory. The three lives are recorded and considered as biographical studies, highlighted by major events in each individual's life within the limitations of available sources. While these limitations do not allow for a traditional, 'cradle to grave' biography, the information currently available allows for a comprehensive understanding of each man's working life. The private lives and interior narratives are mostly missing, but glimpses of personality, attitudes, and beliefs still manage to emerge from official and third party sources.

Biography has long had its champions as a legitimate academic pursuit but, rather surprisingly, it still has its sceptics, one historian noting as recently as 2009 that 'many historians view biography with suspicion',<sup>16</sup> while that same year the historian Lois W. Banner commented that 'historians in general, often rank biography as an inferior type of history'. Banner then went on to make a case for biography stating:

At its best, biography, like history, is based on archival research, interweaving historical categories and methodologies, reflects current

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<sup>13</sup> Adrian Mitchell, 'Watkin Tench's Sentimental Enclosures: Original Relations from the First Settlement', *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, 11 (Jun 1994), 24.

<sup>14</sup> 'A Letter from Sydney' 24 Mar 1791, (published in the Edinburgh newspaper *The Bee* 15 May 1792), *HRNSW*, Vol. II, 778.

<sup>15</sup> Captain Hill to Wathen, 26 Jul 1790, *HRNSW*, Vol. I, Pt 2, 371.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen Fleischmann, "'I only wish I had a home on this globe": Transnational Biography and Dr. Mary Eddy', *Journal of Women's History*, 21, no.3 (Fall 2009), 110.

political and theoretical concerns, and raises complex issues of truth and proof.<sup>17</sup>

Over the years the arguments for and against appear to have become circular, but I have been easily persuaded that the use of biography is a valuable tool in helping to understand historical events and contemporary themes. Barbara Tuchman and Joseph Ellis are two of many historians who have included biography as a means of understanding history. Many years ago, Tuchman used biography as a means 'to encapsulate history' and found it 'useful because it encompasses the universal in the particular' and similarly, Ellis uses 'human lives as instruments to understand the past'.<sup>18</sup>

By their nature, these biographies are also microhistories of the period. They are small, particular histories during a period of considerable change in British imperial, political, religious and social life. A number of microhistories have studied places and events, but one definition of microhistory has also included the study of 'hitherto obscure people' that 'concentrates on the intensive study of particular lives' to reveal 'the fundamental experiences and mentalités of ordinary people', a process that allows for a consideration of the lives of Dawes, Tench and Worgan upon a greater canvas.<sup>19</sup> By accepting that definition as appropriate for biographical studies, it does raise questions about its application to the study of these three lives. The definitions of 'obscure people' and 'ordinary people' are somewhat subjective and imposed by others, as it is unlikely that Tench, for example, considered himself either obscure or ordinary, and applying the modern day 'man on the Clapham omnibus' test would probably still leave a question mark. Yet all three may be considered to meet

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<sup>17</sup> Lois W. Banner, 'Biography as History', *American Historical Review*, 114, no.3 (June 2009), 580.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Tuchman, 'Biography as a Prism of History', in Marc Pachter (ed), *Telling Lives: The Biographer's Art* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979), 133-4; Joseph Ellis, 'Get a Life: Reflections on Biography and History', *Historically Speaking: the Bulletin of the Historical Society* 5, 5 (May/June 2004).

<sup>19</sup> This definition of microhistory was included in a 'Call for Papers for a Conference on Microhistory: Advantages and Limitations for the Study of Early American History', by the Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture (1998) quoted by Jill Lepore, 'Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography', *The Journal of American History*, 88, 1 (June 2001), 130.

the definition of 'obscure' as they are unknown beyond a narrow band of scholarship, and in the course of conversation on that omnibus they may also be likely to meet the 'ordinary' test. However, if ordinary can also be taken to include representative, then they fall outside that component of the definition, as none of the three are representative of their times, occupations or beliefs: each man brought his own unique attributes to his experiences. 'Intensive study' may suggest the requirement for a wide variety of detailed and personal sources yet this thesis will show that an intensive examination of aspects of an individual's life can be obtained from sources other than the directly personal. Geoffrey Wolff takes the 'ordinary' further in his article 'Minor Lives', but is inconclusive in defining a 'minor' life. In researching a biography of his father, Wolff declares that his father was 'a "minor" subject if ever there was one, but a major father to me'.<sup>20</sup> Putting aside the implied arrogance of a biographer declaring any life 'minor', Wolff's conclusion about his father can be readily applied to Dawes, Tench and Worgan. Yet, at another level these men were considered anything but minor. To the great majority of the population they enjoyed considerable privilege by virtue of their gender, class, nationality, and race. For the men themselves it is unlikely that any of them considered themselves to be minor, even though each man would have been very aware of his position in a society of distinct social and economic grades.

Modern historians have successfully used multiple biographies to examine historical events. Iain McCalman, Jenny Uglow and Richard Holmes have all chosen men whose lives have intersected with a common interest. The study of these lives has provided deep insights into the development of science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a development that also featured in the lives of Dawes, Tench and Worgan.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Wolff, 'Minor Lives', in Marc Pachter, *Telling Lives, The Biographer's Art* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1979), 68.

<sup>21</sup> Iain McCalman, *Darwin's Armada* (Camberwell: Penguin Viking Australia, 2009); Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men. The Friends who made the Future 1730-1810* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002); Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder. How the Romantic Generation discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London: Harper Press, 2008).

## ii. Historiography

Little has been written of the lives of the three men beyond their intermittent appearances in the various histories of the early European settlement period in New South Wales, a situation this thesis will rectify. Watkin Tench is the best known of the three as a result of the two books written of his experiences in the colony. A popular edition of the two combined as one has been in booksellers' stocks continually since its publication in 1996, while the original edition of the combined books edited by L.F. Fitzhardinge, provides a valuable and scholarly introduction, with annotations to the text and identifying many of Tench's literary references.<sup>22</sup> This work also contains some limited biographical information that forms the basis of Fitzhardinge's entry for Tench in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*. The information contained in the *ADB* comprises the bulk of the knowledge about Tench's life to date and has been the main source whenever Tench is discussed in later histories and articles. A third book of his experiences as a prisoner of war in France is less well known although its re-published edition benefits greatly from the introduction by its editor.<sup>23</sup> Gavin Edwards has also considered Tench's writings about New South Wales from a literary perspective, offering valuable insights into the structure and method of his literary skills, and has placed similar emphasis in his introduction to *Letters from Revolutionary France*.<sup>24</sup> Isabelle Merle has considered Tench's writing

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<sup>22</sup> Watkin Tench, *1788*, comprising *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* and *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, edited and introduced by Tim Flannery (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1996) and Watkin Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, being a reprint of *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay* (1789) and *A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson* (1793), introduction and annotations by L.F. Fitzhardinge (Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1979) (first published 1961).

<sup>23</sup> Watkin Tench, *Letters from Revolutionary France. Letters written in France to a Friend in London, between the Month of November 1794, and the Month of May 1795*, edited by Gavin Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001) (1796).

<sup>24</sup> Gavin Edwards, 'Watkin Tench and the Cold Track of Narrative', in *Narrative Order, 1789-1819. Life and Story in an Age of Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

from an ethnographic viewpoint, while Adrian Mitchell has considered Tench's attitudes as representative of the period.<sup>25</sup>

William Dawes is less well known as he never published any of his own experiences. A little known short, somewhat hagiographic account of his life was written by his great-grand-daughter and published in 1930.<sup>26</sup> Dawes has been the subject of some recent scholarship that considers aspects of his time in Antigua, arising from a larger project addressing the British Caribbean of the period.<sup>27</sup> He has also received attention from historians and others regarding the nature of his relationship with a young Aboriginal woman in New South Wales who was a source of many entries in his dictionary of the local language, while speculation on the relationship had been extrapolated to assess his activities in Sierra Leone and Antigua.<sup>28</sup> These contributions are considered later.

When G.A. Wood prepared his paper on Dawes and Tench in 1924, nothing was known of Worgan other than as the surgeon on HMS *Sirius*, whose name appeared from time to time in accounts of the early colony.<sup>29</sup> The fragments of his journal and letters to his brother Richard were not discovered until the early

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<sup>25</sup> Isabelle Merle, 'Notes on the Journal of an officer of the Marines: Watkin Tench at Port Jackson, 1788-1791', *Cultures of the Commonwealth*, 10 (Spring 2004), 1-22. (the table of contents confusingly uses the same title as the 2009 re-issue) Merle's article was slightly revised and reissued as 'Watkin Tench's Fieldwork: the Journal of an "Ethnographer" in Port Jackson, 1788-1791', in Margaret Jolly, Serge Tcherkézoff & Darrell Tyron (eds), *Oceanic Encounters*, (ANU EPress, 2009) 199-219, at <http://press.anu.edu?p=60461>. Mitchell, 'Watkin Tench's Sentimental Enclosures', 23-33.

<sup>26</sup> A. Curren-Jones, *William Dawes, R.M. 1762 to 1836* (Torquay: W.H. Smith & Son, 1930).

<sup>27</sup> Sue Thomas, 'William Dawes in Antigua', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 12, 1 (Spring 2011). [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_colonialism\\_and\\_colonial\\_history](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history). Accessed 10 May 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Cassandra Pybus, "'Not fit for your protection or an honest man's company". A Transnational Perspective on the Sainly William Dawes', *History Australia*, 6,1 (2009), 12.1-12.7; and Sue Thomas, 'A transnational perspective on William Dawes' treatment of women', *History Australia*, 10, 1 (Apr 2013), 187-204.

<sup>29</sup> G. Arnold Wood, 'Lieutenant William Dawes and Captain Watkin Tench', *Journal and Proceedings*, The Royal Australian Historical Society, X, Pt.1, 1924, 1-24.

1950s, and published over twenty years later.<sup>30</sup> A brief introduction to Worgan's journal gives scant details of his life, but more than can be found in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Worgan and his father, uncle and siblings are the subjects of entries in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in respect of their skills as musicians and composers. Worgan and Tench have also earned entries in *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis*, Worgan primarily for his agricultural survey of Cornwall but also, frustratingly for this biographer, for the brief entry 'Account of Botany Bay by G.B. Worgan. MSS'.<sup>31</sup> The entry suggests a known manuscript, now apparently lost, that may have been more than the fragments that were published exactly one hundred years later. An earlier account also mentions 'an interesting account of the voyage and colony' and adds 'it was however never published, and has been mislaid'.<sup>32</sup> Tench's entry in the *Bibliotheca* simply notes all three of his works.

Apart from the accounts of the men's activities in New South Wales and other brief episodes mentioned above, the thesis uncovers substantial aspects of their lives for the first time. It is these later experiences (and the earlier home and military service periods) that reveal most about the men and their characters. Some character traits were known from the New South Wales period such as Dawes' inflexibility of will and Tench's willingness to challenge authority and these are confirmed in later life, especially their commitment to a cause. Importantly however the men are revealed as more rounded personalities but each with his own strong moral compass that included a commitment to family, and a continuing belief in the importance of their chosen careers.

### iii. Structure

The role of biography and its place in understanding history is considered in the introduction, followed by three parts representing the biographical studies of

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<sup>30</sup> George B. Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon* (Sydney: The Library Council of New South Wales, 1978). The author of the introduction is not identified.

<sup>31</sup> G.C.Boase & W.P. Courtney, *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis*, Vol. II, (London 1878), 906-7.

<sup>32</sup> John Allen, *History of the Borough of Liskeard and its Vicinity* (Liskeard 1856), 526.

each man. Each life is presented in a broad chronological structure with occasional lapses when required for coherence. Given the lack of personal papers, the lives have been largely assembled from official and third party records, but as dispassionate as such documents usually are, the studies will reveal aspects of character previously unknown. The final part considers the common themes that emerge in the lives and illustrates how biography is a valuable tool in expanding understanding of history, in these cases of imperial history. Linda Colley has observed that there should not be an 'Olympian version of world history, and there is always a human and individual dimension'.<sup>33</sup>

The thesis will seek to make a case for the value of studying individual lives to better understand history. The men are just three of the thousands of men and women who forged the Empire. Their lives were complex and idiosyncratic but they also shared experiences with those thousands who they would never meet. Out of those experiences a number of important themes will be seen that illustrate the value of considering biography as microhistory. The importance of networks, connections and patronage; matters of honour, duty and gentlemanly behaviour; the impact of hierarchy and power; the development of empire and a sense of Britishness; and questions of morality including the fight against slavery. As noted, these big themes will be considered in the fourth part of the thesis as they impacted on the lives of these men.

These themes are examples of some of the issues of the period as seen through the small prisms of their lives. The thesis does not set out to be a study of empire nor a study of the theories of empire. It is intended to be read as the biographical studies of three men who happened to be participants during this period of social, scientific, and imperial development.

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<sup>33</sup> Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh. A Woman in World History* (New York, Pantheon Books, 2007), 300.

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**Part I.**  
**William Dawes: a life.**

Chapter 1  
The Early Years and the American War

i. Early Years

William Dawes was born in Portsmouth in late 1761 or early 1762, and baptised at St. Thomas, Portsmouth on 17 March 1762. His parents, Benjamin Dawes and Elizabeth (Sinnatt) were married at the same church five months earlier. Little is known of his parents' backgrounds but parish records reveal that both families were living in Portsmouth at least one generation earlier. Benjamin Dawes was Clerk of Works at the Ordnance Office within Portsmouth dockyard.<sup>34</sup>

Dawes' education is unknown. Portsmouth dockyard was home to the Royal Naval Academy, and given Dawes' later navigational skills it is possible he was a student, although those skills were still being honed as late as 1786 when he spent some weeks with Rev. Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal, at the Greenwich Observatory.<sup>35</sup> If not educated at the Academy, Dawes' education indicates a grammar school style of instruction, and his knowledge of Latin grammar is evident later in his New South Wales language notebooks. He was later described as knowing a range of European languages as well as having studied botany and mineralogy in addition to his mathematical skills as an astronomer.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Phyllis Mander-Jones, 'Dawes, William (1762-1836)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Online edition. [www.adb.anu.edu.au](http://www.adb.anu.edu.au). (*ADB Online*)

<sup>35</sup> Maskelyne to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 Nov 1786. RGO 35/64.

<sup>36</sup> William Bayly to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 Aug 1786. Banks papers JBK/1/4 f.237, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Library Archives.

Parish records also reveal that Dawes had two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, two to six years younger than him, both apparently still unmarried at the time of their father's death in 1804.<sup>37</sup>

## ii. The American War

William Dawes was aged seventeen when he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Marines on 2 September 1779, joining the Portsmouth Division.<sup>38</sup> On 5 April 1780 he was posted to HMS *Resolution*, a third-rate, 64-gun ship of the line that sailed almost immediately for service in American waters.<sup>39</sup>

The level of naval action in the American war increased substantially when France joined the conflict, providing Dawes with his first serious enemy encounter. HMS *Resolution* was part of the British fleet under Admiral Graves that engaged the French under the Comte de Grasse off Chesapeake Bay in early September 1781. The main action took place on 2 September during which Dawes was wounded, probably not seriously as although the surgeon's log for the period is not available, he continued to serve on *Resolution*.<sup>40</sup> Dawes experienced further action in April 1782 when HMS *Resolution* was part of Admiral George Rodney's British fleet that successfully engaged de Grasse's fleet off the coast of Dominica in the West Indies. The engagement, known as the Battle of the Saintes, took place, over three days from 9 April, the victory providing a significant morale boost back in Britain.

Dawes left HMS *Resolution* when it returned to Portsmouth on 23 October 1782.<sup>41</sup> He was sent to sea again some six months later when he joined the sloop HMS *Merlin*, where he was in command of the small marine contingent.<sup>42</sup> *Merlin* spent the next twelve months cruising in the southern waters of the North

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<sup>37</sup> Will of Benjamin Dawes, TNA PROB 11/540.

<sup>38</sup> *Historical Records of New South Wales*, Vol. 2, 418.

<sup>39</sup> Ship's muster, HMS *Resolution*, TNA ADM 36/8709.

<sup>40</sup> P.H. Nicolas, *Historical Records of the Royal Marine Forces*, Vol. 1 (London: Thomas and William Boone, 1845), 116-7. (all references are from Volume 1).

<sup>41</sup> Ship's muster, HMS *Resolution*. TNA ADM 36/8713.

<sup>42</sup> Ship's muster, HMS *Merlin*. TNA ADM 36/10463.

Sea, returning to its berth at Sheerness from time to time. After leaving HMS *Merlin* on 15 May 1784,<sup>43</sup> Dawes was based at the Marine barracks at Portsmouth until he joined the fleet being prepared for New South Wales. The journey to New South Wales was his last sea service with the Marines and although he was promoted to First Lieutenant on 18 April 1793, his marine career virtually ceased when he went to Sierra Leone at the end of 1792.

In May and June 1799, Dawes gave evidence before the House of Lords as it debated a Bill to ban the slave trade on the coast of Africa. The period spent on HMS *Resolution* when it was based in the West Indies introduced Dawes to the realities of slavery, a cause that would become a significant part in his later life. In his evidence, Dawes said that he had visited two plantations in Barbados as well as 'others in other Islands'. The experience caused him to find the condition of the slaves to be 'very unpleasant and hard' and it became a topic of discussion in the ship's mess. The arrival of a slaver in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, had a considerable influence on Dawes and was a matter of concern to the officers of the *Resolution*, including its Captain, Lord Robert Manners, who spoke out against the trade. When asked by the Lords if the officers spoke favourably or unfavourably of the slave trade, Dawes answered simply 'unfavourably'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ship's muster, HMS *Merlin*. TNA ADM 36/10463.

<sup>44</sup> William Dawes evidence: House of Lords Papers, 28 May 1799, Minutes of evidence taken on the second reading of the Bill, 'An Act to prohibit the Trading for slaves on the coast of Africa within certain limits'. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.rp.nla.gov.au/fullrec/fullrec.do?id=hlsp-000740>. Accessed 17 Mar 2013.

## Chapter 2

### New South Wales

#### i. Appointment and voyage.

William Dawes' appointment to the fleet for New South Wales commenced with his hometown connections. In August 1786, William Bayly, headmaster of the Royal Naval Academy at Portsmouth, wrote to Sir Joseph Banks recommending Dawes as a suitable appointment to the expedition. Dawes, he wrote, had 'a great desire to go' and had many skills to recommend him. Bayly said Dawes 'understood' Spanish, Portuguese, French and Italian, indicating a facility for languages further evident as his life progressed. More importantly, Bayly expanded on the technical skills that he thought Dawes could offer the expedition, particularly that he 'is a tolerably good Astronomer & draws very well' with a good mathematical and grammatical knowledge in addition to having studied botany and mineralogy. Bayly assured Banks that everything he had said about Dawes was 'strictly true'.<sup>45</sup>

Bayly's endorsement of Dawes' drawing skills was supported by a recent exhibition of drawings by First Fleet artists that included a small number of watercolour drawings of local plants attributed to him. One, titled 'Purple donkey orchid' is inscribed as:

A Species of Orchis found growing in vast quantities  
on the steep downs between Pitt Water and the Sea by  
Lieu. William Dawes of the Marines 20<sup>th</sup> September 1790.

The writing of the inscription is virtually identical to that in Dawes' correspondence, and if the drawings are not by him, the inscription almost certainly is.<sup>46</sup> Dawes' skills as a draughtsman were evident in the maps of New South Wales and Sierra Leone he produced, but these drawings show an

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<sup>45</sup> William Bayly to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 Aug 1786. Kew Library Archives, Banks Papers JBK/1/4 f.137.

<sup>46</sup> Louise Anemaat, *Natural Curiosity. Unseen Art of the First Fleet*, (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 2014). The drawings raise the intriguing prospect that Dawes also accumulated a portfolio of drawings of high quality, but at this moment only these four are known to exist.

artistic sensitivity that complements the botanical knowledge that Elizabeth Macarthur was later to acknowledge.

William Bayly had been Master of the Academy since February 1785, long enough to know Dawes who had been back at the Portsmouth Marine barracks since May 1784. Bayly, a leading astronomer of the period had been assistant to Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal, and more recently an astronomer on Cook's second and third voyages.<sup>47</sup>

Bayly also recommended Dawes to Maskelyne, who in turn wrote to Banks supporting a recommendation to the Board of Longitude that Dawes be appointed to carry out observations in New South Wales, noting he was 'well versed in most kinds of astronomical observations'. Maskelyne also suggested that if Dawes performed well in the new colony it would serve for some future employment, and so Dawes did not seek any remuneration for the position. Maskelyne saw an added benefit in the appointment as that part of the world was considered to offer superior conditions for viewing a comet due in the summer or autumn of 1788. Dawes owned only two technical instruments and Maskelyne sought Banks' assistance, both being members of the Board, in having the Board lend additional instruments to the expedition.<sup>48</sup>

Dawes had also known Captain William Twiss of the Royal Engineers in Portsmouth where the latter was working on the construction of the dockyards and harbour. In October 1786, Twiss wrote to Brook Watson recommending Dawes for the expedition to New South Wales, which Watson in turn forwarded to Evan Nepean.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Derek Howse, 'Bayly, William, (bap. 1738, d. 1810)' *ODNB Online*, accessed 22 Sep 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Nevil Maskelyne to Sir Joseph Banks, 17 Oct 1786. RGO 35/63.

<sup>49</sup> Twiss to Watson, 24 Oct 1786; Watson to Nepean, 2 Nov 1786. TNA HO 42/10 f.393. Brook Watson was at the time a Member of Parliament and a Director of the Bank of England, later becoming Lord Mayor of London and receiving a baronetcy. (Watson had lost a leg in a shark attack in Havana harbour while a young officer in the Royal Navy. The event is starkly depicted in a well-known painting, 'Watson and the shark' by John Singleton Copley, currently in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.) Twiss went on to become Colonel-Commandant of the Royal Engineers reaching the rank of General. See, Alastair W. Massie, 'Twiss, William (1744/5-1827)', *ODNB Online*.

Dawes promptly did what he could to strengthen his position. In October 1786 the Admiralty granted him leave from the Marines to attend to his 'private affairs'.<sup>50</sup> These included spending time with Maskelyne at the Royal Observatory Greenwich to develop his knowledge and skills in navigational and astronomical matters and the use of various technical instruments that would be required.<sup>51</sup> It is likely that Dawes stayed with Maskelyne during this period as in later correspondence he regularly signed off with regards to Mrs Maskelyne and 'little Margaret', Maskelyne's daughter.<sup>52</sup> Maskelyne gave Dawes a letter of introduction to Banks in which he declared that having been at the Observatory 'a good deal', Dawes was now 'very ready and will do the business very well'.<sup>53</sup> We can see how Dawes was building and benefitting from a network of patrons. It will also be seen later in his life as he created a network of influential patrons and supporters among the leading evangelical clergy and laymen of the period.

The Commissioners of the Board of Longitude were an influential group. Chaired by Admiral Lord Howe, First Lord of the Admiralty, they included Sir George Pocock, Master of Trinity House; Banks as President of the Royal Society; Maskelyne; five professors of astronomy or mathematics from Oxford and Cambridge; and Philip Stephens, Secretary of the Admiralty. The Commissioners agreed to lend the Board's instruments to the expedition and, although Maskelyne said Dawes was 'capable of making proper use of them', the Commissioners considered his rank and position and determined that the instruments be 'put in charge of Captain Philip' [sic] as 'greater care would be

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<sup>50</sup> Stephens to Smith, 25 Oct 1786. TNA, ADM 2/1177 f.521. (Phillip Stephens, Secretary to the Admiralty. Lt.Gen. Smith, Commandant of the Portsmouth Division of Marines)

<sup>51</sup> Dawes' experiences with Maskelyne and the Board of Longitude are mirrored in the experiences of William Gooch, described in detail by Greg Dening. Gooch had also received support from William Wales. Greg Dening, *The Death of William Gooch. A History's Anthropology*, (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 115-122. The connection to Wales is at p. 113. See also Derek Howse, *Nevil Maskelyne, the Seaman's Astronomer*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) for a study of Maskelyne's life.

<sup>52</sup> for example see Dawes to Maskelyne, 20 Mar 1787. Board of Longitude correspondence, RGO 14/68

<sup>53</sup> Maskelyne to Banks, 8 Nov 1786. RGO 35/64.

taken of them than could be done by Mr. Dawes'.<sup>54</sup> This was not just a reflection on Dawes' rank as a very junior officer of Marines, but also a practical consideration of life at sea. Phillip's cabin was more commodious than Dawes', who was sharing with others, and would have been more secure. Dawes later told Maskelyne that he was relieved he did not have responsibility for the instruments, but thought keeping them with Phillip might prove inconvenient given the distance between their two cabins.<sup>55</sup> Taking readings was only the first part of the complex process of navigation, as the data had to be calculated from the various mathematical and astronomical tables in place. At Bayly's suggestion, Dawes asked Maskelyne for his own set of tables to alleviate this problem, adding that if that were not possible he would buy his own.<sup>56</sup>

Having support from the Astronomer Royal and Sir Joseph Banks to carry out astronomical work, and having secured the approval from the Board of Longitude to borrow its valuable scientific instruments, Dawes now found he had to clarify his position on the expedition. He had joined it too late to be included as a member of the Marine contingent and was therefore appointed to HMS *Sirius*' complement. Discovering that the Marines were to receive a year's advance of subsistence he immediately wrote to Lord Howe to question his exclusion from the payment. Howe responded that the Marines had signed on for a fixed term in the colony while *Sirius* and her complement could be recalled at any time and so there was no need for an advance. More alarming perhaps was Howe's comment that if Dawes was not happy with those arrangements he could withdraw from the expedition. Howe, giving priority to his role as First Lord, thought the proposed astronomical work of secondary importance and did not feel that the Board of Longitude would have any difficulty in seeing the work abandoned. Dawes wrote back to Howe accepting his position, but requested that he be appointed to the Marine land detachment at the first available vacancy.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Board of Longitude meeting, 14 Nov 1786. Minutes of the Commissioners of the Board of Longitude, RGO 14/6.

<sup>55</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 28 Dec 1786. Board Correspondence RGO 14/48.

<sup>56</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 28 Dec 1786. RGO 14/48.

<sup>57</sup> Dawes reproduced the Dawes-Howe correspondence in his letters to Maskelyne regarding the matter. Dawes to Maskelyne, 16, 19 and 21 Jan 1787. RGO 14/48.

Dawes was aware he needed to act quickly as he was near the top of the rotation list of the Marines and could shortly be sent to sea if he remained in England.<sup>58</sup> Also, the New South Wales expedition presented opportunities for his future career even though it came with a considerable risk. Remaining on the complement of HMS *Sirius* meant he would not be considered for any promotions that might arise. He wrote to Maskelyne exclaiming that he 'would not lose one Day's rank for Tons of Gold & Diamonds'. Loss of rank was 'the greatest misfortune that could possibly befall me', and rather more dramatically, he would much prefer to 'lose a limb' or 'lose my life'.<sup>59</sup> Nothing more of this episode appears in the correspondence with Maskelyne, and Dawes accepted his status relying on the possibility of a later posting to the shore detachment. That opportunity arose shortly after arriving in the new colony.

Dawes' remaining period in England was spent in refining instruments and determining the accuracy of the chronometer. He had sent a sextant to the leading instrument maker Jesse Ramsden for adjustment, and the chronometer to Bayly for confirmation of its readings, while continuing to clarify details with both Maskelyne and George Gilpin, Maskelyne's former assistant. In one of the last letters Dawes wrote to Maskelyne before the fleet departed England, he reported that Arthur Phillip had come onboard HMS *Sirius* and had expressed enthusiasm about the work Dawes was undertaking.<sup>60</sup> This began a brief period when Dawes' relationship with the Governor was positive and even warm. It lasted the voyage to New South Wales but started to cool within a few months of arrival in the colony.

Dawes occupied himself during the voyage by making daily observations and reporting his findings to Maskelyne at each available opportunity. On the voyage he worked closely with John Hunter, Captain of HMS *Sirius*, and William Bradley, Hunter's First Lieutenant, in comparing readings.<sup>61</sup> Hunter, whose navigational skills were later proven on *Sirius*' voyage to the Cape of Good Hope in late 1788, was impressed with Dawes calling him:

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<sup>58</sup> William Bayly to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 Aug 1786. Kew Library Archives, Banks Papers JBK/1/4 f.137.

<sup>59</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 25 Jan 1787, RGO 14/48.

<sup>60</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 8 May 1787, RGO 14/48.

<sup>61</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 5 Jun 1787. RGO 14/48.

a young gentleman very well qualified for such a business, and who promises fair, if he pursues his studies, to make a respectable figure in the science of astronomy.<sup>62</sup>

Maintaining the timekeeper was a matter of great importance. The instrument was a vital piece of equipment in the fleet's navigation and necessary in calculating longitude. It was required to be wound each day and Bradley recorded Phillip's meticulous orders for the process. It had to be wound at noon in the presence of Phillip with either Hunter or Dawes and the readings confirmed by the officer of the watch. Even the guard on duty outside Phillip's cabin was involved by having to be present at the winding.<sup>63</sup> When later in the voyage the timekeeper did run down, it took a considerable number of astronomical observations and calculations by Dawes to have it reset.<sup>64</sup>

For most of the month that the fleet was at Rio de Janeiro, Dawes was based on a small island within the harbour. A tent was erected for his shelter and for the shelter of the instruments, including the timekeeper, which were taken ashore. Dawes recorded his appreciation of the assistance and encouragement he received from Phillip and made sure Maskelyne was aware that Phillip was personally covering the costs involved. A guard was placed on the island and no-one was allowed to land, although Phillip brought two Portuguese astronomers to discuss observations with Dawes and inspect the instruments. Phillip's personal standing in Brazil from his earlier service with the Portuguese Navy facilitated the arrangements and allowed free access within the town by the various officers with the fleet.<sup>65</sup>

At the Cape of Good Hope, Phillip was concerned with security if the instruments went ashore so they stayed on *Sirius* for the month they were in

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<sup>62</sup> John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea 1787-1792*, John Bach (ed). (Sydney: Angus and Robertson with The Royal Australian Historical Society, 1968), 13.

<sup>63</sup> William Bradley, *A Voyage to New South Wales. The Journal of William Bradley RN of HMS Sirius 1786-1792* (Sydney: The Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, 1969), 11.

<sup>64</sup> Bradley, *Voyage*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 3 Sep 1787. RGO 14/48.

port.<sup>66</sup> Dawes made the acquaintance of Colonel Gordon, the local military commander, whom Dawes declared to have a 'great love of science'. He assisted Gordon in making preparations for observing the comet due in a year's time. He noted that Gordon had a good sextant by Ramsden and asked Maskelyne to send Gordon some additional instruments, adding that Gordon would arrange payment from the Dutch consul in London. Gordon was also keen to receive any directions from Maskelyne that might assist in his observations.<sup>67</sup> In one of the few non-technical moments in his correspondence, Dawes also told Maskelyne that 'the whole fleet is in perfect good order' and everyone was 'exceedingly healthy'. There had been 'only abt 15 deaths'.<sup>68</sup> His next letter to Maskelyne was from New South Wales.

## ii. The Colony

When the advance section of the fleet arrived in Botany Bay on 18 January 1788, William Dawes was twenty-six when he was one of the first to step ashore. The following day, Dawes accompanied Phillip and Lieutenant Philip King, Second Lieutenant on HMS *Sirius*, to the north shore of the Bay where they had their first encounter with the Aborigines.<sup>69</sup> Dawes was with Phillip and others again the following day as they explored around the Bay and on 20 January he was with King when Phillip sent them to explore the southern side of Botany Bay. Dawes and King had another meeting with the local people, a meeting that had sufficient tension for King to order a musket shot into the air. They went out again the next day exploring the upper part of the Bay.<sup>70</sup>

The arrival in Botany Bay of two French vessels under the command of the Comte de la Pérouse was a surprise to the British, although they were aware that La Pérouse was operating somewhere in the Pacific. That the French arrived in the Bay on the same day as the British were leaving to relocate to Sydney Harbour, added to the surprise. The French visit particularly engaged

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<sup>66</sup> Later, when HMS *Sirius* was wrecked on Norfolk Island, the timekeeper was saved and returned to Sydney Cove on HMS *Supply*. (Bradley, *Voyage*, 197)

<sup>67</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 9 Nov 1787. RGO 14/48.

<sup>68</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 9 Nov 1787. RGO 14/48.

<sup>69</sup> Paul G. Fildon and R.J. Ryan (eds) *The Journal of Philip Gidley King: Lieutenant, R.N. 1787-1790* (Sydney: Australian Documents Library, 1980), 32.

<sup>70</sup> King, *Journal*, 33-6.

Dawes and his work on the observatory. Dawes and King left Sydney at two in the morning of 1 February 1788 to visit the French vessels and, on Phillip's behalf, offer any assistance required. The voyage in the *Sirius*' cutter took eight hours as the crew was forced to row against the southerly winds while the following day's return journey was even more difficult with winds now coming in the opposite direction, and combined with high seas resulted in the passage taking a gruelling fourteen hours.<sup>71</sup> For Dawes at least, the effort (of others) was worth it as the day spent with the French was very valuable for him. He struck up a relationship with Joseph Lepaute Dagelet, the astronomer on board the *Boussole*, who had already established a small observatory on the Botany Bay shore.

Dagelet was a respected man of science. Some ten years older than Dawes, he had been a member of the French Academy of Sciences since 1785 and Professor of Mathematics at the Royal Military Academy in Paris since 1777. He and Dawes spent time together discussing the establishment of the observatory in Sydney, and Dagelet later wrote to Dawes offering suggestions on its layout and the placement of instruments. Dagelet also suggested to Dawes that if he wished to write a paper on the movements of the sun and stars he would offer it to the French Academy of Science on Dawes' behalf. Clearly the two men got on, relishing the opportunity to discuss their mutual interest.<sup>72</sup>

Dagelet also asked Dawes to send on two letters, one to his mentor and future head of the Paris Observatory, Jérôme Lalande, the other to the Royal Military School in Paris. He requested that they be sent to Nevil Maskelyne for forwarding. In his letter to Lalande, Dagelet advised that:

at Botany Bay he had come across an English astronomer furnished with instruments who was preparing to carry out numerous observations and we may have the satisfaction

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<sup>71</sup> King, *Journal*, 37-40.

<sup>72</sup> Ivan Barko, 'Lepaute Dagelet at Botany Bay (26 January-10 March 1788) and his encounter with William Dawes', *Explorations. A Journal of French-Australian Connections*, 43 (Dec 2007), 21-40. One of Dagelet's pupils was Napoleon Bonaparte, and Barko records that Dagelet's assistant on the expedition was selected for the voyage in preference to Bonaparte. This allows for the enjoyable (if pointless) pastime of playing 'what if?'

of correspondence with our Antipodes.<sup>73</sup>

Dagelet's letter to the Military Academy has an air of mystery about it, as he was very specific that it be sealed in a covering letter for Maskelyne to send to the Ministry in Paris.<sup>74</sup> This can be seen to add to suggestions that La Pérouse's expedition was more than one of discovery. Alan Frost suggests the reason Phillip chose not to meet La Pérouse was because of suspicions he was on a spying expedition.<sup>75</sup> Robert Haworth goes further, strongly suggesting that the French exploratory ventures around the inlets of Botany Bay and up what is now called the Georges River, a journey he has calculated was as far as twenty four miles, was to assess the strategic value of the area. Whilst admitting to speculation, Haworth found support in Tench's comment that he had learned the dimensions of the opening to Botany Bay from the French 'who took uncommon pains to observe it'.<sup>76</sup> Speculation or not, it would be surprising if La Pérouse had not been conscious of potential strategic issues during his voyage – he was a naval officer after all.<sup>77</sup> The French left Botany Bay on 10 March 1788 and were never seen again. The wreckage of the two vessels was discovered in the Solomon Islands in 1827.

### iii. Expeditioning

William Dawes' intensive work commitments meant that during the first two years of the colony his time for exploratory ventures was limited. However, at the end of 1789 he ventured on a westwards journey that attempted to explore what were then called the Carmarthen Mountains, now the Blue Mountains. The party left Rose Hill in early December 1789 and returned eight days later

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<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Barko, 'Lepaute Dagelet', 21.

<sup>74</sup> Dagelet to Dawes, 3 Mar 1788. SLNSW Ad49/6-7 (safe 1/250). Online translation at [http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/\\_transcript/2007/D00007/a1297.html#a1297004](http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/_transcript/2007/D00007/a1297.html#a1297004), accessed 9 Sep 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Alan Frost, *Arthur Phillip*, 166.

<sup>76</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 34-5.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Haworth, 'The Several "Discoveries" of Sydney's Georges River: Precursors to the Tom Thumb Expedition', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, 14 (2012), 17.

having been turned back by the ruggedness of the country.<sup>78</sup> Dawes and his party had managed to penetrate a little over fifty miles, a distance not bettered for a number of years. Dawes named the point where they turned back Mt. Twiss, recognising the patron who had supported his application to join the Botany Bay expedition.<sup>79</sup> One English newspaper reported that Dawes had reached a point where any 'farther it appears impossible for any man to travel' and the land was 'sterile in the extreme', bleak enough that 'a rat would starve'.<sup>80</sup>

In early August 1790 Dawes joined Tench and Worgan on an expedition that travelled south-west from Rose Hill. The party ventured out again later the same month, in a north-westerly direction. The two journeys involved twelve days over some difficult country. The following month a third expedition by the group, joined by Rev. Richard Johnson, was away three days, venturing as far as Broken Bay.<sup>81</sup> By this time he was among those most familiar with the new colony.

On 9 December 1790 John McIntyre, a convict appointed to shoot game, was fatally speared, supposedly by an Aborigine from the Botany Bay area.<sup>82</sup> Phillip

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<sup>78</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 158; Collins, David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, edited by Brian Fletcher (Sydney: A.H.& A.W. Reed with The Royal Australian Historical Society, 1975 (1798)), Vol.1, 72-3. All references to Collins are from Volume 1.

<sup>79</sup> F.A. Craft and R. Else Mitchell, 'In Search of Dawes' Mount Twiss', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings*, Vol. XXVII, Pt. IV (1941), 245-275. There is still no general agreement on the exact location of Mount Twiss.

<sup>80</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, 29 Jun 1792. The account is likely to have been provided by Dawes, perhaps in correspondence to his father. I am grateful to David Wood of Phoenix Auctions Melbourne who supplied me with a copy of this entry. Phoenix Auctions offered the newspaper for sale on 17 July 2015.

<sup>81</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 174-5; James Scott, *Remarks on a Passage to Botany Bay 1787-1792* (Sydney: The Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, 1963), 54-5. (The original manuscript journal is headed 'Remarks on a passage Botnay [sic] bay. 1787'); David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, edited by Brian Fletcher (Sydney: A.H.& A.W. Reed with The Royal Australian Historical Society, 1975 (1798)), Vol.1 107. All references to Collins are from volume 1.

<sup>82</sup> In discussing those experiences, I have chosen to refer to the indigenous people as the 'Aborigines', the common nomenclature. Inga Clendinnen considered an appropriate general terminology, and decided to call the indigenous people the 'Australians' arguing that 'Aborigine' was anachronistic,

decided that the increase in violence by local Aborigines required action and ordered Watkin Tench to lead a retaliatory expedition to the area. Tench included Dawes as one of two Marine lieutenants in the group.

There were three other lieutenants potentially available whom Tench could have chosen and at first glance his choice of Dawes is a strange one.<sup>83</sup> Apart from the general interaction in a small community, Tench knew Dawes from his many visits to the observatory and their expeditions together earlier in the year, and, on the face of it, it is odd that he was not aware of Dawes' strong beliefs. Perhaps the normally inquisitive Tench was unable to draw Dawes on his beliefs or perhaps etiquette did not allow for deep personal discussions. The community may have been small, but Tench was two ranks senior to Dawes and discussions around a campfire or at the observatory would still have had their boundaries. However it is possible that Tench was simply fulfilling Phillip's orders while at the same time manning the expedition with people sympathetic to his own unease with the task – as we will see later.

Dawes learned of his appointment to the expedition after reading Phillip's proclamation and immediately sent a letter to Captain James Campbell, the senior Marine officer, refusing to take part. Campbell was unable to convince Dawes to change his mind and forwarded the letter to Phillip, who met with Dawes but also failed to convince him to alter his position, even after pointing out the potential ramifications of a court martial for disobeying orders.

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although common modern day terminology suggests her argument has failed to gain acceptance. (Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), 4) Dawes translated the term Eora as meaning "people", a description used by some historians, and it may have been appropriate to use that as a generic term given the high number of different clans and language groups in the colony. Grace Karskens has identified around thirty individual groups in the Sydney area stretching from Broken Bay to Botany Bay. (Karskens *The Colony*, 3).

<sup>83</sup> Lieutenants Kellow, Johnstone, Clark, Faddy and Creswell were on Norfolk Island while Long and Furzer had their duties as Adjutant and Quartermaster respectively. Of the lieutenants available, Timins joined *Charlotte* at Cape Town and Tench had plenty of time to assess his character, Shairp seems to have been generally disliked by his colleagues and Tench knew Davey from serving with him on a number of courts martial, including the one that resulted in the members of the Court being arrested. It is also likely that one or more of the three were on duty at Rose Hill.

Dawes took himself and his conscience to Rev. Richard Johnson and whatever was discussed it was enough for Dawes to write to Campbell later that evening to inform him of a change of mind. After what was a busy, and for Dawes difficult, day he joined the party that departed the following morning. Given the short time frame, Dawes' response to Phillip's order was clearly an immediate reaction, but even after the pastoral advice from Johnson, his decision continued to trouble him. His immediate, reactive response was a regular feature of Dawes' character and throughout his subsequent career proved to be a polarising aspect of his personality. The expedition provided an opportunity for sufficient quiet contemplation, and on his return Dawes advised Phillip that he 'was sorry he had been persuaded to comply with the order', giving Phillip the impression that he would refuse any similar order in the future. Lieutenant John Long, the Marine Adjutant, was present when Dawes spoke to Phillip in a manner Phillip considered sufficiently improper to subject Dawes to a court martial. Dawes chose not to be subjected to a court martial, as was his right, but the affair caused an irreparable breach between the two.<sup>84</sup>

In April 1791 Dawes was a member of an expedition Phillip led to establish that the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers were the same waterway, but failed to achieve their goal. The following month Dawes joined Tench and a smaller group in a second attempt, this time successfully establishing the confluence of the two rivers. Tench made a point of singling out Dawes' ability to keep track of the distance travelled each day, and who 'from habit and superior skill, performed it almost without a stop, or an interruption of conversation: to any other man, on such terms, it would have been impracticable'.<sup>85</sup> Dawes may have been particularly skilful in his ability to keep a mental count of the distances, aided by his knowledge that there were about two thousand paces to a mile, but keeping track of that would have required a singular determination. Possibly a step counter aided him, as Inga Clendinnen suggested, but we do not know.<sup>86</sup> In his imaginative and at times erroneous book, Ross Gibson speculated that Dawes' skills might have been indicative of a condition

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<sup>84</sup> Details of the disagreement between Dawes and Phillip are contained in Phillip's correspondence to Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville, 7 Nov 1791. *HRNSW*, Vol.1 (Pt.2), 543-546; and *HRA*, Vol.1, 290-4.

<sup>85</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 224-234.

<sup>86</sup> Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 203.

somewhere in the autism spectrum.<sup>87</sup> Irrespective, Dawes displayed both a considerable skill and a discipline that was evident throughout life. We do not know how he related to Phillip during the journey after their major falling out four months prior.

#### iv. The stars

Exploration involved more than traversing the land. For Dawes it also involved attending to his task of exploring the skies. There were frustrations in this however, as Dawes found that his other tasks as an officer in the settlement consumed a large amount of his time. Shortly after arriving in the colony, he wrote to Maskelyne advising that he was unable to spend worthwhile time establishing the observatory as Maskelyne and the Board of Longitude had wished, as Phillip had appointed him to the dual roles of Engineer and Officer of Artillery, two skills that Dawes later put to good use in Sierra Leone. However he used his contingent of four Marines and three or four convicts allocated by Phillip to commence clearing the observatory site, and provided Maskelyne with a sketch of his plans for the building.<sup>88</sup> The problems resulting from Dawes' workload continued, but two and a half months later he was able to advise Maskelyne that work was progressing well. He found that by providing shoes to the Marines as well as rum and water 'now & then' during the heat of summer he was able to progress the building to the point where he expected to shortly set up the instruments. Present day experience makes it difficult to imagine how spirits in the heat of a Sydney summer assisted with the work's progress, but apparently it did. The shortage of materials was a continuing problem and Dawes reported that Phillip had told him that if he knew constructing the observatory would be so difficult he would have incurred the additional expense

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<sup>87</sup> Ross Gibson. *26 Views of the Starburst World. William Dawes at Sydney Cove, 1788-91* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2012), 50-1. Gibson goes on to provide examples of third party comments on Dawes' character that do little to support his claim; such as the example that Dawes 'relied on self-made, repetitive ceremonies' such as 'frequent pauses throughout the day, to complete his weather diaries' (p.51) – it is difficult to understand how he could have done otherwise. A number of Gibson's errors of fact arise from his selective use of limited sources, but as Gibson himself said, his work is 'a set of biographical speculations' (p.v11). It would do Dawes a disservice if it was seen as more than that.

<sup>88</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 30 Apr 1788. RGO 14/48.

of bringing a pre-fabricated building structure.<sup>89</sup> Phillip's own combined residence and government headquarters had been brought to the colony in a pre-fabricated form.<sup>90</sup>

In his letter of 10 July 1788, Dawes told Maskelyne he was considering signing on for another three-year period in the colony, but in another letter two days later added that he would only be able to stay in New South Wales if he had an occupation to supplement his Marine income.<sup>91</sup> Any appointment would suffice, and in return Dawes would devote time and energy to the observatory, adding that if a permanent position at the observatory was offered he would be happy to accept. Dawes' letter shows him in a role that he was finding satisfying and to which he was committed. In his later career much of what can be discerned about Dawes' beliefs and almost fanatical commitment to his cause of the time has to be pieced together from the man in official and formal mode, but here Dawes is writing to a man for whom he has high regard and a personal relationship. He told Maskelyne that if nothing came of his request for an appointment, he had 'had the happiness of being in some measure the means of establishing a permanent observatory in this country'.<sup>92</sup>

Dawes' relationship with Arthur Phillip was difficult. Towards the end of 1788 he admitted to a disagreement with the Governor, telling Maskelyne that when Phillip asked him to take on the positions of Engineer and Officer of Artillery, he tried to avoid the request. Phillip suggested that the positions would allow him time for the observatory, but he found the dual roles more onerous than expected, and complained to Phillip, who was 'very highly offended and several letters past between us'. The disagreement resolved itself, but Dawes

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<sup>89</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 10 Jul 1788. RGO 14/48.

<sup>90</sup> The use of pre-fabricated canvas accommodation was not unusual as housing for imperial satraps in new regions. In 1792 John Simcoe, the newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada brought with him a 'cavass house similar to that sent with the Governor to Botany Bay' and like Phillip he had the house partitioned to provide a room for official duties. Simcoe's house had been purchased from the estate of James Cook. (Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles. The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire* (Hammersmith: Harper Press, 2011), 204.)

<sup>91</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 10 Jul 1788. RGO 14/48.

<sup>92</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 12 Jul 1788. RGO 14/48.

wondered that if he had stayed with the Marine detachment his time would have been freer.<sup>93</sup>

For all that, Dawes considered he had given the observatory as much as he could: 'no application shall be wanting in me'. Continuing his concern for the observatory, he hoped a properly qualified person would be appointed before his six years had expired. He told Maskelyne that he had made arrangements for the observatory in the event of a prolonged illness or death, and had chosen Watkin Tench, as interested in astronomy as in all other aspects of the colony, as his standby support. 'I have reason to believe that Captain Tench of the Marines, will in a moderate time become sufficiently acquainted with the practice of astronomy to be capable of supplying my place'. Tench had the added advantage of also having signed on for a further three years in the colony.<sup>94</sup>

Around this time Benjamin Dawes, reacting to now lost correspondence from his son, contacted Maskelyne to support Dawes' campaign for some certainty of continuing appointment in New South Wales, and financial recognition of his additional duties as Engineer and Officer of Artillery.<sup>95</sup> Responding to advice from Maskelyne that Dawes should first obtain leave from the Marines, Benjamin Dawes suggested that this would be straightforward, as he and his family were well known to the family of Lady Hood 'of this place'. Lady Hood's husband, Admiral Lord Hood, was a leading naval man and had served as a subordinate to Admiral Rodney at the Battle of the Saintes in April 1782, the action in which William Dawes served on HMS *Resolution*. Benjamin Dawes added that if any proposed appointment was to be in the Ordnance Office, an approach should be made to the Duke of Richmond, Master-General of the Ordnance. He added that the Duke had been a personal patron and had met his son. Benjamin Dawes also mentioned an offer of support from Captain Twiss of the Royal Engineers.<sup>96</sup> This was the same Twiss who supported Dawes in his application to join the First Fleet and whom Dawes acknowledged by the naming of Mt. Twiss.

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<sup>93</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 17 Nov 1788. RGO 14/48.

<sup>94</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 17 Nov 1788. RGO 14/48.

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Dawes to Maskelyne, 30 May 1789. RGO 14/48.

<sup>96</sup> Benjamin Dawes to Maskelyne, 9 Jun 1789. RGO 14/48.

Benjamin Dawes petitioned Home Secretary William Grenville requesting employment for his son as an engineer or officer of artillery or 'any other permanent post' in the colony. He suggested a salary of five shillings a day, or like his son when asking for income, 'such sum as your Honor shall think proper'.<sup>97</sup> Grenville was willing to oblige and wrote to Phillip recommending Dawes as ideal as an engineer and suggested to Phillip that he be offered the position. If so, Dawes was to be paid at a rank equal to his Marine rank.<sup>98</sup>

Benjamin Dawes and Maskelyne kept up their correspondence over a number of months. Dawes senior later petitioned both Philip Stephens the Secretary of the Admiralty, and Grenville requesting his son be approved leave from the Marines for three to four years on full pay, plus additional remuneration for his other posts. He later told Maskelyne that he had been advised that leave for such a long period was unprecedented, but a favourable decision might be influenced by support from a 'Person of consequence'. It is not known if Maskelyne took the hint, but the available correspondence does not contain any further correspondence between Benjamin Dawes and Maskelyne on that or any other matter.<sup>99</sup>

William Dawes was diligent in advising Maskelyne of the progress of the observatory and the readings he was able to take, although the weather proved a continuing challenge. He found that the timekeeper lost time during cold weather and gained time during heat, and expressed frustration at a series of cloudy nights that prevented him from making his observations, telling Maskelyne 'there cannot be a more unfavourable country for observation'. Still, the instruments were well set in the observatory, the quadrant was fixed to a niche in a rock 'which has never moved since the foundation of the world'.<sup>100</sup>

Frustrations boiled over in a strongly worded outpouring of exasperation and anger sent to Maskelyne in July 1790. It was not possible to spend the time

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<sup>97</sup> Memorial of Benjamin Dawes, 18 Jul 1789. *HRNSW*, Vol. 2, 423.

<sup>98</sup> Grenville to Phillip, 16 Nov 1790. *HRNSW*, Vol.1, Pt 2, 415.

<sup>99</sup> Benjamin Dawes to Maskelyne, 30 May 1789; 9 Jun 1789; 20 Jul 1789; 1 Aug 1789. RGO 14/48.

<sup>100</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 16 Apr 1790. RGO 14/48.

needed in the observatory because of his other duties, Dawes claimed. He considered that 'the very few men of business in this country' were overloaded with duties, adding that apart from the Chaplain he had the heaviest workload. 'I do more real business than any besides in the country' he claimed, adding that a major contributor to his workload was the alleged ineffectiveness of Augustus Alt, the colony's Surveyor-General. But Dawes harshest criticism was of Phillip. In a direct, if indiscreet, series of comments, Dawes claimed that as regards the observatory, Phillip never had 'the business in the least degree, really at heart' [Dawes' emphasis]. Worse, Phillip was 'never without a mask of some kind', but Dawes considered the masks had worn thin and Phillip was simply placing impediments in the way 'actively or passively'. Dawes had heard that Phillip had indicated Dawes would remain in the colony but he had not heard directly from the Governor on that subject and added, 'I think it at least ten to one that I shall return with the marine detachment'.<sup>101</sup>

Having unburdened some of his frustrations, Dawes gave descriptions of the land and environment in the colony. He told Maskelyne he had travelled about fifty-nine miles inland, and described the country he saw as 'middling' with limited good land. On the whole his judgement was damning: 'a more dreary, dismal, barren, inanimated country I believe does not exist any where else in the whole world'. On the expedition Dawes noted, that a party of eight could find only enough game for 'one scanty repast' [his emphasis]. He did not think it would be possible to settle any reasonable number of people within a short radius of the present settlement, and added that the only person who thought differently was Phillip. Finishing his letter with a gibe at Phillip's positive approach, Dawes wrote:

it is not difficult to perceive the occasion of this difference of opinion as everyone here sees that 1500 pounds per annum [Phillip's salary] which must cease on the evacuation of this country has wonderful effects, in this instance in particular.<sup>102</sup>

What Nevil Maskelyne made of this letter is unknown. It suggests that Dawes saw his relationship with Maskelyne to be close enough to allow such an

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<sup>101</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 26 Jul 1790. RGO 14/48.

<sup>102</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 26 Jul 1790. RGO 14/48.

expression of opinion. Throughout his life Dawes had a tendency to be very direct in his communications and this determination not to allow, or at least strongly resist, interference with his responsibilities is seen again in his later dealings with opposition in Sierra Leone and with the Church of England establishment in Antigua.

The final letter from this period of his life was written from HMS *Gorgon* as the vessel neared Spithead after the long return journey. Dawes informed Maskelyne that Captain Parker of the *Gorgon* had care of the instruments belonging to the Board of Longitude and would have them delivered to Maskelyne, but that he hoped to be able to make some final readings and have them compared with William Bayly's clock at the Portsmouth Academy before Parker delivered them.

More importantly, Dawes told Maskelyne that Phillip had 'written against me' to the Secretary of State and the Admiralty, but in a rather sanguine dismissal added 'so that I imagine it will take some little time to clear up that matter'. Dawes' conscience was clear. Finally, he told Maskelyne that although his experience was not totally successful, the observatory had promise, and a properly qualified and committed person would be a success.<sup>103</sup>

However clear he may have thought his conscience, Dawes was at best being naïve. Phillip had good reason to vent his frustrations with Dawes. Apart from the disagreements over the construction of the observatory and the competition with Dawes other duties, Phillip was affronted that Dawes challenged his authority over the punitive expedition. Phillip considered Dawes' attitude a serious breach that would have resulted in a court-martial for insubordination. and regretted that he did not have the power to institute one.<sup>104</sup>

What possibly upset Phillip more was Dawes' involvement in purchasing convict rations. Phillip believed Dawes had not just ignored his clear and concise orders against this, but in doing so had acted against the general good order of the settlement. In an attempt to stop convicts trading their rations for spirits and

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<sup>103</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 8 Jun 1792. RGO 14/48.

<sup>104</sup> Phillip to Grenville, 7 Nov 1791. *HRNSW*, Vol.1 (Pt.2), 543.

other goods, Phillip had banned the purchase of rations from convicts. Dawes had purchased some flour from a convict and when challenged he insisted that the vendor was established as 'baker to the garrison', and in any case his purchase was from the convict's own stores and not his rations. Dawes' responses appear rather weak if not evasive, particularly when it is considered that Ross had previously admonished him for a similar transaction. What becomes apparent for the historian is Dawes' capacity for self-righteousness: he could not accept he had breached any orders, conventions or requirements.<sup>105</sup>

The many interruptions to his study of the skies did not prevent Dawes from maintaining a weather journal that provides detailed climatology for the first three years of European settlement. The journal lists temperature and barometric readings, winds, and general comments on the weather. The records have been described by one historian as 'remarkable...possibly unique in the world at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century'.<sup>106</sup> While there were usually three or four readings each day, it was not uncommon for Dawes to include six readings, every four hours from eight in the morning to eight at night, plus readings at sunrise and sunset. There are occasional gaps when Dawes was away on an expedition or otherwise engaged, but the discipline in maintaining the journal shows rigour and commitment. In one instance when readings had been kept by someone on his behalf he noted in the journal, 'rather doubtful being kept by a friend in my absence'; whether that friend was the ever interested Watkin Tench is impossible to know.<sup>107</sup>

One writer has described Dawes' meteorological activities as evidence of his 'idiosyncratic investigations and ritual activities', a claim that ignores the obvious extension of his astronomical responsibilities and the necessity to maintain regular weather readings if they were to have any scientific value.<sup>108</sup> Dawes understood the importance of recording this new land in the name of

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<sup>105</sup> *HRNSW*, Vol.1, Pt 2, 543-6.

<sup>106</sup> Robert J. McAfee, *Dawes's Meteorological Journal*, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981), 27.

<sup>107</sup> Entry for 2-5 Nov 1788, Dawes' Meteorological Journal, microfiche copies in McAfee, *Dawes's Meteorological Journal*.

<sup>108</sup> Ross Gibson, 'Event-Grammar: the language notebooks of William Dawes', *Meanjin*, 68, 2 (Winter 2009), 91-99.

science and for the benefit of those, such as Nevil Maskelyne who looked on with interest from afar in the imperial metropole.

#### v. Language and questions of character

In his account of the Hawkesbury River expedition with Dawes and others in April 1791, Tench described some of the confusions the colonists had with the indigenous languages.<sup>109</sup> The expedition took place midway during the period that Dawes was compiling his dictionary of the Sydney area language and the presence of Colbee and Boladree in the party would have assisted him in the task as both are acknowledged as contributors to the enterprise.

Dawes' work on recording the language is found in three extant notebooks of observations. Collectively referred to as Dawes' Notebooks the third, Book C, is not in his hand and has been discounted for this discussion. The notebooks have received considerable examination by scholars.<sup>110</sup> In preparing the dictionary of words and phrases, several Aborigines including Colbee, Bennelong and Barangaroo, helped Dawes but a significant number of his entries are sourced from conversations with a young Aboriginal woman, Patyegeerang, with whom Dawes developed a close relationship. Jeremy Steele has established that sixteen Aborigines provided 125 of the identified records, while Patyegeerang was the source of fifty-nine of them.<sup>111</sup> Patyegeerang is not identified as a source in any of the entries in Notebook A, and as they appear to be broadly chronological, it seems that Patyegeerang did not become involved in

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<sup>109</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 230-1.

<sup>110</sup> For consideration of Dawes' notebooks, see for example the work of Jakelin Troy, (Jakelin Troy, *The Sydney Language*. Canberra: Australian Dictionaries Project, AIATSIS, 1994), and Jeremy Macdonald Steele (below.) The notebooks are online at <http://www.williamdawes.org>. The online version is a joint venture between Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Project at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The School holds the original notebooks. I accessed the site on a number of occasions during 2013 and 2014.

<sup>111</sup> Jeremy Macdonald Steele, 'The Aboriginal Language of Sydney. A Partial Reconstruction of the Indigenous Language of Sydney based on the Notebooks of William Dawes of 1790-91, Informed by Other Records of the Sydney and Surrounding Languages to c.1905' (M.A. (Research) thesis, Macquarie University, 2005), 313.

the process until some time in 1791 – Steele suggests ‘about the middle’ of that year.<sup>112</sup>

Very few entries or pages are dated, but from those that are it appears that Dawes commenced recording during November 1790. The last dated entry is 13 November 1791, a few weeks before Dawes left the colony. The commencement of his notebooks in late 1790 suggests that the work pressures he had earlier complained of had eased and he was now able to spend time on this new project. In fact, from August 1790 Dawes was spending more time on expeditions further suggesting that his other responsibilities were under control. Steele believes that Dawes’ interest in recording the language may have been encouraged by the increased frequency of visits by Aborigines to the settlement, which Tench claimed had commenced in November 1790.<sup>113</sup> A number of references to words and individuals suggest that many of the entries, especially those learned from Patyeđerang, were prepared at his accommodation attached to the observatory.

The notebooks reveal much about Dawes, particularly his genuine interest in the local people. Tench, Phillip, King, Collins and Southwell all recorded examples of the language, reflecting in part a natural curiosity for this new land and its inhabitants. Steele observed that King and Southwell recorded the most substantial word lists, both more than Tench.<sup>114</sup> But Dawes took this interest further. He was concerned with language use, with tense, sentence construction and other aspects of basic grammar. He was working on creating a record of the language rather than simple word lists. The fact that at least sixteen different Aborigines supplied him with words and phrases indicates his willingness to interact and his ability to earn a level of confidence from the local people. His ability to participate in successful cross-cultural interactions is seen in greater measure in Sierra Leone and Antigua.

The discovery and subsequent study of Dawes’ notebooks has led to some modern observers finding reasons for concern about his relationship with

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<sup>112</sup> Steele, ‘The Aboriginal Language’, 87.

<sup>113</sup> Tench, *Sydney’s First Four Years*, 192.

<sup>114</sup> Steele, ‘The Aboriginal Language’, 60.

Patyegeerang. The most contentious entries suggest, understandably no doubt, that Patyegeerang spent some nights in Dawes' hut, such as the exchange:

D: why don't you sleep?

P: because of the candle<sup>115</sup>

And earlier:

P: put out the candle Mr D(awes)<sup>116</sup>

Grace Karskens observes that for all the positive information contained in the notebooks they also include 'darker threads'. With Cassandra Pybus, Karskens draws a sensual interpretation from an exchange between Dawes and Patyegeerang regarding the use of her petticoat by another young female Aborigine.<sup>117</sup> After recording the translation of the phrase 'I will hold it up', Dawes gives an example of its usage:

Gonanjulye desiring to wear one of P's petticoats:

I told her it was too long for her; on which she

said 'Gulbanjabaou' which Patye explained as above.<sup>118</sup>

A more benign interpretation is that Gonanjulye, being shorter than Patyegeerang, would simply have had to hold up the petticoat to avoid it dragging on the ground.

Strong criticism of Dawes comes from Cassandra Pybus' reading of the Notebooks. Pybus states 'His [Dawes] transcription of her [Patyegeerang] words to me suggests an unmistakably sexual element in their relationship'.<sup>119</sup> Pybus has her own processes to come to this conclusion, but a number of the comments and inferences she makes in doing so need to be questioned. Pybus states that Dawes was at his hut 'well away from prying eyes' where he 'installed an Aboriginal girl of about 14 or 15'.<sup>120</sup> Of course Dawes' observatory was established well before he commenced his language notebooks or included

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<sup>115</sup> Dawes, Notebook B, 36.

<sup>116</sup> Dawes, Notebook B, 34.

<sup>117</sup> Karskens, *The Colony*, 411-2.

<sup>118</sup> Dawes, Notebook B, 8.

<sup>119</sup> Pybus, 'Not fit for your Protection', 12.1.

<sup>120</sup> Pybus, 'Not fit for your Protection' 12.1. One writer has suggested that Henry Lidgbird Ball, the Captain of HMS *Supply*, 'occupied a cottage next to Dawes's own meteorological observatory'; see Philip Jones, *Ochre and Rust. Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2007), 47.

Patyegeerang as one of his informants. By referring to Patyegeerang's age Pybus is undoubtedly inferring impropriety. Patyegeerang was almost certainly of a young age; she is recorded as wearing a 'barrin', an item of dress that David Collins reported was worn by young women 'until they are grown into women and attached to men'.<sup>121</sup> Sue Thomas has pointed out that the age of consent in Britain at the time was twelve,<sup>122</sup> but this in no way exculpates Dawes when judged by today's standards. However it is a reminder that he lived in a very different time and may not have been judged harshly by his contemporaries.

Pybus suggests that Patyegeerang's presence at the observatory 'could have been the real reason' Elizabeth Macarthur ceased her astronomy lessons with Dawes but this was clearly not the case. Macarthur had visited Dawes to learn astronomy but she had ceased before the records show that Dawes was using Patyegeerang as a source for his language studies.<sup>123</sup>

Pybus also suggested that 'certainly his male contemporaries were unlikely to have believed Dawes was just studying the stars and praying in his seclusion at Observatory Point'.<sup>124</sup> There can be no such certainty. Not one contemporary writer made any comment on Dawes' activities at the observatory other than his involvement in the functions for which it was established. Tench, a man of strong morals, visited Dawes regularly to discuss both his astronomical activities and the progress of his studies of the language, and continued the relationship on the long voyage back to England. Dawes had character flaws many of which caused enmities, but one aspect of his character that continued to his death was the strong moral base that was the bedrock of his faith. His character and actions should speak for themselves at least according to the standards of his own day. As Ross Gibson put it, 'everyone who reads the notebooks make their own decisions' but on the basis of presently available records the true nature of the relationship between Dawes and his young interlocutor remains unknown.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Collins, vol.1, 562.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas, 'A transnational perspective', 199.

<sup>123</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 Mar 1791 quoted in Macarthur Onslow, *Early Records*, 28-9.

<sup>124</sup> Pybus, 'Not Fit for your Protection', 12.1.

<sup>125</sup> Gibson, 'Event Grammar', 97.

Dawes was interested in more than language and endeavoured to understand the Aborigines' spiritual beliefs. He attempted to teach the young Aboriginal girl Abaroo the concepts of Christianity, hoping there would be a two-way knowledge transfer, but to his frustration she was too distracted by 'her levity, and love of play' to be a successful informant or pupil.<sup>126</sup> We learn from Elizabeth Macarthur that Dawes considered the Aborigines 'to have the tradition of the Flood amongst them', while Tench considered spirits influenced them.<sup>127</sup>

The new settlers found the environment of the colony alien and at times difficult to understand. Dawes saw the land through the eyes of a man feeling overburdened with work and frustrated with his conditions. When Dawes wrote to Maskelyne bemoaning the quality of the country, it was during a period when he was struggling with Phillip's demands on his time and meeting his responsibilities to Maskelyne.<sup>128</sup> Dawes told Maskelyne his negative views on the worth of the country emphasising the inability of the country to develop agriculture and sustain a reasonable level of settlement.<sup>129</sup> In his later experiences in Sierra Leone, Dawes had an interest in agriculture from the strictly practical approach of establishing farming and its produce as a basic component of a successful established settlement, and as an opportunity for trade.

Dawes' struggles with Governor Phillip removed any chance of his remaining in New South Wales. Phillip was not prepared to allow Dawes to take up the position of engineer or any other official position unless he apologised for buying provisions from a convict, and his reaction when admonished by Phillip. Dawes apologised for his behaviour but refused to admit he had done anything wrong in purchasing the provisions. That plus his not forgotten response to the punitive expedition was enough, and Dawes sailed from Sydney with the other Marines the following month, never to return.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 280.

<sup>127</sup> Macarthur Onslow, *Early Records*, 38; Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 280.

<sup>128</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 30 Jul 1790. RGO 14/48.

<sup>129</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 26 Jul 1790. RGO 14/48.

<sup>130</sup> *HRNSW*, Vol1, Pt 2, 543-6.

The journey home was uneventful, giving the men time to contemplate their experiences of the new world left behind. They had yet to discover how those experiences would influence their later lives in a variety of direct and indirect ways.

## Chapter 3

### Sierra Leone, Mathematics and Missionaries

#### i. Sierra Leone: first period (September 1792 to March 1794)

Events moved quickly for William Dawes on his return to England. Within a month he had met Rev. John Newton, the elder statesman of the evangelical wing of the Church of England, courtesy of his letter of introduction from Rev. Richard Johnson.<sup>131</sup> Johnson had become a spiritual mentor to Dawes while in New South Wales, both taking an active interest in ‘improving’ the local indigenous population. Newton was by this time long established as an elder of the Evangelicals and was closely linked to other Evangelical clergymen through the Eclectic Society,<sup>132</sup> and to the leading Evangelical laymen through his connections with William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, both key individuals during Dawes’ involvement with the Sierra Leone Company.<sup>133</sup> Henry Thornton was Chairman of the company and had previously filled the same role in the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor, the driving force behind the first but unsuccessful colony at Sierra Leone.

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<sup>131</sup> Rev. John Newton to Rev. Richard Johnson, 19 Jul 1792. *HRNSW*, Vol. 2, 473. Johnson owed his appointment as chaplain of the colony to Newton, who promoted him to Prime Minister William Pitt through his intermediaries William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton. Pitt later thanked his friend Wilberforce for obtaining a chaplain for the colony. (Pitt to Wilberforce, 23 Sept 1786, in A.M. Wilberforce (ed), *Private Papers of William Wilberforce* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1897), 33.

<sup>132</sup> The Society was established in 1783 by a group of Evangelical clergy. It was formed as a discussion group ‘for mutual religious intercourse and improvement, and for the investigation of religious truth. (John H. Pratt (ed), *Eclectic Notes; or, Notes of discussions on Religious Topics at the Meetings of the Eclectic Society, London during the years 1798-1814* (London: 1865), 1.) The group included Revs. Thomas Scott, Josiah Pratt and John Venn who all became important in Dawes’ life.

<sup>133</sup> The word ‘evangelical’ covers Protestant groups pursuing a Bible based Christianity with an emphasis on salvation. The lower case ‘evangelical’ refers to the broad group of clergy and lay people that included Methodists and other Dissenters, whereas ‘Evangelical’ refers to the evangelical wing of the Church of England.

At the same time, Dawes was being introduced to Wilberforce and Thornton via another source. Shortly after his arrival in Portsmouth Dawes was contacted by John Lowes the former assistant surgeon on HMS *Sirius*. Lowes, a Swedenborgian, had returned to England with George Worgan and the other members of *Sirius*' complement after it was wrecked at Norfolk Island. In accord with the beliefs of Swedenborg and his followers, he had formed a strong interest in the various proposals for the settlement of Sierra Leone, and had become an employee of the newly formed Sierra Leone Company.<sup>134</sup>

Lowes had obviously spoken to his new employers about Dawes and in contacting him, Lowes made it clear that the directors of the Sierra Leone Company were keen for him to join the enterprise. Dawes was hesitant, telling Lowes he was too busy to travel to London to meet the Directors. Some ten days later he received another letter from Lowes who had travelled down to Portsmouth with a brief to recruit Dawes for the company. This visit was enough to convince Dawes to engage in discussions, and after meeting in London with Thornton and another director, Samuel Parker, he agreed to accept appointment to the new governing structure the Company had created for the young colony. Dawes landed in Sierra Leone in mid September 1792 as a member of the new Council and second to the Governor, John Clarkson. This was just three months after arriving home from New South Wales.<sup>135</sup>

The Directors of the Sierra Leone Company knew exactly what sort of man they were sending to the colony. In introducing Dawes to John Clarkson, Henry Thornton described him as 'cool, correct and sensible', while Wilberforce referred to Dawes' period in New South Wales where he was 'the avowed friend of Religion & good order in the midst of a dissolute and depraved Society'.<sup>136</sup> Not all felt the same way. Anna Maria Falconbridge, wife of Alexander

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<sup>134</sup> A concise description of Swedenborgian ideas about Africa and Africans can be found in Deirdre Coleman, *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery*, Cambridge, 2005.

<sup>135</sup> Evidence of William Dawes. Minutes of Evidence taken on the Second Reading of the Bill, 'An Act to prohibit the Trading for Slaves on the Coast of Africa, within certain Limits', 17 Jun 1799. House of Lords Sessional Papers 1714-1805, Vol. 3, 254, in House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk>.

<sup>136</sup> Comments cited in Coleman, *Romantic Colonization*, 122, 185.

Falconbridge, the Company's agent in Sierra Leone, thought that a Marine officer, with 'all the prejudices of a rigid military education' made more severe by having served in a convict colony, could not have the proper disposition to be successful in Sierra Leone.<sup>137</sup> But the colony under Governor Clarkson was having difficulties that seemed beyond Clarkson's skills to rectify, and was in danger of drifting away from the Company's goals. The Directors of the Company hoped that Dawes' appointment would provide a counter balance and avoid more drastic measures with Clarkson's position. A difficulty for the Directors was the sensitive matter that Clarkson was the brother of Thomas Clarkson, a fellow Director and leading abolitionist.

Like many experiments, the Sierra Leone project was subject to regular adjustment as it sought to create a settlement providing a safe, secure and financially successful enterprise for its investors and governors, as well as its inhabitants.<sup>138</sup> The Sierra Leone settlement was intended to prove that Africans could prosper and develop meaningful Christian lives, albeit under the firm guidance and counsel of those supposedly better equipped to do so. At the time Dawes became involved in the experiment, the directors of the Sierra Leone Company were providing that firm guidance and counsel.

The first experiment was a complete failure. The 'Province of Freedom', established by the leading abolitionist Granville Sharp was to be a settlement founded on a self-governing structure as a refuge for the large London population of poor blacks. In one of the coincidences of empire building the fleet to sail for Sierra Leone was being put together at Portsmouth at the same time as the First Fleet.<sup>139</sup> When Anna Maria Falconbridge was at Portsmouth

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<sup>137</sup> Deirdre Coleman (ed), *Maiden Voyages and Infant Colonies. Two Women's Travel Narratives of the 1790s*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 113.

<sup>138</sup> The most comprehensive early history of Sierra Leone is still to be found in Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). Another worthwhile history is J. Peterson, *Province of Freedom. A History of Sierra Leone, 1787-1870* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

<sup>139</sup> The parallels between the settlements at Sierra Leone and New South Wales have been explored by a number of academics, notably Deidre Coleman, *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery*, Cambridge 2005; Emma Christopher, *A Merciless Place: The lost story of Britain's convict disaster in Africa and how it led to the settlement of Australia*, Crows Nest, 2010; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*.

waiting to sail to Sierra Leone, she commented on the presence of another group of ships 'with convicts for Botany Bay'.<sup>140</sup> The settlers, their numbers supplemented by whites seeking their fortune, had arrived in Sierra Leone in May 1787, but by the end of the following year, only 130 of the original 377 remained, their numbers depleted by disease and desertion. A year later, in December 1789, the local Temne people destroyed what remained of the settlement.<sup>141</sup>

The second experiment commenced in May 1791 with the incorporation of the Sierra Leone Company. The Company started life as the St. George's Bay Company, under the leadership of Sharp in early 1790 and intended principally to undertake trade in the region. In these activities it came up against significant opposition from existing traders, especially those involved in the slave trade, a conflict that would have ongoing repercussions for the new Company and its local officials.

The challenges that Dawes and Zachary Macaulay, his fellow Council member, were later to face in the colony soon become apparent. Many of the problems were the result of promises made to the settlers that could not be fulfilled; the expectations of the settlers that did not and could not accord with the intentions of the directors of the company; and a general ignorance and lack of experience in the management of a colony, especially a colony in Africa that had to both compete and cooperate with the intricately structured indigenous peoples and comprehend the clash of cultures that eventuated. This was a privately organised colony incorporated by its own Act of Parliament with the support of but not controlled by the government. Its directors had no qualifications for the role beyond banking, business, and belief. The new colonisers also had to

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<sup>140</sup> This was the Third Fleet to New South Wales. Anna Maria Falconbridge, *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone During the Years 1791-1792-1793*, Christopher Fyfe (ed), (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2000 (1794)), 15. Anna Maria Falconbridge's letters and journal were published in 1794 as *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone during the years 1791-1792-1793*. Both Christopher Fyfe and Deidre Coleman have re-published the work with editorial comment and notes. I have used Christopher Fyfe's work as a source. Coleman's work is *Maiden Voyages*.

<sup>141</sup> Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, 23.

come to grips with the powerful and well-established slave trading operations that had been in place decades before their arrival.

On top of all this were the confused priorities of the Sierra Leone Company itself. What was to be the priority – freedom for slaves, trade and commerce, or spreading Christianity? All three were important to the directors and proprietors of the Sierra Leone Company, but they quickly discovered these aims could not work with equal emphasis and commerce became the dominant purpose. But the proprietors of the Company were probably always expecting profit. The Act establishing the Company referred only to trade and commerce as its purpose, and despite the dominance of Evangelicals amongst its directors and proprietors, commerce remained the driving force. It needed to be: not only did the region promise a return for the investors, profits would also allow the continued funding of the settlement's other goal of providing a model colony for former slaves in their original home.

The newly structured company found a source of settlers amongst a group of former slaves who became known as the 'Nova Scotians'. The British North American province of Nova Scotia had become a refuge for many loyalists who had been forced or had chosen to leave the former American colonies at the end of the American war. Importantly for the directors of the Sierra Leone Company, Nova Scotia had also become a place of refuge for former slaves, many having joined the British forces during the war. For them, Nova Scotia was a hard refuge. The extreme winters caused much physical suffering, but they also found that they remained second-class citizens. As former members of the armed forces they were entitled to grants of land, but they had to compete with white loyalists who had been forced to leave large landholdings in the former colonies claiming and receiving preference.<sup>142</sup> Lack of access to land of their own meant many found themselves in labouring positions that were little different from their former lives.

In early 1791, Thomas Peters, a self appointed delegate of the Nova Scotians, travelled to London to seek redress and support from the British government. Peters met Granville Sharp, who in turn presented the case to both his

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<sup>142</sup> Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*, 31.

colleagues at the Sierra Leone Company and the government. For Henry Thornton the Nova Scotians were the right settlers for the new colony. They were former slaves free to return to their roots and were mostly Christians, although predominantly Methodists, Baptists or followers of a smaller evangelical society, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion; and they were anxious to own and develop land. These qualities met most of the Company's moral aims and hopefully would prove that slaves, once liberated, could become hard-working, Christian subjects. The British government agreed to fund the cost of transporting all who wished to go to Africa, as their departure would also solve the problem of rising social tensions in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and at the same time hopefully ease the moral conscience of the government. This resulted in one of the most difficult issues that would confront William Dawes and other governors for the duration of the Company's administration of the colony – the rights to land.

The Sierra Leone Company sent John Clarkson, a naval lieutenant and younger brother of Company director Thomas Clarkson, to Nova Scotia to arrange the recruitment of settlers and organise their passage to Sierra Leone. At various church meetings around Nova Scotia, Clarkson announced the terms offered by the Company for settlement in the new colony. Settlers would receive a fixed land entitlement of twenty acres for each man, plus ten acres for a wife and five for each child.<sup>143</sup> The land was to be free of any ongoing charges except for rates to provide schools and maintain the sick and poor.<sup>144</sup> But Clarkson, who under direct questioning had promised the land would be free, was not in a position to do so. This was definitely not the intention of the Company. The directors planned to charge quit rents for the land as a continuing source of revenue. This was clearly stated as the first item of revenue in their 1791 report to the Company.<sup>145</sup> Clarkson would later claim that he was never aware of the Company's intentions, and it is unclear where the communications between the directors and Clarkson broke down. However, the Nova Scotians arrived in Sierra Leone at the end of February and early March 1792 expecting fixed land grants without of charges.

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<sup>143</sup> Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*, 47.

<sup>144</sup> Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*, 34.

<sup>145</sup> *Substance of the Report Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, 19 October 1791*, 53.

Before recruiting the Nova Scotian settlers, the directors received advice from its agent in Sierra Leone, Alexander Falconbridge, who encouraged them to believe that the region of the former Province of Freedom was suitable for agriculture and provided good opportunities for trade.<sup>146</sup> They also relied on a recent publication by a naval officer, Lieutenant John Matthews, and feedback from Granville Sharp.<sup>147</sup> Matthews had published an account of his time in Sierra Leone describing the region as providing arable land as good as that found in the West Indies, and providing good quality timber and other natural sources of food and income. If Matthews failed to describe a veritable Eden, he at least described a land that could become Eden in short time.<sup>148</sup> To modern eyes the quality of the directors' research was extremely limited and displayed a lack of commercial acumen, however at that time it was probably as reliable as circumstances allowed. They did at least seek advice from Falconbridge who had been sent to Sierra Leone specifically for information and advice, although the quality of his report was tempered by his limited experience, his recent years being spent as surgeon on slave trading vessels, and he had a reputation for excessive drinking. Still, Falconbridge was the one person connected to the Company who had the most experience of that part of the African coast. It did not take long before the directors were forced to admit that reliance on Matthews and his reports was unwise, as it became a significant contributor to the ongoing difficulties of the settlement.<sup>149</sup>

William Dawes arrived in Sierra Leone in September 1792 as the senior member of a two member Council appointed to assist Governor John Clarkson. The second member of the Council, Zachary Macaulay, arrived in January 1793. Macaulay would be part of Dawes' life for most of the remainder of his days. Macaulay, a Scot, came to Sierra Leone aged just twenty-four, having been employed on a Jamaica plantation worked by slaves. While Anna Maria Falconbridge decided this made him completely unsuitable to assist in

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<sup>146</sup> *Substance of the Report, 1791, 29.*

<sup>147</sup> *Substance of the Report, 1791, 12.*

<sup>148</sup> Lieutenant John Matthews, *A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone*, London, 1788. In a chapter that discusses his anti-slavery attitude, Matthews draws a comparison between Africans sold into slavery and 'the English felon' sent to Botany Bay. The vast distances meant both would never return home.

<sup>149</sup> *Substance of the Report, 1794, 15-16.*

governing a colony 'founded on the principles of Freedom', Macaulay had in fact left Jamaica horrified at what he had experienced.<sup>150</sup> He was well connected as the brother-in law of Thomas Babington, a member of the Clapham Sect and a close friend and mentor of William Wilberforce. After Sierra Leone, Macaulay continued the anti-slavery fight from England and became an influential figure in the Church Missionary Society and long time editor of the *Anti Slavery Monthly Reporter*.

Dawes arrived in a colony already under significant strain. The Nova Scotians were expressing frustration with the lack of progress in allotting land, their frustrations compounded by much of the apparent good arable land being reserved for the local Temne people. Allotments were not commenced until November 1792 and even then Clarkson had to persuade the settlers to accept a fifth of what was originally promised.<sup>151</sup>

In 1792 Clarkson returned to Britain to discuss with the directors the frustrations he had with their perceived lack of interest in the welfare of the Nova Scotians and what he saw as their lack of understanding and support given the difficulties in establishing the colony. Before departing Sierra Leone he spent considerable time encouraging the colonists to accept Dawes and respect his authority, as he would act as Governor during Clarkson's absence. To this point the Nova Scotians had never taken to Dawes, finding him austere and cool, probably a correct reading of his personality or at least his official one. His personality was almost the opposite of Clarkson who had become regarded for his paternalistic attitude and concern for the colonists' welfare. This became a source of the tensions between Clarkson and the directors who believed Clarkson was placing the interests of the colonists above those of the Company. On his return to Britain, the directors found the solution to their disagreements with Clarkson was to dismiss him and install Dawes as Governor. Christopher Fyfe comments that the directors acted after receiving advice from Dawes and Macaulay that their system of firm government was having greater success than Clarkson's style of 'persuasion and promise'.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 108.

<sup>151</sup> Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*, 47.

<sup>152</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 126.

The problem was emerging that the Company's idea of greater success did not accord with the understanding of the Nova Scotian settlers. Shortly after, Clarkson's brother Thomas Clarkson resigned as a Director of the company.<sup>153</sup>

Dawes now began to implement what he saw as the Company's priorities. The allotment of land was delayed as Dawes transferred resources to building a fort at Freetown, experience he had gained in New South Wales, and he and Macaulay began concentrating on developing relations with the local tribes to enable the growth of trade, and negotiating with them to increase the Company's landholdings to allow for better opportunities for agricultural development. Dawes' activities in promoting trade were acknowledged in 1794 when the Company reported that he and his Council had 'followed up the orders sent out on this subject with great spirit'.<sup>154</sup>

The Nova Scotians grew aggrieved at the lack of interest in their needs, and relations with Dawes deteriorated to the point where a petition was drawn up and taken to London complaining of his oppression, and citing examples of price rises at the Company store and the watering of the rum supply.<sup>155</sup> After news arrived of the execution of Louis XVI in France, some settlers went so far as threatening Dawes with a similar fate.<sup>156</sup> As attentive to the Company's interest as he apparently was, Dawes could have been more conscious of the position of the Nova Scotians. They had already experienced the oppression of slavery, had been treated as second-class citizens in Nova Scotia and now, in what was to be their own province of freedom, saw themselves being no better off than before. They knew enough and had experience enough to be aware of their rights and Dawes could have eased tensions by displaying a greater understanding of their concerns. But he was first and foremost a servant of the Company and he considered that the directors well understood conditions in the colony.

One of Dawes' principal detractors was Anna Maria Falconbridge. Her husband's problems with alcohol led to his dismissal and subsequent death,

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<sup>153</sup> Hugh Brogan, 'Clarkson, Thomas (1760-1846)', *ODNB Online*.

<sup>154</sup> *Substance of a Report* 1794, 91.

<sup>155</sup> Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*, 51.

<sup>156</sup> Fyfe, *Sierra Leone*, 51.

and his widow's apparent lack of compensation led to her constant criticism of the Company and its employees, Dawes particularly. After her husband's death Mrs Falconbridge quickly married Isaac DuBois, another Company employee who also had difficulties with his employers. Mrs Falconbridge did not like William Dawes. Apart from his 'rigid military education' she considered his manner was exacerbated by his time at Botany Bay where 'no doubt it is necessary for gentlemen to observe an awful severity in their looks and actions'.<sup>157</sup> Later, she cited the settlers in support of her opinion writing 'Mr Dawes is almost universally disliked'.<sup>158</sup>

And disliked he was. Apart from the reference to the execution of the King of France, Falconbridge also recorded a meeting between Dawes and the settlers that deteriorated to the point where Dawes threatened to leave the colony if he did not have cooperation. The response was immediate 'Go! go! go! we do not want you here, we cannot get a worse after you'. Dawes' 'mortified' reaction was such that it even softened Falconbridge sufficiently that she 'could not help feeling for him'.<sup>159</sup> In the eyes of the Nova Scotians, Dawes could never compare to his predecessor John Clarkson. Some recalled Clarkson was like 'Mosis [sic] and Joshua was bringing the Children of Esaral [sic] to the promise land'.<sup>160</sup>

Still, as we have seen, he had the support of the Company and he was confident he was fulfilling his duties to the Company. Wilberforce certainly thought so. Writing to Henry Dundas, then Secretary for War, he commented:

It is impossible for me to speak in too high terms of his conduct in Africa. I don't believe there is in the world a more solid, honest, indefatigable man more full of resources and common-sense.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 100.

<sup>158</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 104.

<sup>159</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 112.

<sup>160</sup> Christopher Fyfe (ed), *"Our Children Free and Happy": Letters from Black Settlers in Africa in the 1790s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 50.

<sup>161</sup> Wilberforce to Dundas, 2 Aug 1794. *HRNSW*, vol.2, 246.

## ii. Sierra Leone: second period (May 1795 to March 1796)

Dawes was a regular victim of fever, and returned to Britain at the end of March 1794 to regain his strength, leaving Zachary Macaulay as Acting Governor. In Britain he found time to marry Judith Rutter in May but no more is known about this period of his life in England. Their first child, daughter Judith, was born in September 1795 while Dawes was in Sierra Leone having returned in May of that year, where he found the colony devastated after being raided by French naval vessels in September 1794.

The French ships were manned by the same type of revolutionary sailors who, as we shall see, disgusted Watkin Tench during his period as a prisoner of war in France. John Lowes was shocked to see such a 'ragged, lawless, set of rascals' whose sole intention was to destroy and loot the establishment at Freetown.<sup>162</sup> The directors of the Company reported to its proprietors details of the destruction that appeared to have been almost total, including the contents of every building occupied by Company employees and the contents of the town's church. The Directors' report also disclosed the involvement of two American slave traders who found the attack an opportunity to seek some revenge for the negative impact the Company was having on the slave trade in the region. It did not help the colony that a Company vessel arrived from England at the time of the French occupation and its cargo of trade goods and supplies were also taken. The directors estimated losses at over £40,000 and went on to report that Dawes, having heard of the 'tumult', had volunteered to return to the colony driven by 'his zeal in the cause'.<sup>163</sup>

The trauma of the French attack combined with bouts of fever caused Macaulay to leave Sierra Leone shortly after Dawes returned. In order to observe the slave trade first hand, Macaulay travelled to England via the West Indies on a slave ship owned by Watkin Tench's cousin, John Tarleton.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Coleman, *Romantic Colonization*, 127.

<sup>163</sup> *Substance of the Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 26 February 1795, 27.

<sup>164</sup> Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son, Architects of Imperial Britain*. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2012), 33.

The colony was in a parlous state after the French attack, the situation made worse by the settlers taking the view that the attack represented retribution on the Company for its treatment of them. Dawes' second period in Sierra Leone was spent in dealing with this increased hostility while endeavouring to rebuild. He set out to improve the food supply and develop agricultural conditions and practices and introduced a reward system by awarding premiums (prizes) for improvements in land clearing and cultivation and in the breeding of cattle, mirroring similar premiums being awarded by the newly formed Cornwall Agricultural Society, an organisation that, as we shall see, played an important part in George Worgan's life as a farmer.<sup>165</sup> Physical recovery was assisted when the Company sent out additional stores and equipment to rebuild Company buildings and other infrastructure.

Yet the same issues remained – Nova Scotian dissatisfaction, simmering tensions with the local people and balancing relations with visiting slavers. The large slave factory at Bance Island was upriver from Freetown, and it became a matter of pragmatism to maintain relations between the slave-free colony and the slave trade enterprise. Besides, whatever the Sierra Leone Company and its employees may have thought, the slave trade was still legal and the principle of property rights still applied to slaves.

There was a fine line to tread when it came to dealing with the local slavers. The Bance Island factory was a necessary trading partner for local supplies, often being better resourced than the colony. Dealing with slavers upset the settlers, while attempts to treat them fairly with Europeans caused equal upset. Macaulay angered the captain of a visiting vessel when he had one of its sailors flogged for stealing a duck owned by a settler. Not only did the ship's captain berate Macaulay but he was also told by the captain of a visiting Royal Naval vessel that his actions were illegal – as they may have been. Anna Maria Falconbridge judged the incident as 'one of the most atrocious infringements on the liberty of British subjects'.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Sierra Leone Council Minutes, 19 May 1795. TNA CO 270/3.

<sup>166</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 124.

Dawes recognised the need for pragmatism in dealing with slave traders. Purchasing supplies from a French vessel, he found the captain would only accept payment in slaves. To overcome direct dealing, Dawes drew a bill on the operator at Bance Island who in turn settled by paying the ship's captain in slaves as required. Anna Maria Falconbridge thought this infringed on the Sierra Leone Company Act that prohibited dealing 'directly or indirectly' in traffic in slaves.<sup>167</sup> She may have been correct, and Dawes' ability to reconcile his sometimes dubious actions would cause trouble later. During this period he continued to be dogged by ill health that was not helped by the magnitude of the task he was dealing with, and in March 1796 after ten months he resigned as Governor and returned to England.

### iii. Interlude: Christ's Hospital

Dawes' son William Rutter Dawes was born in December 1797, but no other details of his life during this period are known until he was appointed Master of the Royal Mathematical School within Christ's Hospital in late January 1799, succeeding the recently deceased William Wales who had held the position for twenty-five years.

The Royal Mathematical School was established in 1673, largely through the efforts of Samuel Pepys, the renowned naval administrator of the seventeenth century. The school was intended to instruct young boys in navigational skills in preparation for a life at sea in both the navy and merchant marine. The idea for the school won the immediate support of the Duke of York, then Lord High Admiral, and in turn that of his brother Charles II who issued the school's Royal Patent in August 1673.<sup>168</sup> The school was to be limited to forty pupils who would be instructed in 'the art of Arithmatique and Navigacon' until age sixteen when they would be examined at Trinity House before assignment as apprentices to ships masters in the merchant trade or to the Navy.<sup>169</sup> To

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<sup>167</sup> Falconbridge, *Narrative*, 106.

<sup>168</sup> N. Plumley, 'The Royal Mathematical School within Christ's Hospital', *Vistas in Astronomy*, Vol.20 (1976), 52.

<sup>169</sup> Alston Kennerley & Percy Seymour, 'Aids to the Teaching of Nautical Astronomy and its History from 1600', *Paedagogica Historica*, 36, No.1 (2000), 165. At the time, Trinity House's functions included the examination and

emphasise the importance of the school, the pupils were presented at Court each year until the practice was discontinued during the illness of George III.<sup>170</sup>

The school initially benefited from the close involvement of leading mathematicians and astronomers of the period including Sir Isaac Newton, John Flamsteed the first Astronomer Royal, and his successor Edmond Halley, but fell into a period of decline during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The appointment of Wales as Master in 1775 restored and enhanced the school's reputation, a reputation maintained by Dawes during his brief period as Master. A modern history of the school has described Dawes' appointment as 'distinguished' and that he brought practical experience to the role, building on the vast experience and knowledge of his predecessor.<sup>171</sup>

Dawes was appointed Master at a meeting of the Council of Governors of Christ's Hospital on 25 January 1799. Again the minutes of the meeting reveal a great deal of the importance of influential connections for a man like Dawes and his ability to use them. There were four candidates for the position and Dawes was elected by a substantial margin. The meeting saw an unusually high turnout of Governors and familiar names present included Henry and Samuel Thornton, both known to Dawes from his involvement in the Sierra Leone Company. He also had the benefit of being recommended by Nevil Maskelyne and being known to Sir Joseph Banks.<sup>172</sup>

As Master, Dawes' duties were intense. In addition to the requirement that ten boys be available for sea service each year, he was also to teach mathematics to boys from the Hospital's Grammar School who were preparing for university. His curriculum included arithmetic; navigation (which involved Euclidian geometry and trigonometry); methods for calculating the time of tides; calculation of longitude by reference to the moon; sun and the ship's clock; and

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regulation of ships' masters in the merchant service. It operated under Royal Charter.

<sup>170</sup> William Trollope, *A History of the Royal Foundation of Christ's Hospital*, (London: William Pickering, 1834), 93.

<sup>171</sup> Plumley, 'The Royal Mathematical School', 57.

<sup>172</sup> Minutes of the Council of Governors of Christ's Hospital, 25 Jan 1799, Christ's Hospital archives, MS 12806/13.

the use of navigational instruments.<sup>173</sup> For fulfilling these responsibilities he was paid an annual salary of £170, increased to £200 in January 1800.<sup>174</sup>

The previous month Dawes had written to the Board of Longitude seeking remuneration for his work in New South Wales. He pointed out that on the voyage home on HMS *Gorgon* he had discovered and rectified errors in the ship's observations that 'might have been attended with the most fatal consequences to the ship and all on board'. The Board subsequently agreed to a once only payment of £100.<sup>175</sup>

After just two years in the position, Dawes resigned. In his letter of resignation to the Board of Governors he gave as his reason 'a very peculiar and pressing occurrence', emphasising that only 'very uncommon circumstances' could induce him to resign, but did not elaborate further.<sup>176</sup> He was possibly referring to his domestic situation as his wife Judith had died three months earlier, two weeks after the birth of their third child John Macaulay Dawes.

#### iv. House of Lords June 1799

Dawes interrupted his duties at the Royal Mathematical School when he was called upon to give evidence before the House of Lords in support of a Bill designed to prohibit slave trading on part of the west coast of Africa. By restricting the prohibition to just a specific area, Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists, well aware of the level of opposition to abolition, were hoping to achieve an interim measure that may have been more acceptable to the supporters of the trade.

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<sup>173</sup> Royal Mathematical School Regulations for Management. Christ's Hospital archives, MS 12878/002.

<sup>174</sup> Minutes of the Council of Governors of Christ's Hospital, 8 Jan 1800, Christ's Hospital archives, MS 12806/13.

<sup>175</sup> Dawes to Board of Longitude, 6 Dec 1799. RGO 14/11, ff.117-8; Board of Longitude minutes 1 Mar 1800, RGO 14/6.

<sup>176</sup> Dawes to Council of Governors, 6 Nov 1800 reproduced in Minutes of the Council of Governors of Christ's Hospital, 7 Nov 1800, Christ's Hospital archives, MS 12806/13.

Before giving their evidence, Dawes and Zachary Macaulay dined with William Wilberforce to discuss the hearing and undoubtedly the range of evidence to be considered.<sup>177</sup> Dawes appeared before the House over three continuous days from 17 June 1799.<sup>178</sup> The questions were wide ranging and covered most aspects of the Sierra Leone colony's activities, particularly in relation to trade. Counsel for the Bill's opponents was determined to prove that the Sierra Leone Company's trading opportunities relied on the general trade opportunities afforded by an active slave trade, and establishing that a critical mass was necessary for the surrounding African chiefs to continue trading with the colony. This is not the place to discuss the economic validity of such arguments, but in presenting their case the opponents' questioning of Dawes was probing and somewhat relentless, but Dawes remained firm in his belief that the abolition of the slave trade in the region would enhance the Company's trading opportunities.<sup>179</sup>

Some aspects of Dawes' evidence reveal either a lack of attention to administrative detail or a deliberate attempt to be non-committal. Dawes was unsure of the population of the colony or the mix of Nova Scotian settlers and local natives. He was equally vague about the amount of land under cultivation by the Company's servants or the quantity of rice produced during his period as Governor and he had no idea if the value of the Company's exports to Britain covered the costs involved, considering such matters to be within the remit of the Company's commercial agent.<sup>180</sup> These unconvincing responses were a cause of considerable irritation for counsel acting for the Bill's opponents.

Where Dawes was adamant was in his attitude towards the Nova Scotian settlers. He did not think they had made a sufficient contribution to repay the

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<sup>177</sup> William Wilberforce diary entry, 31 May 1799 quoted in R.I. & S. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, Vol. 1, (London 1838), 337.

<sup>178</sup> Dawes' verbatim evidence is found at: House of Lords Papers, 28 May 1799, Minutes of evidence taken on the second reading of the Bill, 'An Act to prohibit the Trading for slaves on the coast of Africa within certain limits', (House of Lords) House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk>. Accessed 17 Mar 2013. The evidence of Zachary Macaulay and others is found at the same source.

<sup>179</sup> House of Lords, 151.

<sup>180</sup> House of Lords, 161-3.

Company's investment in their settlement, and thought that having once been slaves they might have been used to hard work. But he was aware of the 'considerable' dissatisfaction amongst the settlers because of 'their ignorance and misapprehension of the measures which were taken with them'<sup>181</sup>, and said he and others believed the Nova Scotians thought the Company would support them 'almost gratuitously'<sup>182</sup>. Dawes did not think it necessary to raise the issue at the core of the settler's dissatisfaction: the unfulfilled (and unauthorised) promises John Clarkson made to them before they agreed to travel to Sierra Leone.

Dawes told the House that he returned to Sierra Leone in May 1795 after a year's absence in response to 'a tumult in the colony'. The so-called tumult was a brief uprising by the Nova Scotian settlers reacting to their situation and some perceived insults by a visiting British slave trader. Dawes, to the amazement of his interrogator, stated that on returning to the colony he did not bother to acquaint himself with the causes of the disturbance, deciding that as matters had settled by the time he arrived, investigation was unnecessary<sup>183</sup>. He rather offhandedly suggested that he may have looked at the relevant Council minutes but he could not remember. This may suggest a casual attitude to his responsibilities, but also confirms his general single mindedness of character. As far as Dawes was concerned there was no need to acquaint himself with the details of the disturbance, it had involved the Nova Scotians and as he, and most of his colleagues, saw them as a continuing source of trouble, no further enquiry was considered necessary.

Zachary Macaulay appeared a week later. It is instructive to compare his evidence with that of his colleague.<sup>184</sup> Dawes had at times appeared to be evasive, brief and uninterested in many of the administrative matters put to him, while Macaulay was positive, precise and expansive in his responses. The members of the House of Lords learnt considerably more of the conduct of the colony's affairs from Macaulay than they had from Dawes. The House's proceedings also reveal Dawes' lack of general political awareness and a

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<sup>181</sup> House of Lords, 159.

<sup>182</sup> House of Lords, 176.

<sup>183</sup> House of Lords, 175-6.

<sup>184</sup> House of Lords, 233 and following.

general unwillingness to compromise, character traits that appear throughout his life. Writing in his diary, Wilberforce noted 'Dawes's evidence middling, but the lawyers charmed with his honesty'.<sup>185</sup>

The Bill was put to the vote in early July 1799 and unsurprisingly, given the strength of opposition, was lost. Lord Grenville, then Leader of the House of Lords and Foreign Secretary, as the leading proponent for the Bill, put his case strongly but did not have the necessary numbers of supporters. The leader of the opposition to the Bill was the Duke of Clarence (later King William IV), brother to King George III, who in a two-hour speech convinced the majority of the Lords to dismiss the Bill. Clarence's main point was that the proponents of the Bill were intent on total abolition of the slave trade, thus removing 'a lucrative commerce' from many businessmen and 'giving up' £3 million in revenue from the West Indies trade, most of which would flow to other countries.<sup>186</sup> The negative impact of abolition on trade was a major theme in the arguments of the pro-slavery supporters, and received nodding understanding from many in the British establishment.

#### v. Sierra Leone: third period (January 1801 to February 1803)

Dawes returned for his third and final term as Governor at the commencement of 1801, the position being filled in the interim by Zachary Macaulay followed by Thomas Ludlam. On the face of it, the regular turnover of governors may well have contributed to the general sense of unrest in the colony, but between them Dawes and Macaulay governed for over eight years, and both had a clear understanding of and commitment to implementing the policies of the Sierra Leone Company.

Dawes found the colony much as he left it. The Nova Scotians were still a disruptive force and had even broken out in violence during Ludlam's brief tenure as Governor, but the main difference was the six hundred Maroons who

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<sup>185</sup> William Wilberforce, diary entry 24 Jun 1799, quoted in *The Life of William Wilberforce*, 339.

<sup>186</sup> The final debate was well reported in *The Times*, even if the earlier evidence of Dawes and his colleagues was simply noted as 'evidence from a former Governor'. *The Times*, 6 Jul 1799.

had arrived in the colony from Nova Scotia in September 1800. The Maroons, descendants of African slaves, came from Jamaica where they had been engaged in rebellion against the British colonial government. They were sent as a body to Nova Scotia, but finding the climate too cold had regularly requested removal to warmer conditions. Henry Thornton and his fellow directors of the Sierra Leone Company recognised an opportunity to solve a difficult situation for the British government and the administration in Nova Scotia by offering to settle them in the colony and obtain financial support in return.<sup>187</sup> Both the Company and its officials in Sierra Leone soon found the Maroons more acceptable settlers given their apparent intention to be industrious and contented members of the colony, in contrast to the original Nova Scotian settlers still seen as troublesome in their demands and perceived lack of application to improve their own conditions.<sup>188</sup> As a counter balance to the Nova Scotians the Maroons provided some stability. William Wilberforce summed up the general view of the Nova Scotians when he wrote to Henry Dundas, then Secretary of State for War, that they 'have made the worst possible subjects, as thorough Jacobins as if they had been trained and educated in Paris'.<sup>189</sup>

This time Dawes' problems came from the local Temne people. Tensions over land had existed between the Company and the Temne since Clarkson's arrival in 1792, but were exacerbated by the arrival of some British troops in Freetown and the construction of Dawes' new fort. The Temne made a surprise attack on Freetown and the fort in November 1801, resulting in the death of a number of settlers and Dawes was wounded during the altercation. The report of the incident noted his wounds were to the 'shoulder and breast' but that he was one of those 'already recovered or likely to recover'.<sup>190</sup> The matter was ended by the arrival of settlers from out of town and the fortuitous arrival of a passing

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<sup>187</sup> Michael J. Turner, 'The Limits of Abolition: Government, Saints and the "African Question", c. 1780-1820', *The English Historical Review*, Vol.112, No.446 (Apr 1997), 329.

<sup>188</sup> Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 79-80.

<sup>189</sup> Quoted in Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 87.

<sup>190</sup> 'Report from the Committee on the Petition of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company', TNA WO 1/352 f.16.

British warship.<sup>191</sup> Governing the colony finally wore Dawes down, and in February 1803 he handed the colony over to Ludlam and returned to England.

After ten years the costs of running the colony as well as the administrative difficulties were weighing heavily on the directors of the Company and the British government after it had agreed to provide financial support. At the urging of Wilberforce and his fellow directors, the Government finally decided to take over the full control of the colony, and on 1 January 1808 Sierra Leone was transferred to the British Crown.

The Sierra Leone settlement represented a series of well-intentioned but ill-considered decisions, which resulted from ignorance and lack of experience in both governing a colony and trade, especially with all the problems associated with Africa, different indigenous groups, slavers, and competing commercial interests. The Company's inability to establish firm priorities resulted in confusion over the implementation of policies and meant that people recruited to administer the day to day affairs in the colony were usually chosen for the wrong reasons and without the skills necessary for success – although talent was difficult to attract to tropical Africa. As Fyfe observed, the Company and its employees in Sierra Leone 'however determined to enforce their rules, were no tyrants, any more than the Nova Scotians, whatever extremists among them might say, were revolutionaries'.<sup>192</sup> There was a clash of cultures as the Company and its employees could not or would not understand the grievances of the Nova Scotians, and the Nova Scotians appeared too quick to find oppression. Clarkson's initial promises and the 'selling' of the colony to the Nova Scotians was a major contribution to the problems encountered. The experiment cost its investors a significant amount of money and resulted in considerable civil strife even though it may have left them with a warm feeling of having achieved some moral success.

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<sup>191</sup> Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 90.

<sup>192</sup> Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 87.

## vi. Interlude: The Church Missionary Society and missionary training

Dawes began working for the Church Missionary Society while still in Sierra Leone. In January 1802 the Committee of the Society agreed to form a Corresponding Committee in Sierra Leone comprising Dawes and three others.<sup>193</sup> Dawes in particular was considered a valuable source of information on the conditions for missionaries in the region and the suitability of those already appointed. After returning from Sierra Leone and his final term as Governor, Dawes attended a special meeting of the Society's Committee convened in December 1804 to hear his opinions of conditions in the colony. In addition to giving his thoughts on the suitability of the missionaries currently in Sierra Leone, he gave details of the state of religious conversions and the situation regarding 'Mahometans' in the colony particularly their general resistance to Christian missionaries. Dawes said there were two types: 'the zealous' and 'the indifferent' and advised that the latter were more prolific amongst the Susoo people of the region.<sup>194</sup> As to the expansion of missionary work, Dawes recommended that missionaries be allowed to take their wives to Sierra Leone. He reasoned that not only would it provide moral support for the missionaries and make their lives easier, but would also be of considerable assistance in encouraging local women and children to attend church services and Sunday schools.<sup>195</sup> The suggestion was adopted at the next meeting of the Society.<sup>196</sup>

The expansion of missionary activity in the colony was hampered by the difficulty in finding new recruits. Further, the Society lacked facilities to provide training in the local languages or preparation for the conditions likely to be encountered. After agreeing to establish a seminary to train future missionaries, the Society approached Rev. Thomas Scott to operate it but Scott

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<sup>193</sup> Church Missionary Society Minutes (CMS Minutes) 4 Jan 1802. CMS Archives, G/C1/1.

<sup>194</sup> The Susu people's traditional lands congregate around the coastal areas of present day Gambia. Spellings varied in contemporary reporting with 'Susoo' being the most commonly used in reports from Sierra Leone.

<sup>195</sup> CMS Minutes, 21 Dec 1804. G/C1/1.

<sup>196</sup> CMS Minutes, 7 Jan 1805. G/C1/1.

declined, declaring his home too small to accommodate seminarians. Scott, a leading Evangelical of the day, was a member of the Eclectic Society with Revs. John Venn and John Newton who, with Rev. Josiah Pratt, were founders of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Scott who was widely known for his book *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* became an important figure in Dawes' personal life. He suggested Dawes as a suitable alternative noting that he had taken a portion of an old mansion at Bledlow and that his 'exceedingly frugal and hardy habits' together with his African experience made him an ideal choice.<sup>197</sup>

Bledlow was five miles from Aston Sandford where Scott was rector, and where he had moved from London and Lock Hospital. Bledlow was also the home of its rector, Rev. Nathaniel Gilbert, who had been the first clergyman appointed to Sierra Leone arriving in the colony before Dawes, and it is likely that Gilbert's presence was the key reason for Dawes' move to Bledlow. Gilbert and his cousin Rev. Melvill Horne, who travelled to Sierra Leone with Dawes in 1792, were also Dawes' introduction to his later life in Antigua. Gilbert owned estates in Antigua and his father, also Nathaniel Gilbert, was a leader in political affairs on the island, having served as Speaker of the House of Assembly. Converted to Methodism after hearing John Wesley preach, Gilbert Snr. is credited with having introduced Methodism to Antigua.<sup>198</sup>

Dawes was keen to take on the role, but in a letter to Pratt, who was then Secretary of the CMS, he expressed concern about the status of his residence in Bledlow, owned by Lord Carrington, who, as Robert Smith, had been a director of the Sierra Leone Company. Carrington was not in a position to provide his tenant with the certainty of the long-term lease a seminary would need. Dawes suggested that if the Society were not happy with the situation he would forgo the proposed seminary and use the produce of his orchard as a means of supplying himself with an income.<sup>199</sup> Keen to shore up support,

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<sup>197</sup> Thomas Scott to CMS Secretary (Rev. Josiah Pratt), 17 Jun 1806. CMS Correspondence G/AC 3/3/23.

<sup>198</sup> 'Nathaniel Gilbert' in *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, 1974. Online at [http://openlibrary.org/books/OL4935921M/The\\_Encyclopedia\\_of\\_world\\_Methodism](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL4935921M/The_Encyclopedia_of_world_Methodism).

<sup>199</sup> Dawes to Pratt, 1 Oct 1806. CMS Correspondence G/AC 3/3/32.

Dawes wrote an almost identical letter to Zachary Macaulay, at the time Secretary of the Sierra Leone Company and held in considerable esteem by Wilberforce and the other Evangelical leadership.<sup>200</sup>

Dawes wrote again to Pratt setting out his credentials, especially his skill with languages. He claimed he could instruct in 'the Arabic of Susoo' plus Arabic, Persian, and the 'vulgar language of the Hindus', an additional skill he suggested would be helpful if any of the missionaries were sent to India. As a group of seminarians were coming from Berlin (the Society was finding it almost impossible to recruit Englishmen to the task), he would also teach the English language. Dawes added that he considered Bledlow to be a good site for the seminary, as its remote location would remove distractions. Finally, Dawes advised Pratt that he would accept any terms that Nathaniel Gilbert and Thomas Scott thought reasonable.<sup>201</sup>

Aware that Macaulay would be at the meeting with Pratt and the Committee to determine the venture, Dawes sent Macaulay an identical letter adding emphasis to his suitability by expanding on his language and other skills. To Macaulay, Dawes added that he had 'the rudiments' of five European languages that he had developed in his youth. He had also shown an aptitude for non-European languages during his time at Botany Bay where, as he told Macaulay, he had succeeded in learning the local language 'so far as to discover the present, past & future terminations with some other parts of the verbs and five cases of nouns, which perhaps all they have'. The letter also pointed out that he had developed skills as a dispenser of medicines noting he had been preparing medicines for himself and his family for 'upwards of twenty years'. Occasionally he had also prepared medicines for the 'whole colony' of Sierra Leone and had 'several of the best books on medicine', regularly adding to them. Finally, Dawes noted that his expertise included 'astronomy, mathematics & mechanical arts' that he believed would also assist missionaries.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Dawes to Macaulay, 1 Oct 1806. CMS Correspondence G/AC 3/3/33.

<sup>201</sup> Dawes to Pratt, 4 Oct 1806. CMS Correspondence G/AC 3/3/34.

<sup>202</sup> Dawes to Macaulay, 4 Oct 1806. CMS Correspondence, G/AC 3/3/35.

The letter to Macaulay allowed a rare glimpse at Dawes' private life. He indicated that he intended to educate both his 'little boy and my nephew' to qualify them for the church, adding that including them in the missionaries' education would provide some ongoing relevance to the seminary. Dawes' son, William Rutter Dawes, was by this time nine years of age. After the death of his mother he had been left in the care of his paternal grandfather during Dawes' periods in Sierra Leone. Later, after the demise of the seminary at Bledlow, young Dawes was educated at Thomas Scott's residence where he lived until completing his education. He would have disappointed his father by abandoning training for the church and instead qualified as a doctor, although he is remembered as an astronomer of some note. Dawes junior remained close to Scott, whose son later remarked that the relationship of Scott to young Dawes was 'to love him as if he were one of his own children'. He was with Scott when he died and later married his widow.<sup>203</sup>

The Society agreed to proceed with the seminary at Bledlow, and Dawes agreed to the terms suggested by Gilbert and Scott, although he was still worried about the uncertainty of his tenancy, as Lord Carrington was continuing to hesitate on giving a lease of certain term.<sup>204</sup> The uncertainty was resolved in 1807, when Dawes advised the Society that Carrington intended to apply to Parliament to have the parish enclosed, and he expected he would have to quit the premises by Michaelmas 1808.<sup>205</sup>

The seminary struggled to achieve its purpose. It had one English trainee who left after a few months, and the candidates from Berlin failed to materialise in the numbers expected. This meant a loss of potential income for Dawes who still had his family and house to maintain, and his poor financial situation was exacerbated by the slow disposal of goods he owned in Sierra Leone. He advised the Society that if the situation did not improve quickly he would need to find employment.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> John Scott, *The Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott*, (London 1824), 525-537.

<sup>204</sup> Dawes to Pratt, 31 Oct 1806. CMS Correspondence, G/AC 3/3/39.

<sup>205</sup> Dawes to Pratt, 25 Sep 1807. CMS Correspondence, G/AC 3/3/73.

<sup>206</sup> Dawes to Pratt, 25 Sep 1807. CMS Correspondence, G/AC 3/3/73.

The Bledlow seminary finally ground to a halt and in 1808 it transferred to Aston Sandford where Thomas Scott took over its operations. The few trainee missionaries lodged with a nearby family.

#### vii. Sierra Leone: fourth period (July 1808 to late 1810)

William Dawes returned to Sierra Leone on 21 July 1808 having been appointed a Commissioner to enquire into 'the State of the Settlements and Governments on the Coast of Africa' at a substantial salary of £1500. He travelled with Thomas Perronet Thompson, the first governor appointed under the Crown. In addition to his role on the Commission, Dawes was appointed engineer of the colony by Governor Ludlam the day before handing over the colony to Thompson – a matter of some frustration for Thompson.<sup>207</sup> During the voyage Dawes gave Thompson background information, while Thompson formed opinions of Dawes and his character. It soon emerged that Thompson was not impressed either with Dawes or his views on the management of the colony, particularly dealings with the inhabitants. The use of apprenticeships in the colony was of particular concern to Thompson, who quickly determined they were no more than slavery under a different name. Two days after his arrival Thompson wrote to his fiancée, 'you may have heard me speak of Macaulay's apprenticeships; and it is as I suspected, that these apprenticeships have ...introduced actual slavery'.<sup>208</sup>

Before going to the colony, Thompson was briefed by Macaulay on conditions in Sierra Leone, including Macaulay's support for apprenticeship, and after hearing similar views from Dawes, Thompson soon became consumed with the need to expose what he saw as the practice of slavery sanctioned within the boardroom of the Sierra Leone Company in London.

Continuing to engage the labour of former slaves through apprenticeship may have been a contentious issue, but after the Act of 1807 abolished the slave trade, other countries expanded their trading activities with great fervour.

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<sup>207</sup> The appointment was reported in the *Sierra Leone Gazette*, 18 Aug 1808. TNA CO 267/24.

<sup>208</sup> T.P. Thompson to Nancy Barker, 23 Jul 1808. TP DTH 4/1, 455-61, in Turner, 'The Limits of Abolition', 335.

Under the British abolition acts, slaves captured from foreign vessels were known as 'Captured Negroes' and while some were recruited into the army in West Africa and West Indies, most were apprenticed.<sup>209</sup> As Thompson saw it, this was an excuse employees of the Sierra Leone Company needed to use apprenticeship as just another form of slavery.

The need to expose this activity may have become Thompson's prime cause during his period as governor, but it was part of a larger problem for him. He considered the Company, and more particularly its officials in the colony, guilty of a general moral abandonment evidenced in their apparent relationships with local women, and in the most serious of charges, complicit in encouraging infanticide of children born from illicit relationships. Both these issues came to consume Thompson during his period as Governor, causing confrontation with the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, Dawes, and finally, the British government.

Thompson was twenty-six when he was appointed at Wilberforce's suggestion, having served three years in the Royal Navy before transferring to the British Army, where he had reached the rank of Lieutenant at the time of his appointment. Thompson's father, Thomas Thompson, was a Member of Parliament and successful banker and merchant. He was also a well-known Wesleyan preacher and 'a particular friend' of Wilberforce.<sup>210</sup>

Thompson had been urged to wait six months before taking up the governorship to allow time for orientation, but soon after arriving was convinced by Ludlam and Dawes that he should commence duties almost immediately. Within a matter of days Ludlam stood down as the last Governor appointed by the Sierra Leone Company, and Thompson was sworn in to commence a new era for the colony.

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<sup>209</sup> Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 115.

<sup>210</sup> Michael J. Turner, 'Thompson, Thomas Perronet (1783–1869)', *ODNB Online*. Wilberforce called Thompson Snr, his 'particular friend' in his letter to Castlereagh recommending T.P. Thompson for appointment as Governor. TNA CO 267/25.

Dawes and Thompson fell out soon after their arrival in the colony. Thompson's journal records a brief conversation that took place within one or two days after their arrival. Before attending a dinner given by the Governor, Thompson had suggested to Dawes that he considered the position of native apprentices to be little different to that of slaves. Thompson then recorded that Dawes replied 'with vehemence': 'I have always thought slavery necessary in the colony, I think as still'.<sup>211</sup> Eighteen months later, Dawes publicly swore that he never made such a statement, a suspect claim as although Thompson's journal entry was written one or two days after the event, his recall appears to be quite clear and definite.<sup>212</sup> The relationship between the two rapidly disintegrated.

If Dawes did make the statement it is not known if it was in the context of a wider discussion, or why he chose to express such a view. Dawes was never one to withhold his opinions, but he was also prone to failing to recognise the wider environment when commenting. There is no record of discussions with Thompson on the journey to Sierra Leone, but some lengthy conversations must have taken place over the seven week period of the voyage that should have given Dawes an opportunity to assess Thompson's character and so choose his words accordingly. Thompson had been quick to assess Dawes, and two days after arriving in the colony noted in his journal 'shall keep a sharp eye on Mr. D'.<sup>213</sup> But Dawes' statement on the necessity of slavery belies his character when his career is considered in totality, and two major confrontations with Thompson over the short period of his governorship provide clear illustrations of Dawes' anti-slavery attitudes and his support for individual slaves.

The first significant confrontation with Thompson took place when Dawes and others attempted to release a number of slaves from a Swedish ship captured in August 1809. The incident was considered at a hearing of the Court of Vice-

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<sup>211</sup> T.P. Thompson rough journal, 22 Jul 1808. DTH/1/21. Relevant parts of the Thompson papers have been copied by Microform Academic Papers and are available on the British Online Archives website at [www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk](http://www.britishonlinearchives.co.uk). Citations of the Thompson papers at Hull are from this online source.

<sup>212</sup> Transcript of a public meeting called by the Governor, Edward Columbine, Sierra Leone, April 1810. TNA CO 267/27.

<sup>213</sup> Thompson, rough journal, 22 Jul 1808. DTH/1/21.

Admiralty on 18 August. The Court of Vice-Admiralty was the legal process to hear claims for prizes captured at sea and in Sierra Leone it comprised Thompson sitting alone. Its proceedings were recorded in *The African Herald*, the official Gazette of the Governor and his Council.<sup>214</sup> Dawes' intervention in the hearing was to claim that the vessel had slaves on board and that he was acting on behalf of a number of them. On the following day it was revealed that Dawes, Ludlam, and three others had boarded the vessel and attempted to convince the slaves to leave the ship. In handing down its decision, the court found that eighteen of the slaves had been purchased from a trader on the River Pongas, within British territory, and were declared confiscated, but as the ship was a foreign vessel, it and the remainder of its cargo, including slaves purchased elsewhere in Africa, were declared free to leave. Dawes then claimed that the remaining slaves were illegally held and applied for a writ of *Habeas Corpus* to have the slaves removed from the vessel. Thompson was outraged, and saw Dawes' actions as 'a daring and fraudulent attempt to defeat the decision and to injure a neutral', and declared that he was there to 'do justice upon neutrals and not to plunder them'. The vessel subsequently sailed for the Swedish settlement at St. Bartholomew in the Caribbean. Thompson was sufficiently upset, or sufficiently aware of the possibility of adding strength to his case against Dawes, to write to the Swedish Governor at St. Bartholomew apologising for the attempt to seize the slaves, pointing out that Dawes and Ludlam (although neither were identified by name) held positions under the British government. He suggested that he and the Swedes lodge complaints with their respective governments so they may note the 'conduct so disgraceful to a civilized nation and so contrary to the good understanding which exists between our Sovereigns'.<sup>215</sup>

The Gazette added some editorial comment noting that the 'party' (Dawes) who had made '*ostensible* [original emphasis] declarations to slavery' was in fact simply attempting to 'establish a monopoly of the slave-trade on the very foundation of the Abolition Act', commentary that if not written by Thompson indicates his considerable influence on the author. Dawes would have acted in

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<sup>214</sup> *The African Herald*, 26 Aug 1809. TNA CO 267/25.

<sup>215</sup> The letter, dated 12 Aug 1809, was published in full in *The African Gazette* of 26 Aug 1809, following the reporting of the Court proceedings. TNA CO 267/25.

breach of the law had he removed the remaining slaves from the vessel, but in acting as he did he displayed once again his fierce determination to act on his beliefs without compromise and without consideration of the consequences. He regularly displayed a lack of political awareness of his actions, driven more by his moral beliefs than pragmatism. Thompson on the other hand was equally fixated in his determination to counter what he had long been convinced was Dawes' moral failings and improper behaviour.

An event that occurred while Dawes was still in England led to a confrontation with Thompson that confirmed his opinion of Dawes as immoral, a supporter of infanticide, and determined to undermine Thompson's authority as Governor. During Thomas Ludlam's governorship, a Nova Scotian woman, Anne Edmonds, was charged with the murder of her newly born child, allegedly to hide the fact that the child's father was a European, but her involvement in the death could not be proven and Edmonds was acquitted. Soon after arriving in Sierra Leone, Thompson heard stories of local women regularly resorting to abortion and infanticide when pregnancies were the result of liaisons with European men, including employees of the Sierra Leone Company. Determined to take a stand, Thompson had Anne Edmonds, by now married to a Maroon man named Morgan, re-tried for murder. She was convicted and sentenced to death but at the last moment had her sentence reduced to banishment from the colony.

The Edmonds/Morgan family featured again when Thompson discovered that Anne Edmonds, mother of Anne Morgan, was harbouring a young girl who had escaped from a European to whom she was apprenticed, having previously been a slave. Thompson called in Anne Edmonds, having promised that the young female would be returned to her master. Despite Thompson's professed abhorrence of slavery there was still the established matter of property rights and he considered it proper that the girl should be returned, although in this instance his determination was reinforced by his personal antipathy to the people protecting the girl. Arriving at the agreed meeting, Thompson found the woman attended by her husband and son and to his great surprise, Dawes. Thompson was 'exceedingly moved'. That Anne Edmonds' daughter had previously been found guilty of infanticide simply exacerbated the matter,

adding to Thompson's general dislike of the Edmonds/Morgan family. Edmonds was, according to Thompson, 'a woman of infamous character and reputation' who was 'supposed' to have been involved in the deaths of a number of children of her other daughters who had children by 'different Europeans in the service of the Sierra Leone Company'.

Not only did Thompson see that Dawes was effectively condoning the activities of the Edmonds in encouraging them to ignore their duty to hand over the girl, but in Thompson's mind it was greatly worsened by Dawes being in the employ of the British government. Dawes, he thought, could not possibly have been unaware of the woman's reputation. Thompson 'warmly remonstrated' with Dawes and ordered him from the house. A number of Thompson's chief concerns came together in this episode. Firstly, it demonstrated what Thompson considered to be Dawes' (along with Ludlam and others) constant undermining of his authority, and secondly it added further evidence of the lack of morals among the employees of the Sierra Leone Company, confirming his now firm negative opinion of the company and its activities. Dawes protested at the accusations, telling Thompson he should be judged on 'the purity of his views and of his past life and actions'.<sup>216</sup> Thompson went on to record in the Council minutes his further concern with Dawes having attended Anne Edmonds' wedding celebrations. Dawes later clarified that he had not attended the wedding, but did have tea with the family before the event, a clarification hardly likely to have changed Thompson's opinions.<sup>217</sup>

The episodes reveal a flaw in Thompson's accusations against Dawes, Ludlam and the Sierra Leone Company. His accusations were based on suspicion, rumour, gossip and innuendo: he was not able to support any of the claims against the so called 'child murderers', or any of the Company officials or employees. However, over the years the Company employed or engaged a number of people, many of them Europeans trying their luck in Africa, as well some of the Nova Scotian and Maroon settlers, and the likelihood that some of the 'most vehement and manly indignations' expressed to Thompson by

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<sup>216</sup> Council minutes, 25 Oct 1809. TNA CO 270/11. Copies are also in the TP Thompson papers, University of Hull. DTH/1/57.

<sup>217</sup> Transcript of a public meeting, 8 Apr 1810, to hear the various accusations against Dawes and Ludlam. TNA CO 267/25.

neighbouring 'native chiefs' about the moral conditions in the colony might have some validity, is probably high.<sup>218</sup> But it is difficult not to have sympathy with Thompson's conclusions that Dawes and his companions were being deliberately provocative by constantly challenging Thompson's authority.

Late in 1808, Thompson sent a lengthy and comprehensive report to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Castlereagh, detailing the various ills of the Colony's former administration and particularly the many infringements of morals and duty committed by 'agents of the Sierra Leone Company'. Thompson used this term regularly to sweep up as many of those involved with the company as possible, allowing him to include his chief suspects, Ludlam and Dawes, by inference.<sup>219</sup>

After some general introductory statements, the report commenced by outlining the various alleged offences. Thompson maintained that 168 natives had been 'illegally sold or disposed' in the colony, and claimed that these activities were with the 'consent and active cooperation' of the employees of the Company 'and of the Directors of that Company in England' (alleged activities that took place while Dawes was in England). This latter accusation would have considerable ramifications for Thompson, as he was now taking on powerful forces in the British political world. Thompson attached a series of letters Macaulay wrote as Secretary of the Company to Governor Ludlam to show how the Sierra Leone Company endorsed the practice of apprenticeship of former slaves. Macaulay had written that with abolition 'he has always been of the opinion [that a] likely means of promoting civilization in the colony would be by indenting the natives for 7 years or age 21', and that their duties would be 'well defined and rigidly supervised'.<sup>220</sup> Henry Thornton, one of the founding Directors of the Sierra Leone Company, later emphasised to Thompson that he considered indentured servants to be clearly different from owning slaves, but

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<sup>218</sup> Council minutes, 25 Oct 1809. TNA CO 270/11.

<sup>219</sup> The report, prepared in November 1808, is found in the Colonial Office papers, Secretary of State, Original Correspondence, Sierra Leone, TNA CO 267/27. A copy is also included in the minutes of the Sierra Leone Council, TNA CO 270/11. As with a number of these papers, copies are also to be found in the TP Thompson papers at the University of Hull.

<sup>220</sup> Macaulay to Ludlam, 1 May 1807, included in Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808. TNA CO 267/27.

added that indentured people would need to be watched to ensure slave type conditions did not exist.<sup>221</sup> Thompson went on to claim that infanticide and abortions took place 'among the women of colour with whom the European servants of the Sierra Leone Company were connected', and who were encouraged by persons who included those 'whom we understand to have been appointed His Majesty's Commissioners' in order to maintain 'the religious reputation of their colony'.<sup>222</sup>

The attacks were too much for Wilberforce and his colleagues who encouraged Castlereagh to have Thompson recalled. Castlereagh complied telling Thompson that the accusations 'do not appear in themselves sufficiently satisfactory without further explanation', and that he expected Thompson to provide further details when he returned to England.<sup>223</sup> On his return Thompson found himself unable to meet Castlereagh or his successor Lord Liverpool, having been effectively shut out by the British establishment.

After the new Governor, Edward Columbine, arrived in Sierra Leone in February 1810, he held a public meeting to consider the allegations levelled by Thompson against Ludlam and Dawes. Columbine had decided he could not hold a formal inquiry as the matter had been referred to the government in Britain, so in April 1808 'all the gentlemen of the Civil Establishment' attended the meeting along with a variety of interested settlers. The accusations against Ludlam occupied the major part of the proceedings, as he was in office as Governor during the period of the alleged infanticide involving Anne Morgan (Edmonds). Dawes however had the opportunity to swear he had not made the statement to Thompson that he thought slavery was necessary in Sierra Leone. He also clarified his alleged attendance at the Morgan-Edmonds wedding, denying he was present but admitting he 'drank tea' with the family the day before. Dawes also argued his good intentions in trying to save the young slave girl in the earlier confrontation with Thompson. Dawes stated he was convinced that Thompson was going to return the girl in 'a clandestine manner'

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<sup>221</sup> Henry Thornton to Thompson, 20 Oct 1808, included in Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808. TNA CO 267/27.

<sup>222</sup> Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808. TNA CO 267/27.

<sup>223</sup> Castlereagh to Thompson, 3 Apr 1809. TNA CO 268/6.

and he was determined 'to prevent the poor girl from being unjustly and cruelly reduced a second time to a state of slavery' and by forcing a confrontation he had hoped to make the whole colony aware of the situation. (Dawes missed the irony that he was implying that apprenticeship was indeed a form of slavery). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the meeting found the allegations against both men to be without foundation, with the many witnesses unanimous in stating they were unaware of any instances of infanticide or abortions being covered up.<sup>224</sup>

The issues Thompson raised re-surfaced in 1815 when Robert Thorpe, a former Chief Justice of Sierra Leone, published a number of charges about the current and former administrations. Thorpe had been appointed Chief Justice of the colony in early 1811, at the same time as Lt-Col. Charles Maxwell was appointed Governor. After a series of disputes with Maxwell, Thorpe was dismissed after some eighteen months.<sup>225</sup> Aware of Thorpe's dissatisfaction with the administration of Sierra Leone, Thompson offered to provide background to the Sierra Leone Company, the African Institution and in particular Zachary Macaulay and his trading activities. This provided material for Thorpe to publish a series of attacks that, apart from his personal quarrels with Maxwell, contained many of the allegations previously aired by Thompson. He reached back as far as the beginnings of the colony when under the control of the Sierra Leone Company, raising the original complaints of the Nova Scotian settlers over broken promises by the Company's administration and directors.<sup>226</sup>

Of relevance was Thorpe's attack on the appointment of the three Commissioners, questioning their qualifications, remuneration and delays in conducting the survey. Dawes he said 'had a little knowledge of land-surveying, yet he was perfectly inadequate to such an undertaking as surveying

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<sup>224</sup> Columbine's notice of the public meeting is dated 8 Apr 1810 and the proceedings commence five days later. The full transcript of the meeting is included in TNA CO 267/27.

<sup>225</sup> Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 122.

<sup>226</sup> Robert Thorpe, *A letter to William Wilberforce, Esq, M.P. Vice President of the African Institution, &c. &c. &c., containing remarks on the reports of the Sierra Leone Company, and African Institution: with hints respecting the means by which an universal abolition of the slave trade might be carried into effect*, (London, 1815).

the coast'. The directors of the African Institution responded by noting Dawes' 'proficiency in the science of nautical surveying', a skill he indeed had, and referred to his associations with Nevil Maskelyne and the Board of Longitude. Moreover, the directors noted the survey was not concerned with surveying the coast, the remit being a general inquiry into conditions along the coastal settlements. In referring to the remuneration of the Commissioners and the delay in commencing the survey, the directors noted the loss of the naval frigate intended for the survey, and drily pointed out that Thorpe had received his salary for three and a half years before arriving in Sierra Leone.<sup>227</sup>

Throughout Dawes' life there were a number of negative, at times harshly critical, comments about his character and personality. There is certainly evidence that the oft used description of an austere personality is valid but this would have reflected his quite strict and formal, if stereotypical, evangelical beliefs and personal standards. Zachary Macaulay who knew him well, the two lived together in Sierra Leone, considered him to be 'one of the excellent of the earth' but also recognised 'his undeviating rectitude and unbending firmness of principle', a particular character trait that often didn't help Dawes when dealing with superiors.<sup>228</sup> Dawes added weight to these general interpretations when he confessed to adopting a 'well meant plainness which I am accustomed to use'.<sup>229</sup>

Recent criticism by the historian Cassandra Pybus is of a wholly different magnitude. Pybus' negative assessment of Dawes' character, and in particular his moral rectitude, is not limited to New South Wales and extends to charges of immoral conduct in Sierra Leone.<sup>230</sup> Her most serious accusation was that Dawes was the father of the child for whose death Anne Morgan (née Edmonds) had been charged with murder, and was likely complicit in the child's death. The claim is simply wrong. Anne Edmonds gave birth to the child in

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<sup>227</sup> *Special Report of the Directors of the African Institution made at the Annual General Meeting, on 12<sup>th</sup> of April, 1815*, London 1815, 81-3.

<sup>228</sup> Viscountess Knutsford, *Life and Letters of Zachary Macaulay* (London: Edward Arnold, 1900), 135, 188.

<sup>229</sup> Dawes to John Clarkson, 9 Dec 1796. BL: Clarkson papers, Vol. III. Add MSS 41263, ff.138-9.

<sup>230</sup> Pybus, 'Not fit for your protection', 12.1-12.7. For the New South Wales matters see my Chapter 2, v. 'Language and questions of character'.

August 1807. At the time Dawes was in England. He had been there since leaving Sierra Leone in February 1803 and did not return until July 1808. The father of the child was later identified as a surgeon employed by the Sierra Leone Company. Pybus also endorses a claim that Dawes traded in slaves with the knowledge and support of the directors of the Sierra Leone Company. Gareth Atkins believes these and other assessments by Pybus are 'characterized by guesswork, embroidery and selective use of evidence'.<sup>231</sup> In fact, no new evidence has been produced to support what were in effect wild claims. Indeed, Sue Thomas has undertaken a detailed refutation of Pybus' claims in more detail than is attempted here. My research fully supports Thomas' view.<sup>232</sup>

### viii. The Survey of the Coast of Africa

One of Thompson's complaints to the British government was that Dawes and Ludlam were receiving £3000 per annum [a combined sum] and had been receiving that sum for two years without anything to show for it. Here, Thompson was correct. The survey of the nearby coast of Africa for which they had been engaged had yet to commence. However, not only were their instructions imprecise as to a timetable, they had yet to be joined by the third Commissioner, and the loss of the survey vessel had caused a delay of fifteen months.<sup>233</sup> The situation was rectified by the appointment of Columbine as the third Commissioner who arrived in Sierra Leone with instructions from the new Colonial Secretary Lord Liverpool that the survey commence as soon as possible. Notwithstanding, discretion was left to the Commissioners as to how and when the task should be carried out, considering the weather and other logistical issues.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Atkins, 'William Wilberforce and his milieu', 213. Atkins has included Simon Schama in this general criticism, but Schama does not comment on this particular episode. See Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings. Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

<sup>232</sup> Thomas, 'A transnational perspective', 187-204.

<sup>233</sup> *Special Report of the Directors of the African Institution, 1815*, 83.

<sup>234</sup> Liverpool to Columbine, 27 Dec 1809, Colonial Office Out Letters Sierra Leone, TNA CO 268/6.

Liverpool recognised that Columbine could not carry out his duties as Governor and absent himself on the survey at the same time and suggested that Dawes and Ludlam carry out the physical survey process and the three then write up the report to Government. They were asked to travel up the Gold Coast visiting all the forts along the coastal settlements, to obtain 'full and accurate' information 'on the State of Africa' including agriculture and 'the social & civil conditions of the inhabitants', and to encourage the African chiefs in understanding the benefits of the abolition of the slave trade. They were also asked to report their views on how the Portuguese traders could be convinced to abandon the slave trade 'with a view to the extinction of the slave trade on the Windward Coast'. Liverpool further suggested the Commissioners consider current and future opportunities for trade and, perhaps surprisingly given the Commissioners' qualifications, to report on forts belonging to 'powers in a state of hostility' and how they could be taken. Dawes had been involved in the construction of single forts in New South Wales and Sierra Leone but how much he understood the strategic value of their placement over a long coastline is unknown. More generally, the Commissioners were asked to advise if the various settlements along the coast should be maintained or abandoned.<sup>235</sup> Liverpool had obviously taken the survey more seriously than his predecessor Castlereagh, suggesting that the appointments had originally been intended more as a reward for Ludlam and Dawes and without any urgent purpose.

Dawes and Ludlam carried out the survey under the difficult conditions of weather and sickness that generally plagued European settlers. Indeed Ludlam succumbed to fever and died during the survey. Dawes suffered regular bouts of fever that he had long become subject to, delaying the completion of the report until 1811. The House of Commons printed extracts from it in March 1812. A further report by Dawes was published the following month.<sup>236</sup> That Dawes prepared a supplementary report suggests the principal document was largely the work of Columbine, and that Dawes may not have had an

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<sup>235</sup> Liverpool to Columbine, 27 Dec 1809, TNA CO 268/6.

<sup>236</sup> *Extracts from the Report of the Commissioners appointed for investigating the State of the Settlements and Governments on the Coast of Africa*, printed 9 Mar 1812 and *Further Paper Relating to the Slave Trade: viz. Observations by William Dawes, Esquire, one of the Commissioners of African Enquiry*, printed 22 Apr 1812, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, <http://parlipapers.chadwick.com>.

opportunity to put his view. By the time the report was tabled in Parliament, Columbine was also dead.

The report noted an initial slowdown in the slave trade after the British and American governments' abolition, but that the southern states of America had commenced slave trading in large numbers by using vessels under a Spanish flag. The trade was restricted to some extent by the arrival of British naval vessels in early 1810 that captured a significant number of vessels, principally on the coast and rivers adjacent to Sierra Leone. The report claimed 'about 2,800 Africans' had been freed from these vessels, but added that the bulk of the trade took place further south on the African coast, specifically Benin, Gaboon (present day Gabon), and the Portuguese settlements in Congo and Angola. The report suggested that most of the Spanish vessels involved were owned by Americans, plus some British merchants, and quoted suggested numbers of eighty thousand slaves imported into Brazil and Cuba. In his supplementary report, Dawes reaffirmed most of the section on the slave trade, but argued that larger naval forces needed to be committed to cover a greater area of the African west coast. The remainder of the published extracts had referred to the good state of the development of Sierra Leone, adding comments and costs of some of the regional coastal settlements and forts. Dawes concurred with those findings.<sup>237</sup>

The terms of the survey suggests that it had been intended to do little more than provide a form of compensation to Dawes and Ludlam for services rendered. The terms were vague and the remuneration very generous. Even when Lord Liverpool reinvigorated the process he left it to the surveyors to determine when and how they carried out their task. The main part of the report contains little of substance and Dawes' addendum was brief and off-hand. After concluding the survey, Dawes returned to England and after almost two decades ended his long association with the Sierra Leone venture.

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<sup>237</sup> *Extracts from the Report of Commissioners.*

## Chapter 4

### Antigua

#### i. The schools

William Dawes joined the Committee of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at its twelfth anniversary meeting on 19 May 1812.<sup>238</sup> Eleven months later he resigned, advising the Committee he was about to depart for Antigua, his home for the final twenty years of his life.<sup>239</sup> Dawes had married Grace Gilbert in London on 25 May 1811.<sup>240</sup> Gilbert, a native of Antigua, was a cousin of Rev. Nathaniel Gilbert, whom Dawes had met in Sierra Leone and with whom he worked closely during the brief period of the missionary seminary at Bledlow. Grace Gilbert, an orphan at a young age, was raised by her aunt Mary Horne, mother of Rev. Melvill Horne. Horne had travelled with Dawes to Sierra Leone in 1792 and spent a short time in the colony before finding the conditions, both climatic and religious, too difficult. He returned to England where he later earned a reputation for his essay on the establishment and conduct of missions, *Letters on Missions*.<sup>241</sup> The Gilbert family had been in Antigua as planters for a number of generations.

In notifying his resignation to the CMS, Dawes indicated his willingness to represent the Society's interests in Antigua. Accompanied by Zachary Macaulay, he attended his final meeting of the Society on 10 May 1813, where the Society accepted his offer to be 'a gratuitous catechist and correspondent of the Society' in Antigua 'and any of the neighbouring islands where he may find opportunity'.<sup>242</sup> Not suggesting he should receive any compensation for the position, Dawes once again demonstrated his commitment to cause over self.

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<sup>238</sup> R.C. Hole, *The Early History of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East to the end of A.D. 1814* (London 1896), 220.

<sup>239</sup> Hole, *Early History*, 242.

<sup>240</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, Marriage registers, Old Church St. Pancras, London.

<sup>241</sup> Suzanne Schwarz, 'The Legacy of Melvill Horne', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 31, 2 (Apr 2007), 88-94.

<sup>242</sup> CMS Minutes, 10 May 1813. CMS/G/C1/2.

In any case his financial position was slightly ameliorated by his appointment as agent for Nathaniel Gilbert's son, also Rev. Nathaniel Gilbert, on the family estate. Grace Dawes had a small annuity from the estate that she and her husband later released.<sup>243</sup> William and Grace Dawes left almost immediately for Antigua taking with them Dawes' daughter Judith. His son, William Rutter Dawes, remained in England and there is no record of them meeting again.

Dawes and his wife became members of the small family core who were involved in the education of slaves and their children. Grace's brother John Gilbert had married Anne Hart whose sister Elizabeth was married to Charles Thwaites. The Hart sisters were free coloured Creoles who had established a school at English Harbour on the southern side of the island a decade before Dawes arrived. Both Hart sisters and John Gilbert were Methodists, while Charles Thwaites became an adherent after becoming disenchanted with the religious qualities of the local Church of England clergy. Moira Ferguson has covered the life and work of the Hart sisters in depth in her 1993 work.<sup>244</sup>

The Sunday school at English Harbour came under the patronage of Lady Grey, wife of the future British Prime Minister, and in September 1814 Dawes was able to report to the CMS that he had become President of the English Harbour Sunday School Society and that the school was prospering with the support of (the then) 'Hon. Mrs. Grey'.<sup>245</sup> The CMS had no formal relationship with the school but supported its activities and allowed Dawes to have a continued involvement after he was employed by the Society.

The CMS remained keen to make use of Dawes' services. A special meeting of the Society to discuss schools in Sierra Leone discussed whether Dawes might consider taking on the role of Superintendent of one of the schools 'at a

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<sup>243</sup> The release (not personally sighted) dealing with two annuities of £20, and interests in a bequest of £500, dated 31 Dec 1822 is in The Beinecke Lesser Antilles Collection at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York. Manuscript ref. M517, listed in Samuel Hough & Penelope Hough (eds), *The Beinecke Lesser Antilles Collection at Hamilton College: a catalogue of books, manuscripts, prints, maps and drawings, 1521-1860*, Gainesville, 1994, 294.

<sup>244</sup> Moira Ferguson, *The Hart Sisters: Early African Caribbean Writers, Evangelicals, and Radicals*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

<sup>245</sup> Hole, *Early History*, 540.

competent salary'. The meeting also considered a request made by 'King Henry' of Haiti [Hayti in the minutes] to William Wilberforce and the British and Foreign Bible Society for support in establishing schools on that island. The meeting agreed to offer Dawes the choice of the two positions but if he preferred to remain in Antigua it offered him the role of Superintendent and Catechist of the English Harbour Schools at a salary sufficient 'to make up his present means of living'. He was also given authority to employ an assistant.<sup>246</sup> Dawes declined the offer to go to Sierra Leone proclaiming 'the great importance of improving his opportunities for good in Antigua'.<sup>247</sup> The Haiti suggestion lapsed.

Perhaps encouraged by his new family connections, Dawes was conscious of the feelings of the local Methodist missionaries regarding their relationship with the Established Church. At a meeting of the committee of the Society in October 1817, a letter from Dawes was tabled noting that the Methodist missionaries were upset that a recent issue of the *Missionary Register* had omitted acknowledgement of their cooperation in allowing some of the Society's schools to use a Methodist chapel. The Secretary, Rev. Josiah Pratt, told the meeting he had omitted the acknowledgement deliberately 'to obviate unfavourable impressions in the minds of persons hostile to the Society'.<sup>248</sup> Those unidentified hostile persons were predominantly the High Church establishment of the Church of England, always concerned with the growing influence of non-conformists and their increasing inroads into what was considered traditional territory. To those leading churchmen the evangelical nature of the CMS required constant vigilance, and perceived relationships with Methodism would have been a cause for alarm, an eventually Pratt was keen to avoid.

Driven by Dawes (but heavily reliant on the work of the Gilberts and Thwaites), the network of schools expanded rapidly. A major contributor to the success of the enterprise was Dawes' continuing determination to work with the Methodists and to a lesser extent, Moravian missionaries, especially in making premises

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<sup>246</sup> CMS Minutes, 21 Mar 1816. CMS G/C1/2.

<sup>247</sup> CMS Minutes, 13 Jan 1817. CMS G/C1/2.

<sup>248</sup> CMS Minutes, 13 Oct 1817. CMS G/C1/3.

available to one another. These close connections, particularly with the Methodists, would create a difficulty for all concerned, including the CMS, but that was for later. By 1819 there were schools at four towns and plantations, with over one thousand children under instruction at English Harbour.<sup>249</sup> The growing spread of schools across the island was making it difficult for Dawes to physically attend to his supervisory duties and to assist, the Society agreed to purchase a horse for his use and pay for its upkeep.<sup>250</sup>

Despite the quiet opposition to the operation of the schools at home, and continuing opposition from much of the planter class on the island, the Society was keen to extend its activities beyond Antigua. At the suggestion of Zachary Macaulay, the Society offered Dawes the position of Superintendent of the Society's schools throughout the whole of the West Indies. He was offered a salary of £300 per year plus reimbursement of his travelling expenses.<sup>251</sup> Dawes accepted the position with alacrity and by the following meeting the Committee received a report of his visit to the island of St. Bartholomew where he had been 'kindly received by the Governor' undoubtedly a different individual to the one who ten years earlier had received T.P. Thompson's complaints about Dawes' actions in Sierra Leone.<sup>252</sup> Apart from taking on a formal role doing what he considered important, Dawes needed the money. Until this position emerged Dawes had found it necessary to find other sources of income, and in August 1816 advised the Society he had opened a dispensary to sell drugs, experience he had gained both in Sierra Leone and at home.<sup>253</sup>

Concern over the relationship between the Society and other denominations continued. In his new role Dawes asked the Society to clarify if schools established on other islands could accept the assistance of other denominations. He noted the 'great zeal' of the Methodists and Moravians for Sunday schools and considered it would be difficult to succeed if he did not have their support. The Society agreed that schools in the West Indies should be open to all denominations but teachers should agree to conduct religious

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<sup>249</sup> CMS Minutes, 1 Jan 1819. CMS G/C1/3; 9 Aug 1819. CMS G/C1/4.

<sup>250</sup> CMS Minutes, 17 Sept 1819. CMS G/C1/4.

<sup>251</sup> CMS Minutes, 13 Mar 1820. CMS G/C1/4.

<sup>252</sup> CMS Minutes, 11 Sep 1820. CMS G/C1/5.

<sup>253</sup> CMS Minutes, 19 Aug 1816. G/C1/2.

education in accordance with the Society's regulations. This latter point had obviously been a matter of intense discussion within the Society: a resolution that teachers could be hired 'without respect to the denomination to which they belong' has been subsequently crossed out in the minutes.<sup>254</sup> The Society would temper its overt opinions where possible but continued to allow employment of non-conformists as teachers where necessary.

In Antigua, Dawes and his colleagues found it necessary to clarify the position of the English Harbour Schools. In addition to being under the patronage of Lady Grey, who had sent funds to extend the school buildings, the schools received vice regal support and encouragement from the Governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, and his wife (the Governor also having been appointed Patron of the Antigua Bible Society).<sup>255</sup> The Hart sisters had formed the English Harbour Sunday School Society (EHSSS) before the CMS had begun to offer some support, and its formation, growth and continuity depended on cross-denominational support. Feeling the need to make its position clear, the EHSSS passed a number of resolutions that Dawes forwarded to the CMS for information. The resolutions noted that mention of Methodists in their reports had offended the CMS, adding that the Methodist church had no authority over the schools and they were never intended to be for the use of one denomination. The EHSSS resolved that they would not discriminate against 'any body of Christians', and agreed they could no longer hold to those principles and receive further assistance from the CMS. This self-imposed limitation on their future resources caused them to agree to abandon all their schools other than those at English Harbour. Dawes was pleased that the School Society had provided clear guidelines for future relations and told the CMS that he felt 'relieved by the turn which the matter has taken'.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> CMS Minutes, 11 Dec 1820; 8 Jan 1821. CMS G/C1/5.

<sup>255</sup> Dawes to CMS Secretary, 1 Jun 1822. CMS W/O 31/21. CMS Minutes, 15 Jul 1822. CMS G/C1/6. All Dawes' correspondence with the CMS were addressed to 'The Secretary', firstly Rev. Josiah Pratt, followed by Rev. Edward Bickersteth. The letters to Pratt usually had a more personal sign-off, often including his wife in passing on respects. Dawes knew Pratt from the time of his first connections with the CMS in England.

<sup>256</sup> CMS Minutes, 15 Jul 1822. CMS G/C1/6.

Dawes continued his work. He visited the island of Dominica where he received support from the Governor and local officials, as a result of which he asked the CMS for two teachers to be sent to the schools he had established. Perhaps more conscious than before of church politics, he suggested that teachers going to Dominica should have a certificate from the Bishop of London who had episcopal jurisdiction over the West Indies.<sup>257</sup> He also urged the CMS to contact absentee plantation owners to provide support for the schools, although in this he was perhaps a little over optimistic. Indeed, at the meeting of the Society in September 1823, Zachary Macaulay advised that plantation owners did not want educated slaves and that the Society should make it clear that schools were for 'free people of colour'.<sup>258</sup>

Dawes briefly displayed political sensitivities soon deserted him. He had been asked by Sir Benjamin D'Urban to provide a report on the state of the schools on Antigua, but Dawes' reply, a copy of which he sent to the CMS, caused the Society great consternation. Dawes had been highly critical of the resident Church of England clergymen on the Island, and told D'Urban that there was a 'want of sound preaching' in the parochial churches. By this he meant there was a lack of emphasis on the Bible based theology that was a key component of evangelical beliefs. He also admitted to D'Urban that cooperation with the local Methodist missionaries was essential for the success of the schools, and further that he had attended Methodist chapels. The Church Missionary Society was quick to distance itself from Dawes' comments and expressed alarm that the letter would cause harm to the Society if it became public. Aware the Governor would include Dawes' letter in his regular reporting to the Colonial Office, the Society promptly wrote to Robert Wilmot Horton, the Under Secretary, explaining the Society's position and requesting the relevant sections not be included in any report to Parliament. Wilmot Horton replied a month later that he had received the Society's letter and would note its concerns. However the damage was done and would cause major problems for Dawes some months later.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> CMS Minutes, 17 May 1823. CMS G/C1/6.

<sup>258</sup> CMS Minutes, 8 Sep 1823. CMS G/C1/6.

<sup>259</sup> CMS Minutes, 13 Jan 1824; 27 Jan 1824; 27 Feb 1824. CMS G/C1/6.

The Society was not opposed to how Dawes was carrying on his activities in Antigua, and in general had sympathy for the need to be cooperative with non-conformists, but it was based in London, not the West Indies, and was conscious of the level of opposition the Evangelical wing of the Church had to deal with.<sup>260</sup> Dawes made a spirited defence of his position that was considered at a Society meeting in December 1824. Dawes claimed his membership of the Church of England, which he esteemed, was a privilege and his attachment to the Church ‘unabated’, but he considered he had a duty to respond to the Governor’s request with total honesty. ‘The friends of Religion in England should be acquainted with the real state of it here’, he said, complaining of the ‘exceedingly corrupt state of the Clergy generally in this part of the World’. Dawes also pointed out, perhaps naively, that he considered himself the only person on the Island ‘whose motives a charge of invidiousness could not in any material degree attach’. Dawes had used Methodist chapels for his night schools and they in turn had used the English Harbour school building purchased by Lady Grey. This was just necessary pragmatism he claimed. He had declined a number of offers to chair meetings of the local Wesleyan Missionary Society, although he had attended some, adding that Wilberforce and others of the Established Church had attended similar meetings in London when felt necessary. He was conscious of not being too overt in his relationship with the Methodists and aware that mention of any association with the local Methodist missionaries should be avoided if possible, but he ‘could not in justice’ fail to acknowledge their contribution to the success of the schools.

Notwithstanding his pragmatism, Dawes’ letter reveals his deep faith and commitment to the Church of England. He referred to the time when his ‘first aspirations for “true repentance” ascended to the throne of God in the sacred language of her liturgy’, a moment he could never forget and the call he received ‘was heard and answered’ (unfortunately he did not add when this call was received). Importantly, he blessed God for sending ‘the Gospel to these parts by any [his emphasis] of his servants’. His reference in the letter to ‘the

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<sup>260</sup> It was also undoubtedly aware of the potential ramifications from the decision to move the West Indies from the authority of the Bishop of London and create two new bishoprics in Jamaica and Barbados.

friends of Religion' was a phrase he regularly used in his correspondence. By his definition, those friends were strongly evangelical, bible based in their beliefs within the theology of the Church of England. The minutes of the Society do not record any discussion of Dawes' letter: merely noting that it as an explanation of the Society's earlier censure of his report to the Governor of Antigua.<sup>261</sup>

## ii. The Church dominant

The creation of the Diocese of Barbados and the arrivals of Bishop Coleridge and Archdeacon Parry in 1825 were the beginning of the end of the Society's activities on Antigua, and the beginning of the end of William Dawes' grand desire to educate the slaves and former slaves as a mode of spreading the influence of Christianity on the Island.

By July 1825 the effects of the new order were being felt, forcing Dawes to write an eight page letter to the Society setting out his concerns about events and the impact of change. He complained that some teachers had already been forced to resign as the Archdeacon's catechists took control of individual schools. Female teachers of male children were a particular problem for Parry, an attitude Dawes had great difficulty in accepting, especially as his wife and his sisters in law were so heavily involved in the schools and a number of coloured women had been successfully recruited as teachers. Dawes drove home his feelings by quoting Archdeacon Parry as stating 'women should be made to know their inferiority' and 'should not be supposed to know so much as they really did know'. Anne Gilbert thought Parry had 'spent too long in a College' and 'knew little of the problems of the colonies' but Dawes went further saying that Parry's attitudes came from 'an idea of clerical infallibility' – his choice of words having an implied allusion to the Church of Rome. Dawes was equally concerned that since the arrival of the Bishop no Evangelical ministers had been appointed to vacant curacies. He was also aware that the Bishop had seen his report to the Governor and thought Dawes should not have written about the clergy as he did. To make their differences very clear, Bishop

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<sup>261</sup> The meeting also noted his report that the school on St. Vincents was losing numbers and the CMS auxiliary on the Island was not proceeding.

Coleridge had informed Dawes he did not consider the CMS to be a church society.<sup>262</sup> The deteriorating state of affairs caused considerable concern within the Society and it resolved to have a meeting with the Bishop.<sup>263</sup>

The Society's Secretary Rev. Edward Bickersteth, who had recently succeeded Josiah Pratt, met Coleridge in London in November 1825 during which the Bishop made his intentions clear and unequivocal. He confirmed Dawes had visited him soon after he arrived in Antigua and, moreover, that he had seen Dawes' report to Sir Benjamin D'Urban in which 'several improper things were stated'. Importantly for the Society, Coleridge said that as he had no connections with the CMS in England he could not approve the Society's schools in Antigua and could not 'lend his name to them'. In response to Bickersteth's insistence that the Society wished to conduct its schools in accordance with the 'principles of the Established Church', Coleridge laid out some ground rules: he would support the continuing involvement of Society schoolmasters but only if they were nominated by the local Church of England minister. All schoolmasters would be under the 'ministerial charge' and direction of the local rector or vicar and under the overall jurisdiction of the Bishop of Barbados.<sup>264</sup>

At the coalface, Dawes continued to struggle with Archdeacon Parry.<sup>265</sup> Parry was closing some schools and was determined to dismiss Charles Thwaites who had refused to relinquish his Methodist connections. Thwaites, who had been involved since the first schools were established before Dawes arrived in Antigua, was eventually removed and reduced to such a state of financial hardship that the Society awarded him a once only gratuitous payment of £50.<sup>266</sup> He later received some relief when the Wesleyan Missionary Society employed him as a schoolmaster. Dawes had campaigned tirelessly for Thwaites to continue in his position and the Society had even agreed to

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<sup>262</sup> Dawes to Bickersteth, 29 Jul 1825. CMS C W/O 31/59b

<sup>263</sup> CMS Minutes, 7 Oct 1825. CMS G/C1/8.

<sup>264</sup> CMS Minutes, Special meeting 28 Nov 1825. CMS G/C1/8.

<sup>265</sup> Parry later had his own connections with Australia when his second son, Henry Parry, was appointed Bishop of Perth in 1876. Mark Haynes 'Parry, Henry Hutton (1826-1893)', *ADB Online*.

<sup>266</sup> CMS Minutes, 18 Apr 1828. CMS G/C1/9.

recommend him to the Bishop for appointment as a catechist, an impossible decision for the Bishop.

At that same meeting Dawes' salary was reduced to £200 per annum because of the decline in school and pupil numbers, a decision Dawes later told the Society he had expected. Dawes' personal finances were a continuing problem throughout his time in Antigua and late in 1826 he applied to the government for financial recognition of his work in New South Wales, placing emphasis on his exploration westwards from Sydney. Through Zachary Macaulay he obtained the support of Watkin Tench for his claim but the government considered that too long a period had elapsed and his claim was rejected.<sup>267</sup>

The situation reached a point where the CMS found the costs of operating the schools in Antigua were far outweighing the benefits being achieved. An expenditure review committee was established to examine the Society's costs, and reported with recommendations to a special meeting in August 1829. The committee noted that at the end of 1824 the number of pupils in the schools was 2,009 but by the beginning of 1829 this had reduced to a mere thirty-nine. The committee placed the reason for this decline on the Church's system of only granting teaching licences to catechists introduced by the Bishop of Barbados, adding that the Bishop had not considered the conditions in Antigua where the success of the schools was largely due to the teachers not being required to be members of the Established Church. In coming to this conclusion the CMS was coming to the same conclusion as Dawes about the impact of the Bishop's policies – not that Dawes would have taken much satisfaction from the findings. The Society had ongoing difficulty in recruiting potential teachers in England, and was not able to find sufficient teachers already resident in Antigua who could meet the Bishop's requirements, and under the circumstances could no longer afford the expense of operations which they resolved to discontinue with 'deep regret'.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Memorial of William Dawes, Dec 1826, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Ad 49, Microfilm CY1414, frames 31-37.

<sup>268</sup> CMS Minutes, Special meeting, 7 Aug 1829. CMS G/C1/10.

Dawes' association with the CMS continued on an intermittent basis while he disposed of the Society's assets, and he gradually disappeared from their records. A brief notice of his death in 1836 appeared in the *Missionary Register* but is unrecorded in the minutes of the Society.<sup>269</sup> Responding to a letter from the Dowager Lady Grey in December 1836, in turn responding to a letter from Charles Thwaites, the Society granted Grace Dawes a payment of £100 to ease her financial situation. The Society made clear it was unable to recognise Grace Dawes as a missionary's widow but made the payment in recognition of her services to the Society. At this point, Grace Dawes also disappeared from the records.<sup>270</sup>

### iii. Struggles: money, health, and faith

Dawes' time in Antigua was a series of concurrent struggles. There was an ongoing financial struggle as he carried out his work on limited income and he was regularly on the borderline of poverty. It was a physical struggle against the elements that not only impeded his movements around the island, but also had a negative impact on his health. However, his biggest struggle was one of faith and morals. Dawes and his colleagues were in constant conflict with those who sought to oppose the education of slaves and their children, and later with the establishment party of the Church of England which sought to rid the island's educational system of Wesleyan and other evangelical influences.

In his initial years in Antigua Dawes was without a source of income. In theory, he had his meagre half-pay as a First Lieutenant of the Royal Marines to underwrite his personal finances, but for reasons unknown at some stage this had ceased to be paid and not until 1821 did Dawes note he had received arrears of his half-pay dating back to 1810, with confirmation it would continue to be paid during his lifetime.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> *The Missionary Register for 1836*, 528.

<sup>270</sup> CMS Minutes, 20 Dec 1836. CMS G/C1/13. The minutes' reference to the 'Dowager Lady Grey' would appear to be an error. The then Lady Grey, the long-time supporter of the English Harbour Schools, was married to Earl Grey, the former British Prime Minister who was still alive in 1836. He died in 1845. The previous Lady Grey died in 1822.

<sup>271</sup> Dawes to CMS, 17 Dec 1821. CMS W/O 31/15.

In January 1817, when Dawes replied to his job offers from the Society, he said he had declined the position in Sierra Leone 'chiefly from a conviction of the great importance of improving his opportunities for good at Antigua'. There was no further mention of any possible role in Haiti also raised at the time, the opportunity undoubtedly lost with the end of the short-lived kingdom.<sup>272</sup>

However, the Society continued to draw on Dawes' knowledge of conditions in Sierra Leone, and in response to a request for advice on overcoming the high levels of sickness and death among the Society's missionaries in Africa, Dawes provided a detailed seven page letter giving examples of individual cases and treatments he had administered. He must have considered his advice important, as he had his letter printed and enclosed with his letter to the Society.<sup>273</sup>

As to finalising arrangements for his employment in Antigua, the Society moved slowly. From his early days on the island, Dawes worked actively on the Society's behalf, employing teachers where necessary, and providing regular reports on the schools' progress. By 1819 there were four at the towns of English Harbour, Bethesda and Falmouth with another on the vast Codrington estates, all being reasonably close together in the south-west corner of the island. It was not until March 1820, when, at the urging of Zachary Macaulay, who praised Dawes for his 'prudence, economy and integrity', that the Society agreed to offer Dawes the position of Superintendent of the schools 'now formed or to be hereafter formed, in connection with the Society, throughout the West Indies' that as we have seen carried a salary of £300 per annum plus travelling expenses, subject to Dawes devoting all his time to the Society's affairs.<sup>274</sup>

A regular income would have provided some certainty and a modicum of relief. Dawes and his wife (and perhaps also his nephew, William Dawes) continued to live in various premises provided by supporters on a gratis basis. Still, the family's finances remained tight. Once during Dawes absence, his wife was

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<sup>272</sup> CMS Minutes, 13 Jan 1817, CMS G/C/1/2.

<sup>273</sup> Dawes to CMS, n.d. (c. Oct 1820). CMS W/O 31/8b. Much of his experience and knowledge had been gained during 1801 when the Sierra Leone colony was without a medical practitioner and Dawes filled the role.

<sup>274</sup> CMS Minutes, 13 Mar 1820. CMS G/C/1/4.

obliged to draw an advance of his salary.<sup>275</sup> Complying with the Society's requirements for his employment, Dawes gradually wound down his dispensary business although it took longer than he hoped as he attempted to avoid having to sell his stock at 'a ruinous loss'. He promised to have the process completed by the end of 1821.<sup>276</sup>

Dawes' salary continued until it was reduced after the schools began winding down, and he was forced to re-commence his dispensary business. After the Society made the decision to reduce his annual salary to £200, Dawes had attempted to find a position in England. Aware that his employment with the Society would not be 'of long continuance', he told the Society he had contacted 'several friends' in England seeking employment, without success. His letter to the Society contained a considerable level of despair at his situation. In addition to seeking employment in England, he also wished to leave the tropics. He noted that nineteen months earlier he had written to a friend seeking 'a situation ten degrees at least further removed from the Equator'. The adverse impact of the heat on his health had been getting worse for 'at least ten years' and Dawes considered he was 'gradually dying of heat'. He added that aware of the effects of the heat as he was, he was prepared to suffer the conditions while he was gainfully employed. He:

was willing to remain & die a somewhat premature death, rather than quit a post which I conceived had been assigned me by the Providence of God.<sup>277</sup>

His personal experience with the climate caused him to advise the Society that when employing prospective European teachers for the West Indies, their salary should include a supplement to allow for regular medical attention.<sup>278</sup>

As the schools developed and Dawes took on the wider responsibilities of the entire West Indies, it came at an increased cost to his health. He regularly complained of rheumatism and, with occasional bouts of fever, was often confined to bed. The first report of rheumatism was in October 1821, when he noted his 'Rheumatic complaints were worse than ever', a situation not helped

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<sup>275</sup> Grace Dawes to CMS, 15 Mar 1823. CMS W/O 32/3.

<sup>276</sup> Dawes to CMS, 17 Dec 1821. CMS W/O 31/15.

<sup>277</sup> Dawes to CMS, 5 May 1829. CMS W/O 31/107.

<sup>278</sup> Dawes to CMS, 21 Jun 1825. CMS W/O 31/57.

by a recent fall from his horse while returning home late at night.<sup>279</sup> By August 1827 it is clear that he was wearing himself out. Writing to the Society, he apologised for the brevity of his letter adding:

For some weeks past, I have at times been much more than usually affected with Rheumatism, debility and languor from the frequent and great changes of weather, accompanied often, as now, with distressing headaches.<sup>280</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that Dawes was approaching sixty-six in August 1827, his correspondence with the CMS indicates that he was still working as hard as he was could. His poor health took a turn for the worse when in March 1828 he fractured his hip. Grace Dawes advised the Society that Dawes was confined to bed for eight weeks, and in July that year Dawes advised that he was still restricted by having to use crutches.<sup>281</sup>

Perhaps his greatest struggle was against those who were actively or passively opposed to his beliefs and those who questioned his moral standards. Dawes was a typical evangelical of the period, somewhat attracted to the strict principles of the Methodists, but in his mind always a member of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. His work in Antigua in promoting education was to inculcate a sufficient level of ability to read the scriptures, lead a moral life and achieve salvation. His attitude is best summed up in his words written after a visit on 14 July 1822 to the Hope school, with 350 pupils.

Teaching, he exclaimed was:

so important a Work; which by the Blessing of God may be means of saving their Souls. I could not help lifting up my heart to God in prayer, that not one of them might be lost.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Dawes to CMS, 15 Oct 1821, CMS W/O 31/14. Grace Dawes had told the Society of her husband's fall, Grace Dawes to CMS, 15 Aug 1821. CMS W/O 32/1.

<sup>280</sup> Dawes to CMS, 1 Aug 1827. CMS W/O 31/89a.

<sup>281</sup> Grace Dawes to CMS, 10 Mar 1828. CMS W/O 32/11. Dawes to CMS, 4 Jul 1828. CMS W/O 31/97.

<sup>282</sup> Dawes, rough journal, Jul 1822, pages not indexed, but filed immediately before CMS W/O 31/129.

As with all evangelicals, his beliefs were Bible based with a heavy emphasis on salvation. A fire at the victualling store at English Harbour in early 1823 resulted in the loss of many books, and Dawes wrote to the CMS requesting replacements. The books requested show his evangelical credentials: copies of Scott's *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, a complete run of the *Christian Observer* (edited until 1804 by Henry Venn then by Zachary Macaulay), Venn's *The Compleat Duty of Man*, Bickersteth's *A Scripture Help*, together with works of English and Scottish divines 'about the time of the Reformation' and a book of 'Hymn & Psalm tunes', but 'more plain and solemn'.<sup>283</sup> The named works were all authored by men well known to Dawes, a reflection of the close world of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. Dawes' request for hymn and psalm tunes that were 'plain and solemn' was typical of the evangelical's approach to music without adornment.

Maintaining moral standards was a constant challenge for Dawes, especially when the perceived threats to morals came from churchmen. His initial cooperative approach with the United Brethren, or Moravian, missionaries soon broke down and he continued to find fault in the activities of some individuals. Dawes reported that one Moravian minister had a 'coloured concubine' who had been administered the sacraments,<sup>284</sup> a situation he referred to again three years later. This was 'a grievous practice' that would only serve to encourage 'the violation of chastity'.<sup>285</sup> Countering this, he could report the benefits of the CMS schools in saving the children, particularly the female children who were the offspring of slave women with estate managers and overseers. Dawes was regularly pleased to be able to report on many of these young girls going on to successful marriages, the bedrock of a solid Christian family.

Perhaps his greatest distress was the threat to moral standards that emerged from the Established Church. Dawes was so concerned by the presence of both the newly arrived Bishop and Archdeacon at a dance at Government House that his complaints occupied four letters to the CMS. This apparent

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<sup>283</sup> Dawes to CMS, 7 Mar 1823. CMS W/O 31/28; 15 Apr 1823. CMS W/O 31/30; 8 May 1823. CMS W/O 31/31.

<sup>284</sup> Dawes to CMS, 23 Apr 1822. CMS W/O 31/20.

<sup>285</sup> Dawes to CMS, 8 Oct 1824. CMS W/O 31/53; 11 May 1825. CMS W/O 31/55.

official church imprimatur on dancing he argued could only have a bad influence on 'the local negroes' and lead to a general decline into debauchery. Charles Thwaites added to the concern by telling Dawes he was worried about the influence on the morals of the young, and Dawes even had to report that he was obliged to dismiss six teachers 'for adultery & fornication'.<sup>286</sup> Dawes was shocked that the ladies at the dance were 'so extravagant' as to change their dresses three times during the course of the night; extravagant perhaps but probably necessary given the exertion in the oppressive heat.

The religious influences of the Establishment of the Church of England particularly troubled him. Dawes continued to pursue the concerns he had raised with Governor D'Urban. The effect of the Bishop's takeover of the schools was 'not the inculcation of real vital Xtianity but almost exclusively, the accomplishment of what will produce a directly opposite effect', he told Bickersteth.<sup>287</sup> Disgusted at hearing that a local clergyman was to return to England to become an Archdeacon, Dawes saw a bleak future where the 'true Members of the Church of England' (the Evangelicals) will have to expect 'dislike and reproach'. But perhaps he got a little carried away when in September 1824 he wrote:

It is not from the slaves I apprehend danger; it is not from any political measures adopted by the Colonists, that I assign evil consequences, nor yet from any of the enactments of His Majesty's Government; but from a lukewarm Clergy whose lives disgrace even their inadequate views of Xtian Theology.

Together these factors would have 'awful results' for 'the slave population and free white & coloured people'.<sup>288</sup>

It was a fight that Dawes could not and did not win.

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<sup>286</sup> Dawes to CMS, 14 Oct 1825. CMS W/O 31/65.

<sup>287</sup> Dawes to CMS, 19 Sept 1825. CMS W/O 31/63.

<sup>288</sup> Dawes to CMS, 20 Sep 1824. CMS W/O 31/135.

## Chapter 5

### Family

William Dawes returned from his first period in Sierra Leone in late March 1794 and married Judith Rutter on 29 May that year. The marriage produced three children: a daughter, Judith, born in September 1795, a son, William Rutter, in December 1797, and another son, John Macaulay in July 1800. Judith was born while Dawes was in Sierra Leone but he was at home for the birth of the other two. His wife Judith died two weeks after the birth of their third child, suggesting that birth complications were the cause of her death, while young John Macaulay died in February 1801, after Dawes had returned to Sierra Leone for his third term as governor.

Dawes' family relationships were not unlike many men of the period undertaking a transnational career.<sup>289</sup> His absences from England meant his wife and children probably relied on the support of other family members. After the death of his wife, Dawes left his eldest son in the care of his grandfather and as we have seen, following his grandfather's death the boy was taken into the household of Rev. Thomas Scott. It is not known who initially cared for his eldest child Judith, although she went with her father and his second wife when they moved to Antigua by which time she was aged eighteen.

William Dawes might not have been one of Zoë Laidlaw's 'colonial elites' but like them he decided to leave his children behind in England as he undertook his periods in Sierra Leone. Remaining in England allowed William Rutter Dawes to have a full education, including a period at Charterhouse School. He abandoned his father's desire that he have a life in the Church and instead studied medicine at St. Bartholomew's Hospital before finally pursuing a career as an astronomer. Clearly he had inherited his father's interest in the science

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<sup>289</sup> Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815-45. Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 19-20.

and was highly successful described 'as one of the leading observational astronomers of his time'.<sup>290</sup>

A nephew, William Dawes, features regularly in Dawes' life and it appears was a constant member of his household. The minutes of the Sierra Leone Council recorded Dawes' arrival in the colony on 6 January 1801 accompanied by his nephew, 'Mstr. Wm. Dawes'.<sup>291</sup> The boy, whose date of birth is unknown, presumably remained with Dawes in the colony until he returned to England two years later, and was present at the Bledlow seminary along with Dawes' son during 1806. The nephew went with the family to Antigua and from time to time Dawes mentions him in correspondence as accompanying him on visits to schools. Judith Dawes married John Jones, an Englishman employed at the dockyard at English Harbour. The return of the Jones family to England in 1825 provides a rare insight into Dawes' private feelings towards his family. In a letter to Pratt at the CMS, Dawes concluded his letter:

The parting of my Daughter and her family without any prospect of ever meeting again in this world has so occupied my mind that I have not been able to add more.<sup>292</sup>

Earlier, the death of a grandchild caused him to note that 'the death of my dear little Grand Daughter has so operated on my mind...that I cannot write more at present'.<sup>293</sup> In April 1826 as he struggled with Archdeacon Parry, Dawes could only note in a letter that he had heard Judith Jones had died in Liverpool.<sup>294</sup>

The parentage of his nephew is a mystery. Dawes is recorded as having two younger sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, but no brother. Both sisters were still referred to by the surname Dawes at the time their father wrote his will in July 1812, when they would have been around fifty and the nephew, not mentioned in the will, likely to have been in his early to mid teens.<sup>295</sup> One of Dawes'

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<sup>290</sup> R.A. Marriott, 'Dawes, William Rutter (1799-1868)', *ODNB Online*, (accessed 23 Sep 2008).

<sup>291</sup> Council minutes, 6 Jun 1801. TNA CO 267/6 f.7.

<sup>292</sup> Dawes to CMS, 18 Jun 1825. CMS W/O 31/56.

<sup>293</sup> Dawes to CMS, 13 Jan 1822. CMS W/O 31/127.

<sup>294</sup> Dawes to CMS, 24 Apr 1826. CMS W/O 31/71.

<sup>295</sup> Will of Benjamin Dawes, dated 27 Jul 1812, proved 8 Jan 1813. TNA PROB 11/1540.

sisters briefly aroused the interest of William Wilberforce in 1796 when he was considering the need for marriage, but it is not known which sister was with Dawes when they stayed at Wilberforce's home after Dawes returned from Sierra Leone that year. Wilberforce was 'half fond of Miss D & sorry to part with her', but he was thirty-seven and she was too young – 'but 18!' In 1796 both Elizabeth and Mary Dawes were around ten years older, and why Wilberforce thought 'Miss D' to be so young remains unresolved, although it suggests the possibility of a third, younger sister yet to be identified. In any event, Dawes did not end up with Wilberforce as his brother in law.<sup>296</sup>

Dawes maintained regular contact with his sister Elizabeth and as late as March 1832 advised the CMS that she would settle an outstanding account on his behalf. At the same time he was also drawing on John Jones, his son-in-law, in respect of Society matters.<sup>297</sup> But it was with his Antigua in-laws that Dawes spent the most time. His wife Grace was a constant companion in his activities with the schools and the other aid societies, together with her sister and brother and through his marriage to the Thwaites. At his death in 1836, Dawes was buried in the Gilbert family plot, where the headstone records that his grave is shared with John Gilbert, his wife Anne (Hart) Gilbert, and Grace Dawes' sister, identified only as M.M. Gilbert.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Entry from William Wilberforce's diary quoted in Anne Stott *Wilberforce. Family and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 73.

<sup>297</sup> Dawes to CMS, 20 Mar 1832, CMS W/O 31/118.

<sup>298</sup> Tombstone details at

[www.tombstones.bb/tombstones/TombstoneDetails.aspx?id=50443](http://www.tombstones.bb/tombstones/TombstoneDetails.aspx?id=50443), accessed 29 Apr 2010. This information is now on the Caribbean Family History site, [www.caribbeanfamilyhistory.org](http://www.caribbeanfamilyhistory.org).

## Part II

### Watkin Tench: a life.

#### Chapter 6

#### The Early Years and the American War

##### i. Family Influences

Watkin Tench was born at Chester on 6 October 1758 and baptised on 10 November.<sup>299</sup> He and his older brother John were the two surviving children of Fisher and Margaret Tench who owned and operated a boarding school in Chester. At least five children had died before Watkin was born.<sup>300</sup> The school employed teachers and there is no evidence that either Fisher Tench or his wife took part in instructing pupils, other than possible instruction relating to Fisher's talents in the intricacies of eighteenth century dance and related social skills that came from his occupation as a Dancing Master. Fisher Tench also used the premises as a dancing academy.<sup>301</sup>

The current scholarship on Fisher Tench's origins has identified his place of birth as either Chester or Nantwich in Cheshire. The historian, L.F. Fitzhardinge, author of the entry for Watkin Tench in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, refers to Fisher Tench as 'a native of Chester', while Victor Crittenden has determined Fisher Tench was born in Nantwich in 1726.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> J P Earwaker, *The History of the Church and Parish of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester* (London, 1898), 159.

<sup>300</sup> L.M. Farrall, (ed), *Parish Registers of the Holy and Undivided Trinity of the City of Chester, 1522-1837* (Chester, 1914) and parish records, St. George's Church, Liverpool. Three children, Briget, John and Thomas were baptised at St. George's between 1745 and 1747.

<sup>301</sup> Joseph Hemingway, *History of the City of Chester from its foundations to the present time* (Chester 1831), 33.

<sup>302</sup> L.F. Fitzhardinge, 'Tench, Watkin (1758-1833)', *ADB Online*, accessed 11 Aug 2011. Victor Crittenden, 'On the track of Watkin Tench', *Margin: Life and Letters in Early Australia*, Jul-Aug, 2003.

Fitzhardinge's endeavours to identify Fisher Tench's origins evolved as he undertook further research. In his Introduction to the first modern edition of Watkin Tench's two books on New South Wales, published in 1961, Fitzhardinge was unable to identify Tench's background, but in a note to the 1979 edition he concluded that Fisher Tench was a native of Chester.<sup>303</sup> He discussed this research in greater detail in an article published in 1964 where he surveyed the geographical spread of the Tench family while looking to identify the correct branch. In correctly identifying Fisher Tench as Watkin's father, he came to the conclusion that Fisher was a 'Chester-born dancing master'.<sup>304</sup> Fitzhardinge was almost right: Fisher did have Cheshire roots but he was not from Chester. Fisher's father, Thomas Tench, was a mercer in London and in the papers admitting Thomas to the Freedom of the City, Thomas' father is identified as Edward Tench of Nantwich, also a mercer.<sup>305</sup> Fisher Tench is almost certain to have been the Fisher Tench who was baptised at St Leonard Shoreditch in London on 28 August 1715, the son of Thomas and Sarah Tench.<sup>306</sup> Confirmation of his birth date is found in his marriage contract of 28 April 1744, where Fisher Tench declared himself to be twenty-eight years of age 'or thereabouts' placing his birth year at c.1716.<sup>307</sup>

What clearly identifies this Fisher Tench as Watkin's father is his period on the London stage and the associations that flow from that time. Playbills of the early eighteenth century indicate that a Fisher Tench performed as a dancer at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane Theatre (known simply as Drury Lane) and Haymarket Theatre from around the 1729-1730 season to as late as 1737-1738. His first known appearance was at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre on 1 January 1729 when he was billed as Fisher Tench Charke, but by May of that year he had dropped the name Charke. He was often referred to as 'Young Tench' or 'Young Master Tench' as he was when he danced in 'The Fairy

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<sup>303</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, vi.

<sup>304</sup> L.F. Fitzhardinge, 'The Origin of Watkin Tench: A Note', *Journal and Proceedings*, (Royal Australian Historical Society), 50, 1, (1964), 74-77.

<sup>305</sup> Freedom of the City Admission Papers, 1691-1925, London, *Freedom admission papers, 1681-1925*, London Metropolitan Archives, COL/CHD/FR/02/0503-0517.

<sup>306</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, St Leonard Shoreditch, Register of baptisms Jul 1709 - Jul 1727.

<sup>307</sup> Copy personally held.

Queen' at Drury Lane Theatre in May 1730 having made his first appearance at that theatre in April the same year. He is also recorded as having danced at the Covent Garden Theatre and Bartholomew Fair.<sup>308</sup> The 1732-1733 season playbills also listed appearances of the dancer and sometime actor, Henry Tench.<sup>309</sup> The baptism register of St Leonard Shoreditch records that Henry Tench, the son of Thomas and Sarah Tench was baptised on 12 September 1711, four years before his brother Fisher.<sup>310</sup>

During Fisher Tench's period on the London stage, he was closely associated with Richard Charke, a musician of the time and later son-in-law to Colley Cibber the Drury Lane theatre owner and British Poet Laureate. The church registers recording Thomas and Sarah Tench's marriage on 18 August 1713 show Sarah's maiden name as Chalke<sup>311</sup>, a likely misspelling of Charke, and if so, Richard Charke is probably a relative. Fisher and Margaret Tench used the name later when their son Chark Tench was baptised in 1752 but, as with a number of children of Fisher and Margaret Tench, the child did not survive infancy.<sup>312</sup> Another son who also did not survive infancy was baptised Richard, although he could well have been named after Margaret Tench's maternal uncle Richard Houghton, a former Mayor of Liverpool.

It is not known how or why Fisher Tench decided to become a professional dancer and join the rather precarious world of the theatre. Although the potential existed for a good income, for dancers this mostly came from sources outside the theatre as a professional dancing master and then only after many years establishing a reputation.<sup>313</sup> Employment was restricted to the theatre

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<sup>308</sup> P.H. Highfill Jr. et al, *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, managers & other stage personnel in London, 1660-1800*, Vol. 14 (Carbondale, c.1973-1993, 16 vols.), 391-2.

<sup>309</sup> Highfill, *A biographical dictionary*, 390-1.

<sup>310</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, St Leonard Shoreditch, Register of baptisms Jul 1709 - Jul 1727.

<sup>311</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, St James, Clerkenwell, Register of baptisms, marriages and burials, 1711-1725.

<sup>312</sup> Farrall, *Parish Registers of the Holy and Undivided Trinity*, 194.

<sup>313</sup> For an understanding of the role and importance of dancing masters during this period, see Anne Bloomfield (Anne Bloomfield and Ruth Watts, 'Pedagogue of the dance: the dancing master as educator in the long eighteenth century', *History of Education*, 37:4 (Jul 2008)), for the technical and professional aspects and John Brewer (John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*.

season and, especially for young performers, pay was generally low. Tench started his career working for the impresario John Rich who had the rights to Covent Garden and associated theatres. In the 1735-6 season, Tench was allowed 172 days work at 6s.8d. per day, a total of £57.6.8. Some sense of his standing can be gained if we compare his income with that of François Nivelon, a leading dancer and dancing master of the time, who earned 25s. per day.<sup>314</sup> Opportunities existed for Tench to supplement his income by the common practice of staging a benefit performance, but that carried with it commercial risk in having to hire the theatre as well as be responsible for the sale of tickets. He held a benefit performance at Lincoln's Inn Theatre on 19 April 1736, for which Rich charged twelve guineas for theatre hire, but unfortunately the records do not reveal the income produced.<sup>315</sup> After the 1737-8 theatre season his name did not appear on any playbills.<sup>316</sup> Fisher Tench took his dancing skills with him when he commenced as a Dancing Master in Chester and while it is not known if he had developed sufficient experience and reputation to be fully successful, he did become recognised as an important member of the local community.

Apart from providing the skills and experience for his later profession as a Dancing Master, Fisher Tench's background in the theatre and his cultural understanding was a major influence on his son, apparent in Watkin's later writings. As well as the strong cultural influences he would have received from his father, Watkin Tench also appears to have inherited his sense of humour. Charles Burney, writing of his time as a student in Chester during the early 1740s, remembered Fisher Tench hurrying from Chester Cathedral during the choirs' singing of the anthem, 'I will sing unto the Lord'. Burney recalled that Tench's response was a loud, 'You may sing unto the Lord if you please; but I'll

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*English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Fontana Press, 1997, 546-550.) who provides a detailed consideration of the important social functions. Bloomfield (Anne Bloomfield, 'Agent of the Enlightenment. The significance of the Dancing Master in creating a civilised society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century', the Early Dance Lecture 2007, [www.earlydancecircle.co.uk/lect2007.html](http://www.earlydancecircle.co.uk/lect2007.html), accessed 14 Jan 2014) also adds depth to the social aspects of the role.

<sup>314</sup> Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'John Rich's Covent Garden Account Books for 1735-36', *Theatre Survey*, 31 (Nov 1990), 207, 231.

<sup>315</sup> Milhous and Hume, 'Covent Garden Account Books', 219.

<sup>316</sup> Highfill, *A biographical dictionary*, 392.

be hanged if you shall sing to me'. Unfortunately for Burney, the episode so tickled his fancy that his laughter caused him to be 'flogged next day'.<sup>317</sup>

Besides the traditional Tench family ties to various towns in Cheshire and its relative closeness to Liverpool, Fisher and Margaret Tench may have been attracted to move to Chester for its growing reputation as a 'leisure town'. There was an active theatre life, and the music festival held annually by Chester Cathedral also encouraged a wide variety of activities and experiences that provided a culturally rich society in which Watkin Tench grew up, strongly influencing his later life.<sup>318</sup> Fisher Tench's standing in the Chester community led him to become a Freeman of the City of Chester, chosen as 'Mr. Mayor's Freeman' on 19 October 1757.<sup>319</sup>

Margaret Tench (also known in some records as Margrett or Margaretta) was a Tarleton, daughter of Thomas Tarleton, a member of a major Liverpool trading family. The Tarletons were active for many years in the Atlantic trade with North America and the West Indies, including the transportation of slaves from the west coast of Africa. They were one of the leading trading operations in Britain during that period of the second half of the eighteenth century, at a time when Liverpool was the country's major port for the Africa-West Indies-Britain trade triangle. Thomas Tarleton, Watkin Tench's grandfather, made at least four journeys carrying slaves to the West Indies as captain of his co-owned vessel *Stannage*. The vessel was capable of carrying about 320 slaves, and Tarleton transported almost 1200 slaves between 1722 and 1726.<sup>320</sup> The family involvement in the slave trade continued for many years, their vessels recorded as having undertaken eighty-nine voyages carrying 26,000 slaves between 1776 and 1800. The family also owned at least one plantation in the West

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<sup>317</sup> S. Klima, et al, *Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney 1726-1769, edited from autograph fragments* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 23.

<sup>318</sup> Jon Stuart, 'Shopping streets as social space: leisure, consumerism and improvements in an eighteenth-century country town', *Urban History*, 25, 1 (1998), 3-12. Stuart provides a close examination of the social and cultural development of Chester during the eighteenth century.

<sup>319</sup> J.H.E. Bennett, *The Rolls of the Freemen of the City of Chester*, pt. II 1700-1805, (Chester 1908), 354.

<sup>320</sup> *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, at [www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces](http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces).

Indies.<sup>321</sup> Unsurprisingly, they became very wealthy and when Thomas Tarleton died in 1730 he left his daughter cash legacies of £1500.<sup>322</sup> The Tarleton family's accumulated wealth is illustrated in the estate of John Tarleton, Margaret Tench's brother, who left £80,000 on his death in 1773.<sup>323</sup>

Whatever Fisher and Margaret's attitude to slavery and the slave trade may have been, they benefited indirectly from the profits of the trade. Their son Watkin was clear in his anti-slavery views and in later life participated in one of the many societies set up to argue against slavery, but he too had benefited. This was true of many involved in the anti-slavery movement.<sup>324</sup> On the basis of the information currently available, there is no evidence of any ongoing relationship between Tench and his Tarleton cousins, although both Watkin and his brother were beneficiaries of Ann Tarleton's estate. Ann was sister to Margaretta (the spelling used in the will) Tench and by her will returned to Watkin and John a gold medal of King Charles I and Queen Henrietta that the brothers had given Ann Tarleton after their mother's death. Ann also provided for the brothers to choose paintings she had created herself. If not, her executors were charged with making the choice.<sup>325</sup>

Fisher and Margaret Tench's school operated from their substantial home on Watergate Street, Chester. It opened in March 1750 as a 'Boarding School for Young Ladies' although there is a reference to an earlier operation in 1747.<sup>326</sup> It promised to provide 'proper Masters and Teachers in every Branch of Education', The family residence and school later moved to premises in Bridge

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<sup>321</sup> N. Draper, 'The City of London and slavery: evidence from the first dock companies, 1795-1800', *Economic History Review*, 61,2 (2008), 442.

<sup>322</sup> Will of Thomas Tarleton, 2 October 1730. TNA PROB.11/646/34.

<sup>323</sup> David Richardson, 'John Tarleton (1755-1841)', *ODNB Online*.

<sup>324</sup> Tench's first cousin Banastre Tarleton, a strong supporter of the trade, later displayed an interest in events in New South Wales when he asked the bookseller-publisher Thomas Cadell for a copy of 'all the pamphlets that have been published relative to South Wales [sic] or Botany Bay'. In September 2014 the letter was being offered for sale by the antiquarian booksellers Hordern House, Sydney. <http://www.hordern.com/pages/books/3211637/tench-colonel-banastre-tarleton/autograph-note-to-the-london-publisher-thomas-cadell>. Accessed 11 Sep 2014.

<sup>325</sup> Will of Ann Tarleton, 1803. TNA PROB 11/1423.

<sup>326</sup> *Adams Weekly Courant*, 2 January 1750, Cheshire Record Office, mf343/3, and Derek Robson *Some Aspects of Education in Cheshire in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: The Chetham Society 1966), 173.

Street, said to have been a temporary refuge for King Charles I during the English Civil War.<sup>327</sup> Perhaps the building's connection to Charles I was the reason Margaret Tench owned the commemorative medal noted above. The final date of the school's operations is not known.

There are no known details of Watkin Tench's schooling, but as evident in his later writings from New South Wales and France, he had a solid knowledge of classical literature seen in his many references to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Shakespeare and Pope. His parents may have taken advantage of the staff engaged for their school to instruct Watkin, but his broad knowledge and sense of inquiry reflects an exposure to a deeper form of education, as might have been provided in a grammar school.

It is unclear how Watkin came to be named. Part of the answer might be found in Tench's dedication of his second New South Wales book to a young Sir Watkin Williams Wynn. There was an important connection with the Williams Wynn family of northeast Wales. This Sir Watkin, the fifth baronet,<sup>328</sup> was twenty-one at the time of the dedication, and it is likely that Tench was recognising a debt to Sir Watkin's father, also Sir Watkin, who received a specific acknowledgement in the dedication.<sup>329</sup> Wynn, the fourth baronet, was a member of the House of Commons at the time and was a son-in-law of the late George Grenville, a former Prime Minister. It was possibly through his influence that Tench received a commission in the Marines. Given Tench's first name it is likely that the Tench and Tarleton families had connections with the Wynns, or that Fisher Tench, newly arrived in Chester, was seeking to establish himself in the town by acknowledging the importance of the Wynn family.

## ii. Service to 1787 and the American War

Tench joined the Plymouth Division of the Marines as a Second Lieutenant in January 1776, aged seventeen. Unlike the Army Marine commissions were not

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<sup>327</sup> Hemingway, *History of the City of Chester*, 33.

<sup>328</sup> The Wynn family tradition of the period was that each eldest son was named Watkin. To avoid confusion, I have emphasised their succession in the baronetcy to assist with identification.

<sup>329</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 125.

purchased, nor was there an entry examination as required by the Navy. Prospective officers relied on patronage for preferment.<sup>330</sup> The possibility that Sir Watkin Williams Wynn provided the recommendation is noted above.

The Marine Corps was the junior service of the British armed forces, established as a branch of the Royal Navy and was the responsibility of the Admiralty. Originally established in 1664 the Corps was later disbanded, and re-formed in 1755. By the time of the American War it was well established, but its officers did not enjoy the same social cachet as their colleagues in the Army and Navy. While that situation improved, especially after George III granted the prefix 'Royal' in 1802, as late as 1814 the novelist Jane Austen drew attention to the lesser social standing of Fanny Price's father, a lieutenant in the Marines.<sup>331</sup> George Farquhar's play 'The Recruiting Officer', later performed in front of Watkin Tench and his colleagues in New South Wales, includes a line dismissive of the social standing of Marine officers.<sup>332</sup> Watkin Tench's father was a gentleman but he was not sufficiently well placed in society or sufficiently wealthy to achieve a better outcome for his son. Most of the officers of the Marine Corps were drawn from the lesser gentry, attracted no doubt to the opportunities for advancement the Corps could provide without the substantial financial outlay of having to purchase a commission. There was also the added financial attraction of the opportunity to share in prize money that had the potential for an occasional supplement to income, although nowhere near as beneficial as it was for naval officers.<sup>333</sup>

The Marines had a multi-function role within the Navy. They were expected to carry out military operations on land and at sea as well as fulfilling the essential role of providing a security service while on board. At sea, they stood guard over weapons, ammunition, and the ship's officers. In action they were as

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<sup>330</sup> Britt Zerbe, "That most useful body of men": the Operational Doctrine and Identity of the British Marine Corps, 1755-1802', (PhD thesis, University of Exeter, September 2010), 72. I have drawn heavily on Zerbe's thesis for an understanding of the development of the Marine Corps. The work is the first in depth study of the Marine Corps during this period.

<sup>331</sup> Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985) (1814). I am grateful to Britt Zerbe for drawing my attention to the Austen reference. Personal communication 12 Dec 2009.

<sup>332</sup> This reference is contained in Zerbe, 'That most useful body of men', 92.

<sup>333</sup> Zerbe, 'That most useful body of men', 44, 72.

exposed to the enemy as all members of the crew, although they provided a more obvious target in the red jackets that were required to be worn at all times while at sea. This was somewhat more dangerous for the senior Marine officers on board who stood on the quarterdeck with the ship's captain and senior officers.

Six months after joining the service, Tench went to sea and into the American war. In July 1776 he joined HMS *Nonsuch*, a third-rate vessel of 64 guns,<sup>334</sup> and remained in American waters for the next three and a half years. *Nonsuch* had been given specific orders to 'intercept, seize or destroy any cruizer or other vessels belonging to the Rebellious Counties of No. America which you may be able to come across'.<sup>335</sup> While serving on *Nonsuch* Tench enjoyed an early supplement to his income when in January 1777 the ship captured an American privateer, the *Charming Sally*.<sup>336</sup> The vessel was almost immediately taken back to England and sold as a prize, part of the proceeds accruing to Tench.<sup>337</sup> Under regulations covering the distribution of prize money, he would have shared one-eighth of the total prize money with other onboard lieutenants and the ship's master. This was a small fraction in itself, but depending on the value of the vessel and its cargo, could still have provided a good boost to the young man's personal finances.<sup>338</sup>

Tench received an early promotion to First Lieutenant in March 1778,<sup>339</sup> and the following month was transferred to the smaller vessel HMS *Mermaid*, a sixth-rate frigate of 28 guns,<sup>340</sup> the size of which meant that he would have had command of the Marine detachment onboard. The American war escalated early in 1778 when France entered the conflict as an ally of the American

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<sup>334</sup> The rating of Royal Navy vessels is discussed later in Chapter 11.

<sup>335</sup> Admiralty to Capt. Walter Griffiths, HMS *Nonsuch*, 19 Dec 1776. TNA ADM 2/102 ff.65-66.

<sup>336</sup> Captain's log, HMS *Nonsuch*, 24 Sep 1775 - 8 Mar 1780. TNA ADM 51/641.

<sup>337</sup> An advance notice of the sale was advertised in the *Sherborne and Yeovil Mercury*, 3 Feb 1777. Microform, Plymouth City Library History Centre.

<sup>338</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean. A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 522.

<sup>339</sup> *The Annual British Army Lists, 1740-1784*, SLNSW, Microfiche 10/NQ355.338094/1.

<sup>340</sup> J. J. B. W. Colledge, *Ships of the Royal Navy* (London: Chatham Publishing 2006), 224.

Congress. A French fleet under Admiral Comte d'Estaing left Toulon on 13 April 1778 arriving off the American coast in July.<sup>341</sup> Tench soon experienced further action, although without any exchange of gunfire, when on 8 July ships belonging to d'Estaing's fleet drove *Mermaid* ashore near the entrance to Delaware Bay.<sup>342</sup>

A recent account of the action claimed that James Hawker, *Mermaid*'s captain, and his officers, having decided they could not escape the French vessels, chose to drive the ship ashore, preferring surrender to the Americans than becoming a prize of the French. Although in a state of rebellion the status of the Americans was ambiguous. They were still nominally British citizens with an ingrained understanding of British law and Hawker probably made his choice with that in mind. At his subsequent court martial held in New York in October 1778, Hawker was acquitted of any blame for the loss of his vessel, the court acknowledging his decision not to allow *Mermaid* to fall into the hands of the French fleet.<sup>343</sup> Along with the other officers and men, Tench became a prisoner of war in Maryland before being transferred to Philadelphia. The British officers had been on parole shortly after capture but in Philadelphia they were gaoled. On 2 August 1778, the officers, including Tench, petitioned the Continental Congress to have their parole renewed and objected to being incarcerated in 'the Common Gaol' where they were denied fresh rations and visitors.<sup>344</sup> The request for parole proved to be a matter of dispute in the Congress and discussion on the petition was deferred on 3 August and again the following day.<sup>345</sup> Henry Laurens, the President of the Continental Congress, noted in a letter to Rawlins Lowndes, President of South Carolina, that the application for parole had many 'able advocates' but 'as strong an opposition', but the opposition may have had more to do with a political dispute between

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<sup>341</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 336-338.

<sup>342</sup> J.H. Owen, 'Howe and d'Estaing in North America, 1778', *Naval Review*, XV, (1927), 262.

<sup>343</sup> Roger Novak, 'The *Mermaid* of Assateague', *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 102, 3 (Fall 2007), 194-203.

<sup>344</sup> Officers of HMS *Mermaid* to Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress, 2 Aug 1778, *Papers of the Continental Congress. Miscellaneous Letters to Congress 1775-89*, Vol.11, 313-4. The papers of the Continental Congress referred to in this and following footnotes are online at the Library of Congress: American Memory site. <http://memory.loc.gov>.

<sup>345</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 3-4 Aug 1778, Vol.11, 743, 747.

Laurens and a fellow South Carolina delegate, William Drayton, who Laurens declared was firmly against granting parole.<sup>346</sup> In his earlier days as a merchant and trader, Henry Laurens had dealings with the Tarleton family estates in the West Indies. It was not until 26 August that Congress finally agreed to parole *Mermaid's* captain, James Hawker, in recognition of his earlier humane treatment of American prisoners, but excluded his officers from the decision.<sup>347</sup> Tench's internment however had ended earlier than his colleagues when on 12 August he and the ship's second lieutenant were ordered by the Marine Committee of Congress to be exchanged for American prisoners.<sup>348</sup> Tench was moved to New York, where he was subsequently posted to HMS *Unicorn* in October 1778. *Unicorn* cruised the American coast and the English Channel before returning to England at the end of 1779.<sup>349</sup>

Tench was promoted to Captain Lieutenant in September 1782,<sup>350</sup> and from December 1782 to December 1784 was on duty in the English Channel on HMS *Grafton* and HMS *Diadem*.<sup>351</sup> His movements from December 1784 until joining the First Fleet almost two years later are unknown. Tench wrote in April 1791 that he had visited and lived in the West Indies but does not say when, and it is possible he did so during this period.<sup>352</sup> The Tarletons owned estates in Dominica and Grenada and the records of Henry Laurens, the American merchant, slave trader and later, politician, include correspondence to a John Tench based in Dominica in 1770 and 1771 as agent for John Tarleton of Liverpool.<sup>353</sup> None of the naval ships he served on in North America visited the

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<sup>346</sup> Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, 7 Aug 1778. *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, Vol.11, 401-3.

<sup>347</sup> Journal of the Continental Congress, 26 Aug 1778, Vol.11, 840.

<sup>348</sup> Congress Marine Committee to John Beatty (Commissary General of Prisoners), 12 Aug 1778. *Letters of Delegates to Congress*, Vol.10, June 1, 1778 – September 30, 1778.

<sup>349</sup> Ships musters, HMS *Unicorn*. TNA ADM 36/1008.

<sup>350</sup> *The Annual British Army Lists, 1740-1784* State Library of New South Wales, microfiche 10/NQ355.3380941/1.

<sup>351</sup> Ships musters, HMS *Grafton*. TNA ADM 36/9586 and HMS *Diadem*. TNA ADM 36/10450, ADM 36/10452.

<sup>352</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 220.

<sup>353</sup> P.M. Hamer, Rogers & Chestnutt (eds), *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, Vol. 7, August 1, 1769 – October 9, 1771 (Columbia: South Carolina Historical Society, 1979), 423.

West Indies while he was on board and he was at his parent's home in Chester for at least part of 1786.

During this first period of his service, Tench became a deeply committed Marine. He developed a strong sense of duty and of loyalty both to the Corps and to those who served with him. This commitment became evident in New South Wales, and most clearly at the end of his career, when loyalty and duty clashed to his cost. In 1786, Tench was on half-pay and volunteered for duty in New South Wales. He received confirmation of his appointment at the end of October that year while at home in Chester.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Admiralty Secretary Philip Stephens to Tench, 27 Oct 1786. TNA ADM 2/1177, f. 525.

## Chapter 7

### New South Wales

Tench chose to say little about the voyage to New South Wales,<sup>355</sup> although brevity did not stop him from offering negative observations on the influence of Catholicism and the autocratic government of the Portuguese rulers of Brazil.<sup>356</sup>

Tench was twenty-nine when he arrived in the colony. He came with a keen sense of inquiry and eagerness to engage with all the experiences offered by a new land, and it is not surprising that he was frustrated that he had to wait three days before he could go ashore at Botany Bay. He took with him a child 'a little boy, of not more than seven years of age' (whose child we don't know) who found his first encounter with the local people a frightening experience.<sup>357</sup> The arrival of the French was an opportunity for both parties to engage in some intellectual conversation and, curious to hear of experiences in the Pacific, Tench recorded his discussions with La Pérouse. The Frenchman's praise for the friendliness of the people of the Sandwich Islands caused Tench to observe that the French must not have visited the island where James Cook was killed.<sup>358</sup>

Tench found himself in conflict with his commanding officer, the Lieutenant Governor Major Robert Ross, just six weeks after the landing at Sydney Cove. Tench was appointed President of a court-martial called by Ross to hear a charge of disorderly behaviour against a Marine private, Joseph Hunt, for striking another Marine private, William Dempsey. The dispute and alleged assault was occasioned by Dempsey's attentions to a female convict, but the matter appears to have been relatively trivial as Hunt had struck Dempsey with 'an open hand' and 'not with the intention of hurting him'. In available evidence of the proceedings the injured Marine does not give the impression of being too

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<sup>355</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 5.

<sup>356</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 23-4.

<sup>357</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 35-6.

<sup>358</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 55.

hurt by the affair and took a soft approach to the assault. Hunt called on Trench and two members of the court, Lieutenants Poulden and Timins, to provide a character reference. They were 'glad' to 'give him the character of a good soldier' – the judges now also character witnesses for the accused (action that does not appear to have been questioned). Hunt was found guilty, but the court made a curious decision as to penalty, which would create a serious rift with Ross, and frustration for Arthur Phillip.

Hunt was asked to choose his own punishment. He was given a choice of asking for a pardon from Dempsey in front of the whole Marine contingent, or receiving one hundred lashes. Ross was both furious and offended, interpreting the decision as an attack on his formal function as commander to sign off on penalties or ameliorate them if desired. He asked the court through Trench to reconsider, which they did without changing their decision. Ross instructed the officers to again consider their verdict but they refused, Trench quoting regulations that forbade a sentence 'to be revised more than once'. The correspondence between the parties, formal and stubborn, came to an end when Ross put all members of the court under arrest. Ross then passed the matter on to Phillip to determine what action was needed 'for the establishment of good order and military discipline'.

Whatever Phillip thought of the affair, and he was clearly frustrated, his concerns were more pragmatic. He pointed out to Ross that with the five officers under arrest and two others unable to do duty because of sickness, the colony had insufficient officers for official duties. He suggested that Ross and the arrested officers submit the matter to the general body of Marine officers, or if that course was not acceptable, to a general court martial. Ross requested a general court martial, but as there were insufficient officers for a court, the arrested officers were released pending the assembly of a court at some future time. In noting their release from their 'present disgraceful situation so notorious', Trench and his colleagues declared that the matter could only be finally settled by a general court martial. The matter continued to weigh on Ross who realised he needed to present his own side of the story, and four months later he decided to send copies of the correspondence between the relevant parties to the Admiralty, asking them to take what action they may

considered necessary.<sup>359</sup> The affair lingered for three years when Tench and his fellow officers again took up the matter with Phillip. Regulations, they pointed out, stated that no Marine could be tried for an offence after the expiration of three years, and this now ruled out the opportunity for a full inquiry into the matter a court martial would have provided. Tench and his colleagues were also concerned that due to their formal status as 'prisoners', they may have been passed over for promotion during the intervening period. The officers asked Phillip to pass on their letter to the Admiralty, which he did without comment. They concluded their letter to Phillip by thanking him for his patience and 'repeated marks of kindness'.<sup>360</sup>

Tench did not let the matter rest. On returning to England he again wrote to the Admiralty asking that the three year period be overlooked given the limitations of holding a court martial while in New South Wales, adding if that was not possible he wished to charge Ross with 'tyranny and oppression'. The Admiralty Secretary, Philip Stephens, advised Tench that the three year limitation ruled out any possibility of a general court martial, and that if he wished to pursue action against Ross he needed to produce specific details and times of Ross's alleged offences. Tench, perhaps wisely, let the matter drop.<sup>361</sup> Tench chose not to mention this affair in his book, but the Marine sergeants Scott and Easty both refer to it, perhaps suggesting the difficulties of officers were of more interest to the ranks than English readers.<sup>362</sup>

It is difficult to see this affair as simply a disagreement over the nature of a sentence handed down by the court martial Tench presided over. However innocuous the members of the court may have considered the offence, order

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<sup>359</sup> Ross to Secretary Stephens (with enclosures), 9 Jul 1788. *HRNSW*, Vol.1, Pt.2, 156-164. Other relevant correspondence between the parties together with the proceedings of the court martial and Ross's correspondence with Phillip, were forwarded by Phillip to Lord Sydney; Phillip to Sydney, 16 May 1788, *HRNSW*, Vol.1, Pt.2, 139-141. The originals are at TNA ADM1/3824, NSW Return of Officers.

<sup>360</sup> Phillip to Secretary Stephens, 25 Mar 1791, enclosing correspondence from Tench and others to Phillip. *HRNSW*, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, 482-3.

<sup>361</sup> Secretary Stephens to Lieutenant Colonel Duval, 23 Oct 1792. *HRNSW*, Vol.2, 482-3.

<sup>362</sup> Scott, *Remarks on a Passage*, 37; John Easty, *Memorandum of the transactions of a voyage from England to Botany Bay 1787-1793* (Sydney: The Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales, 1965), 99.

and discipline meant there was a need to impose a penalty. Perhaps they sought to have the punishment dealt with as leniently as possible. This was at odds with the usual harsh punishments handed down under the Articles of War, but unfortunately for our understanding, the Court did not provide reasons for its decision. Tench, two of the other four officers on the court, the defendant, the prosecuting Marine private, and the convict woman who was the subject of their interest, had all travelled to New South Wales on the transport *Charlotte*. Tench as President of the Court was the correspondent with Ross and Phillip during this affair and even if it is to be expected that he regularly consulted his fellow members of the bench it was he who incurred Ross's ire. Ross expressed his feelings to Secretary Stephens when he complained he had been subjected to 'such mortifying things, more particularly from Captn-Lieut. Tench'.<sup>363</sup>

Joseph Hunt and Tench were involved in a far more serious court martial the following year. Tench and his fellow members of the Court sentenced six Marine privates to death for stealing from the stores. Hunt, heavily involved in the thefts turned King's Evidence against his colleagues and was pardoned. Tench described the executions as 'an awful and terrible example of justice' and rather surprisingly referred to the six men as 'the flower of our battalion'. David Collins thought otherwise, recording that they 'had long been verging towards this melancholy end'. Tench's comment is impossible to explain. His reference to the event is a short paragraph of just seventy-two words and does not mention he was involved in the verdict. He felt it would be 'disingenuous to suppress' the event but coming at the end of a chapter it reads almost as an afterthought.<sup>364</sup>

Both his contemporaries and historians have generally judged Ross a difficult man. Marine Lieutenant Ralph Clark described him as 'the most disagreeable commanding officer I ever Know', and David Collins wrote to his father that 'tranquillity may be said to have been our guest' after Ross had moved to Norfolk Island. Collins even added the suggestion that it was unfortunate that

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<sup>363</sup> Ross to Stephens, 9 Jul 1788. *HRNSW* Vol. 1, Pt.2, 158.

<sup>364</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 145; Collins, *An Account*, 49.

Ross had not gone down with the ship when HMS *Sirius* was wrecked.<sup>365</sup>

There is no apparent record of Tench and Ross having any form of disagreement before the court martial affair and as they travelled to New South Wales on different ships, their contact with one another would have been limited. It is possible however that the two men had disagreements before joining the First Fleet as both belonged to the Plymouth Division of Marines. Their various sea postings meant that there were few common periods at Plymouth but both men were nominally at the Plymouth barracks for two or three years prior to the fleet sailing to New South Wales. That this serious disagreement took place just a short time after arrival in the colony may add to the various interpretations of Ross's character, but it also displays some of Tench's character traits that continue to emerge throughout his career. Having moved up two ranks in just six years, Tench was already displaying his leadership and his commitment to the Corps, together with a determination to hold to a course of action in which he believed, but this was interlaced with occasional lapses of judgement or a failure to see the longer-term ramifications of his decisions.

Tench and Ross fell out again five months later. Confusion arising from conflicting orders given by Tench and Ross had resulted in two Marine privates being court-martialled for disobeying orders. The two soldiers were acquitted but Ross was so incensed by Tench's involvement that he wrote to Philip Stephens asking for the Admiralty to have Tench recalled, a request that was simply ignored.<sup>366</sup> Phillip solved the Ross problem by sending him to Norfolk Island, his absence from Port Jackson conveniently extended by the wreck of HMS *Sirius*.

In late June 1789, Tench took a small party, including John Lowes from HMS *Sirius*, north-west from Rose Hill. On the second day they discovered a river 'nearly as broad as the Thames at Putney' flowing towards the north. Phillip

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<sup>365</sup> P.G. Fidlon and R.J. Ryan (eds), *The Journal and Letters of Lt. Ralph Clark 1787-1792*, (Five Dock, Australian Document Library 1981), 263; David Collins to A.T. Collins 23 Mar 1791 cited in John Currey, *David Collins. A Colonial Life* (Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 71.

<sup>366</sup> Ross to Stephens, 1 Oct 1788. *HRNSW*, Vol.1 (Pt 2), 197.

named the river the Nepean after Evan Nepean, then Under-Secretary in the Home Office.<sup>367</sup>

This short expedition resulted in some of Tench's most descriptive writing of the experience of discovering new country:

We continued to march all day through a country untrodden before by an European foot. Save that a melancholy crow now and then flew croaking over head, or a kangaroo was seen to bound at a distance, the picture of solitude was complete and undisturbed.<sup>368</sup>

Here Tench is creating images of country that is desolate yet somehow comforting. Similar writing occurs throughout his two books, showing that he, like a number of his colleagues, found it confusing. By the time Tench left the colony he was still undecided about its future' and looking at the broader picture he decided to:

leave to others the task of anticipating glorious, or gloomy, consequences, from the establishment of a colony, which unquestionably demands serious investigation, ere either its prosecution, or abandonment, be determined.<sup>369</sup>

Tench's writings have been ably considered by a number of authors who have studied his ability to engage his readers and his commitment to writing narrative. His many literary allusions and quotations have been analysed and considered from a literary perspective, but for the historian they show the very strong influences of his upbringing.<sup>370</sup> In the absence of any substantial knowledge of Tench's mother, it is clear that he was moulded by his father's strong artistic and cultural experience.

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<sup>367</sup> I have used the words 'discovered' 'discovery' etc., as they refer to the first European encounter. The landscape and its flora and fauna had been well known to the indigenous inhabitants for millennia.

<sup>368</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 154. The full account of the expedition is at 153-155.

<sup>369</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 300.

<sup>370</sup> For analysis and consideration of Tench as author, see for example, Mitchell, 'Tench's Sentimental Enclosures', 23-33; Michael C. Flynn, 'Watkin Tench', *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 230: 'Australian Literature, 1788-1914', 381-386; Edwards, 'Watkin Tench and the Cold Track of Narrative', 56-80.

On 4 August 1790, Tench, Dawes and Worgan set out on the first of the journeys undertaken together. They travelled southwest from Rose Hill, now Parramatta, accompanied by Sergeant Isaac Knight of the Marines. Marine Private James Scott recorded that the land they traversed was 'very unfit for agriculture', a comment repeated by Collins, who it appears had discussed the journey with Tench. Collins added that the country was 'intersected everywhere with deep ravines'. The normally descriptive Tench must have decided that this expedition lacked sufficient interest to expand further and summed up the journey with 'nothing very interesting was remarked'.<sup>371</sup> Two weeks later the party went out again, this time accompanied by Captain William Hill of the newly arrived New South Wales Corps. Travelling northwest from Rose Hill they met the Nepean and followed it to where Tench had discovered it in June 1789. Again Tench had little to say, the expedition rating one short paragraph in his record. James Scott recorded that they found 'a Very Bad Country, sandy and covered with 'Brush Wood'.<sup>372</sup>

James Scott, by now promoted to Sergeant, wrote that Tench and Dawes with Rev. Richard Johnston and 'several other gentlemen', left the settlement on 20 September 1790 on a three day excursion to Broken Bay. Worgan was not mentioned as a member of the party but Tench's wording implies that he was. The journey obviously did not excite Tench too much as he devoted just two sentences to his description of it, just enough to refer to Broken Bay's 'desolate incultivable shores'. They did bring back some soil samples for analysis.<sup>373</sup>

The fourth expedition which Dawes, Tench and Worgan experienced together was no journey of exploration but the infamous punitive expedition of December 1790. The action was called by Governor Arthur Phillip as a retaliatory measure against the Aborigines of the Botany Bay area after the killing of John McIntyre, one of a small number of convicts appointed to shoot game. McIntyre was speared on 9 December 1790, during a hunting excursion near the north arm of Botany Bay, an attack that appears to have been deliberately intended to cause

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<sup>371</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 174-5; Scott, *Remarks on a Passage*, 54; Collins, *An Account*, 107.

<sup>372</sup> Scott, *Remarks on a Passage*, 55.

<sup>373</sup> Scott, *Remarks on a Passage*, 57; Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 175.

maximum physical damage, as the spear used was a killing spear with a shaft studded with sharp stones that would dislodge in the body when the shaft was removed. Tench had recorded an earlier incident when McIntyre's presence caused 'so much dread and hatred' in Phillip's friend Baneelon,<sup>374</sup> and it has been suggested that McIntyre must have done an act or acts of aggression that had upset the Aborigines to the extent that they required this level of revenge.<sup>375</sup>

It was too much for the previously patient Phillip. He had specifically prohibited reprisals after he was speared earlier in the year, but violent incidents had been increasing and this was one too many. Tench was ordered to lead a party to the Botany Bay region and bring back two prisoners after killing ten others and returning with their heads. In explaining his motives, Phillip told Tench that Aborigines had killed at least twenty-seven people since the settlement commenced, and that he believed that the source of trouble was from the groups of the Botany Bay region. In this Baneelon and Colbee, who indentified the killer as Pemulwuy from that region, no doubt helped him.

Phillip was concerned to confine the mission to the twelve intended victims and made clear to Tench that women and children were not to be harmed and shelters not damaged. He instructed that any weapons found were to be destroyed and the remnants left to be discovered by the locals. Phillip insisted that the Aborigines not be deceived in any way and instructed Tench that should any be sighted he and his party should make no signs of recognition that might cause a false sense of security. In taking these steps, Phillip's aim was to make clear to the entire native population that this was a retaliatory measure, not a general act of aggression. He wanted to punish but not turn the expedition into the beginning of a longer-term confrontation.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Baneelon, or Bennelong, was one of a number of local indigenous people who regularly interacted with the European settlement. Baneelon was initially captured by Phillip, but the two went on to form a level of friendship. Phillip took Colbee captive at the same time as Baneelon, and while not as close with the Europeans he was regularly at the settlement. Both feature regularly in the contemporary accounts by Tench and his colleagues.

<sup>375</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 204-5.

<sup>376</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 208.

Phillip's reaction was out of character, and in some way reflecting his personal unease with his decision, he asked Tench for his views and sought any alternative suggestions. Tench has related his account of the meeting with care, in order to make clear that Phillip had genuine concerns about his orders. He told his readers that extreme circumstances required extreme measures, but perhaps was also conscious that his readers wanted to see confirmation of the civilising aspects of British rule.<sup>377</sup>

Tench suggested that the mission be toned down, a lesser number be captured, and all brought back alive to Sydney Cove where one or two be selected for 'retaliation' and the rest freed at some time. Tench said that Phillip 'was pleased instantly to adopt' the suggestion and amended the mission's goal to bringing back six Aborigines of whom two would be hanged and the rest sent to Norfolk Island. Phillip asked Tench to select two lieutenants to accompany a party that would also comprise George Worgan and his Surgeon's Mate, John Lowes, and forty-seven soldiers.<sup>378</sup> Tench chose Dawes and John Poulden, a lieutenant of Marines. Poulden was well known to Tench as both came from the Plymouth Division of Marines. They had travelled together to New South Wales on the transport *Charlotte* and Poulden had served with Tench on the court-martial, discussed previously, which resulted in their arrest after an altercation with Ross.

From what can be discerned of Tench's own character and beliefs and his successful suggestions to have Phillip tone down the level of punishment, it is likely he found the purpose of the mission distasteful. Nonetheless his sense of duty would have been quite clear.

The expedition was a failure. The party of fifty-two men marching through the bush was enough to ensure that any Aborigines in the area would have quickly absented themselves, but word of the expedition had already filtered down. On the second day the party met Colbee who was, perhaps coincidentally, fishing on the Bay, and who told them that Pemulwuy had long gone further south.

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<sup>377</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 209.

<sup>378</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 209.

Tench normally made his sense of disappointment in his failures quite clear, but in his record of the mission there is no evidence that he felt a lack of success.

The expedition also brought other problems, and in addition to its emotional and physical challenges. Tench was obliged to deal with some troubles with the soldiers under his command, forcing him to court martial a private from the New South Wales Corps on the first night. John Easty, a Marine private, noted the incident, although Tench chose not to mention it in his account and preferred to sum up the journey with a commentary on the poor condition of the soil.<sup>379</sup> However, he was prepared to indicate to his readers his own sensible and concerned approach, when he related his suggestions to Phillip for softening the purpose of the expedition.

After the group returned, Phillip decided on another attempt and again appointed Tench leader, this time without Dawes and Worgan. In fact no surgeons were attached to the party, suggesting a lesser expectation of success. Two junior officers of the New South Wales Corps and a detachment of thirty-eight soldiers accompanied Tench. The expedition left on 22 December, two days after McIntyre died from his wounds, and returned two days later without success. The only danger to life occurred when Tench and some of the party were trapped in mud while crossing a waterway, an experience that caused some anxiety, especially for one soldier who was trapped in mud to his chest. Tench recorded that the party returned 'in disappointment and vexation', an emotion likely to have been exacerbated by their 'fruitless peregrination'.<sup>380</sup> With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to conclude that the two expeditions had little hope of success. A large party that included officers less than fully committed to their mission and soldiers weighed down with equipment and unsuitable clothing was always going to be no match for the agile local population. Perhaps Phillip and Tench were aware of that, for

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<sup>379</sup> Easty, *Memorandum of the transactions of a voyage*, 120. Tench, *First Four Years*, 211.

<sup>380</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 205-215.

Hunter and Collins both concluded the two expeditions had little chance of achieving their aims.<sup>381</sup>

In April 1791 Tench was a member of a large party that included Phillip, Collins, White, and Dawes. The expedition aimed to confirm that the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers were the same waterway. The party left Rose Hill on 11 April and returned five days later after failing to achieve its goal. In recording the expedition, Tench gives the most extensive description of any of his journey: twelve pages in the modern edition of his work. He provided a detailed description of the equipment carried by the members of the expedition (except Phillip who was not subject to such labour), camp details, and the physical challenges of the journey, but it was the Aborigines who received most attention. Colbee and Boladeree, another 'friend' of the Europeans, were part of the expedition, providing Tench with an opportunity to observe their responses to the country and their sense of fun and amusement at the difficulties the Europeans found with the conditions. Tench was unimpressed with the country, and when the party climbed a small hill, or as Tench described it 'this pile of desolation', he was subjected to one of the rare examples of Phillip's sense of humour when Phillip named the site 'Tench's Prospect Mount'. It is unlikely that Tench missed the joke, but he chose simply to record the naming.<sup>382</sup>

Frustrated with the previous expedition, Tench and Dawes together with their regular travelling companion, Sergeant Isaac Knight, set out again on 24 May 1791 and this time were successful in establishing that the Hawkesbury and Nepean were the same river. The journey was not without its dangers. When Tench and his team struggled to cross the river they were exploring, he and Knight had considerable difficulties until two Aborigines safely assisted them.<sup>383</sup> Tench had strong praise for his helpers, acknowledging that they had the exploring party at a considerable disadvantage should they have chosen to act upon it:

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<sup>381</sup> Collins, *An Account*, 118-9; Hunter, *Journal*, 328-9. Inga Clendinnen also argues that Phillip did not expect that the expedition would achieve its official aims, in *Dancing with Strangers*, 180-1.

<sup>382</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 228.

<sup>383</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 234-7.

Let him whose travels have lain among polished nations, produce me a brighter example of disinterested urbanity, than was shown by these denizens of a barbarous clime, to a set of destitute wanderers, on the side of the Hawkesbury.<sup>384</sup>

Colourful, but no doubt sincere.

Tench's record of the journey that he titled 'the last expedition' is mostly concerned with the level of cold, and his temperature readings during the course of each day and night. Tench was amazed at the impact of frost, but perhaps the cold was extraordinary in the context of their time in the colony as he suggested that the cold 'was judged to be greater than had ever before been felt'.<sup>385</sup>

The local Aboriginal people were an instant curiosity for the Europeans. Tench's initial observations of the Aborigines are similar to other contemporary writers although Tench's descriptions are more expansive. Their physical attributes as well as their accommodation, weapons and implements are all extensively described, reflecting not only the natural curiosity of Tench and his colleagues but also his readership. These people were after all totally foreign to his readers' experience. There was no evidence of settlement or civilisation as the colonists knew it, the Aborigines even being different from the Native Americans that a number of the English had encountered. Still, they were close enough for Tench and his colleagues to refer to the people as 'Indians'.<sup>386</sup> The nineteenth century newspaper editor Cyrus Redding remembered that Tench had 'expected to see a race like the American Indians'.<sup>387</sup> Tench displayed an interest in the local languages but it is difficult to ascertain how strong it was. Throughout his books, mostly in the second, Tench recounted a number of interactions with the Aborigines, particularly the principal characters who associated with the settlement, but it is not until the final chapters of his second

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<sup>384</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 236.

<sup>385</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 238.

<sup>386</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 46-53.

<sup>387</sup> Cyrus Redding, *Personal Reminiscences of Eminent Men*, Vol. III, (London: Saunders, Oatley & Co., 1867), 267. Redding had founded the *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser* and had been editor of the *Plymouth Chronicle*.

book that he provided detailed commentary and observations of the people and their customs.

Tench claimed to be interested in furthering the study of the local languages and discussed the publication of a dictionary or general study with Dawes. Apart from visits to the observatory, the journey home would have provided an opportunity for the two men to discuss the project at length, and Tench was slightly miffed when Dawes who 'had promised to co-operate with me' had no sooner arrived in England than he departed for Sierra Leone.<sup>388</sup> Tench gave the impression that he was the lead in this proposed venture although Dawes had done the actual work in recording the language. Tench may have provided a commercial input as he had experience in arranging publication and was well advanced on the preparation of his second book. Many decades later, Cyrus Redding remembered conversations with Tench who 'could say nothing about the language spoken by these aborigines' other than 'it was very pleasing and soft in sound'.<sup>389</sup>

Tench's account of the expedition to the Hawkesbury River in April 1791 includes discussion of the difficulties the colonists had with the local language. The variations in dialect between the Aborigines of the Sydney Cove area and those further inland puzzled Tench, as the distance between the two was only thirty-eight miles (sixty-one kilometres), yet Sydney was only about twenty miles (thirty-two kilometres) from Rose Hill where Tench says the dialect of the Sydney Cove area was still spoken. Their two Aboriginal companions found that they could understand much of what was spoken around the Hawkesbury area although many words left them confused. Tench provided a small table of the more apparent differences. Language differences had emerged at the very beginning of the settlement when the colonists, relying on translations James Cook made eighteen years earlier, found that the word 'Kangaroo' was completely unknown at Sydney Cove. Cook's language records were assembled during his short period in what is now north Queensland while his ship was undergoing repairs. Understanding the local languages was further complicated by the manner of its usage. To emphasise this Tench made the

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<sup>388</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 291.

<sup>389</sup> Redding, *Personal Reminiscences*, 272-3.

extraordinary confession that for three years the colonists had been using the word 'Bée-al' (the spelling is Tench's) in conversations with the locals understanding it to mean 'good' when in fact it meant 'no', a misunderstanding that Tench implies somehow avoided total confusion over that period.<sup>390</sup> Clearly it was going to require a much closer study before a full understanding of the local languages could be achieved.

Watkin Tench's descriptions of the landscape are in the accounts of his various expeditions, but towards the end of his time in the colony he admitted his initial complimentary observations of the colony should not be taken to mean that New South Wales was anything like as beautiful as the countryside at home. 'The first impression made on a stranger is certainly favourable' Tench wrote, but the observer 'looks in vain for the murmuring rills and refreshing springs, which fructify and embellish more happy lands'.<sup>391</sup> Like several of his colleagues, Tench's initial observations found that the land around Botany Bay did not match Cook's descriptions of it, finding they could not identify the 'natural meadows' Cook observed.<sup>392</sup> Tench added later that if it were not for the accuracy of Cook's navigational readings it would be easy to believe 'that those who described the contiguous country, had never seen it'.<sup>393</sup>

Robert Haworth is one of those 'historians and admirers of Cook' whom J.C. Beaglehole claimed suffered 'some distress' at the criticisms of Cook's reports. Haworth claimed that a number of English commentators, 'especially Tench', had developed 'a "tall poppy" hostility' to everything Cook and Banks wrote about Botany Bay and the surrounding area.<sup>394</sup> Without engaging in a close analysis and comparison of Cook's observations with those of Tench and his colleagues, it is important to stress that the sea-faring men of the time held

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<sup>390</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 230-1. As Inga Clendinnen has observed 'the consequences are too daunting even to contemplate'. Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, 66. The process by which the Europeans attempted to understand the local languages such as Tench's comparison of the Sydney area language to Latin, and Dawes and Collins both finding similarities to Greek, are discussed by Alan Atkinson. (Atkinson, *Europeans in Australia*, Vol.1, 145-152.

<sup>391</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 260.

<sup>392</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 65.

<sup>393</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 155.

<sup>394</sup> Haworth, 'The Several Discoveries', 20.

Cook in the highest regard. Tench stated 'I will never without diffidence and hesitation presume to contradict the narratives of Mr. Cook', while George Worgan was thankful that 'our great Circumnavigator' had discovered Port Jackson, and repeated Tench's comments that La Pérouse had high praise for the reliability of Cook's charts.<sup>395</sup>

Tench showed a strong interest in the development of farming and agriculture in the colony. With other contemporary writers, he noted the unsuccessful attempts to establish basic food gardens during the early days of the settlement, and in November 1790 referred to the situation at Sydney Cove where 'cultivation, on a public scale, has for some time past been given up'.<sup>396</sup> He later recorded two tours of the cultivated areas at Rose Hill, near present day Parramatta, the first in November 1790 when he toured the area with Rev. Richard Johnson, whom Tench described as 'the best farmer in the country'.<sup>397</sup> He also described how the convict farmer James Ruse developed his farming techniques over a year from November 1790 to when Tench returned to Rose Hill in early December 1791, and found Ruse sufficiently successful to be off-stores.<sup>398</sup>

Tench was pleased with what he found during this final tour. He wrote that the farms maintained by convicts were in good order, and gave details of a number of them, listing names, background and areas under cultivation. He attempted to estimate crop yields but having done so decided that 'a man of so little experience of these matters, as myself, cannot speak with much confidence'.<sup>399</sup> Tench was again very conscious of his readers: a dash of knowledge followed by a humble qualification allowed him to display both an apparent extensive knowledge of a broad range of subjects while not opening himself to possible future criticism. Tench concluded his survey of the area by describing the planned layout for the settlement at Rose Hill (by now named Parramatta by Phillip), plans that impressed Tench sufficiently to declare it the future centre of

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<sup>395</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 78. Worgan, *Journal*, 7, 30.

<sup>396</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 191.

<sup>397</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 193.

<sup>398</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 197-8; 256-7.

<sup>399</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 250-3.

the colony, unfairly and incorrectly dismissing Sydney Cove as just 'a depot for stores'.<sup>400</sup>

Five months after the landing at Sydney Cove the colony celebrated the King's Birthday. Tench was unusually matter of fact in his reporting of the day's events simply recording that the officers dined with the Governor, the seamen and convicts enjoyed free grog and a bonfire was held.<sup>401</sup> He was more descriptive of the next year's celebrations even if he may have found part of it uncomfortable. Some convicts presented a performance of George Farquhar's play 'The Recruiting Officer' in a makeshift theatre that impressed Tench with its ingenuity and charm.<sup>402</sup> The play contains lines far from complimentary about the status of Marine officers, such as when the character Sergeant Kite reports to Captain Plume, one of the recruiting officers, 'I have sent away a shoemaker and a tailor already, one's to be a Captain of Marines'.<sup>403</sup> The play was a popular one of the period and Tench was probably familiar with it. He made no comment on its contents but he did compliment the performers.<sup>404</sup>

Contemporary records from New South Wales are almost unanimous in their positive observations of Tench. The exception has already been referred to – Tench had upset Major Ross to the extent that he requested Tench be recalled. Daniel Southwell, the Master's Mate from HMS *Sirius* found Tench 'polite and sensible', a 'worthy officer and affable gent',<sup>405</sup> while Captain William Hill balanced the expected physical rigours of an expedition with Tench and Dawes against the benefits of being with two 'gentlemen whose minds are highly

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<sup>400</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 259.

<sup>401</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 60.

<sup>402</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 152.

<sup>403</sup> Tench's father, Fisher Tench, performed at the Drury Lane Theatre when it was owned by the actor and impresario Colley Cibber, later to be father in law to Fisher's relative Richard Charke. Cibber played the other recruiting officer Captain Brazen in the first performance of the play in 1706 and continued to perform the role to great renown until his retirement. Helene Koon, *Colley Cibber: A Biography* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1981), 51.

<sup>404</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 152.

<sup>405</sup> David Southwell to Mrs. Southwell, 14 Apr 1790 and 27-30 Jul 1790. *HRNSW*, vol. II, 710 and 719.

cultivated, and of great scientific knowledge' and looked forward to 'the mental satisfaction I must receive with them'.<sup>406</sup>

Tench's social and intellectual skills attracted much attention. Tench formed a close bond with the Macarthurs while in the colony, Elizabeth Macarthur writing 'there are few days pass that we do not spend some time together'.<sup>407</sup> Almost twenty years later, when her son Edward arrived in London to begin the defence of his father for his involvement in deposing Governor Bligh, Tench wrote to him expressing sympathy for the Macarthur cause and his support of Bligh's removal. Bligh, a friend had told him, was 'not only a tyrant, but a poltroon'.<sup>408</sup> Tench was strongly committed to the rule of law and the formal structures of authority all his life, and on the face of it, it is strange that he should have been so strong in his support of Bligh's removal. After all, poltroon or not, the Governor had been appointed by the Crown, but Tench is taking the view that the rule of law had been subverted and some corrective action had been necessary.<sup>409</sup> The following month Tench was in London and met Edward Macarthur where they discussed the Bligh removal and the case against Edward's father John.<sup>410</sup>

Tench left the colony on 18 December 1791 with other members of the Marine contingent, arriving at Portsmouth in mid June 1792.

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<sup>406</sup> Captain Hill to Wathen, 26 Jul 1790. *HRNSW*, Vol. I, Pt 2, 371.

<sup>407</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 Mar 1791, in Macarthur-Onslow, *Early Records*, 28-9.

<sup>408</sup> Tench to Edward Macarthur, 2 Sep 1808, in Macarthur-Onslow, *Early Records*, 163-4.

<sup>409</sup> While critical of Bligh's role as Governor, Tench was complimentary of Bligh's navigational skills, particularly in the long voyage after he and others were cast adrift following the mutiny on HMS *Bounty*. Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 220.

<sup>410</sup> Edward Macarthur to John Macarthur, 25 Oct 1808, in Macarthur-Onslow, *Early Records*, 175-6.

## Chapter 8

### The Marines

#### i. War with France

Watkin Tench was married in October 1792, and did not go to sea again until he joined HMS *Alexander* in March 1794. The National Archives at Kew notes that no records of service of Marine officers commissioned before 1793 exist, and because of the lack of relevant records it is not possible to positively identify Tench's activities between his return from New South Wales and his posting to HMS *Alexander*. Tench was in charge of *Alexander's* complement of eighty marines during an initial uneventful period that included a voyage to Ireland, returning with French prisoners. In May-June 1794 *Alexander* was part of the auxiliary fleet supporting the battle known as the Third Battle of Ushant, but saw no action.

Action came aplenty in November 1794 when *Alexander* was overwhelmed by three French ships of the line off the coast of Brest, and after a lengthy battle that cost thirty-six British lives and the near destruction of the ship, was forced to surrender.<sup>411</sup> Writing to the Admiralty immediately after the action, the ship's captain, Rear Admiral Richard Bligh, singled out some officers, including Watkin Tench, for their 'Bravery and good Conduct', that he held in 'the highest Estimation'.<sup>412</sup>

After six months in France, a prisoner exchange was arranged and the officers repatriated to Britain, and as required after the loss of a naval ship, a court-martial was held at Portsmouth in May 1795. At the court, Bligh expanded on the details of the action he had previously sent to the Admiralty, noting he had consulted with his officers before deciding to surrender the ship. As with all similar courts-martial, the Admiralty was concerned to establish that everything

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<sup>411</sup> Joseph Allen, *Battles of the British Navy*, 2 vols. (London: H.G. Bohn, 1852), Vol.1, 405.

<sup>412</sup> Bligh to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the Admiralty, 23 November 1794, in Tench, *Letters from Revolutionary France*, 167.

possible had been done to save the ship and other officers were called to corroborate Bligh's evidence. In his evidence, Tench, who had been promoted to the rank of Major in the army while in France,<sup>413</sup> recounted how he was stationed physically close to Bligh throughout the action and recorded his admiration for him. The court rapidly came to the determination that Bligh and his officers be 'Most honourably acquitted'.<sup>414</sup>

Tench was posted to HMS *Polyphemus* in October 1796 and remained on that ship until January 1800. A substantial period was spent based at Cork, Ireland where Tench was possibly recruiting for the Marines, and cruising in Irish waters. Towards the end of 1797, *Polyphemus* made a journey to the Cape of Good Hope returning via St Helena.<sup>415</sup> Here Tench met with the Governor, Robert Brooke, and they discussed the current political situation in Britain and Europe. Brooke passed on this information to Lord Macartney, Governor of the Cape, in an addendum to his otherwise general correspondence marked 'Private. Intelligence principally from Maj. Tench'. According to Brooke, Tench covered the general state of affairs in Europe, particularly in France, and the increasing likelihood of renewed hostilities. Tench commented on the treaty arrangements between Portugal and France and the difficulties this caused for the Royal Navy in its activities against Spain. He referred to the breakdown of peace negotiations between the British envoy Lord Malmsebury and the leaders of the French Directory who had recently been successful in the army backed coup known as the coup of 18 Fructidor (4 September 1797). Tench's view was that the resultant unrest in France would enable 'England to strengthen and recollect herself after the late shocks she has sustained at Home'.<sup>416</sup> He also noted the possibility of the Ottoman Empire seeking the support of Austria-Hungary because of concern with 'what had befallen Venice'.<sup>417</sup> Tench would

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<sup>413</sup> Army List, 1 Jan 1795.

<sup>414</sup> Court-martial regarding the loss of HMS *Alexander*, TNA ADM 1/5332.

<sup>415</sup> HMS *Polyphemus* Ship's Musters. TNA ADM 36/12538; ADM 36/12539; ADM 36/12541; ADM 36/12542. Steel's Navy List, Jan 1798.

<sup>416</sup> Those 'late shocks' are not identified but as a Royal Marine Tench was likely to have been referring to the recent naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in April and May.

<sup>417</sup> Robert Brooke to Earl Macartney, 14 December 1797. *Calendar of Brooke Letters*, University of Witwatersrand Historical Papers A737/24. I am grateful for the assistance of Mrs Gabriele Mohana and Ms Mphonyama Taulela of the

have spoken to Brooke with some authority as it was only a few years since his six month period in France and his *Letters Written in France* had been available long enough for Brooke to have been aware of its contents. Brooke was married to the widow of William Wynne of Bengal, a cousin of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn.<sup>418</sup>

The correspondence between Brooke and Macartney was a typical example of the information transfer of the time. Tench's background briefing was part of the unofficial but essential information colonial administrators relied upon to keep abreast of international and national affairs. Official communications were mostly made up of orders and instructions, usually without the necessary information to place matters in context. Tench knew what it was like to be in a remote location starved of news and general intelligence, and had bewailed the thoughtlessness behind the lack of newspapers onboard the transport *Mary Anne* when it arrived in New South Wales from England in July 1791.<sup>419</sup> Maintaining these unofficial lines of communication over the vast distance to and from New South Wales was a significant problem as Tench's exasperation demonstrated. George Worgan also found that with the lack of regular shipping he and his colleagues had to 'snatch greedily at every opportunity to convey our Hopes and Wishes to our Friends'.<sup>420</sup>

While serving on HMS *Polyphemus* Tench was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the Army on 1 January 1798, and after leaving the ship in January 1800 spent some months ashore before his final sea posting to HMS *Princess Royal* in August 1801. Like his previous posting, Tench spent much of this period in Irish waters, *Princess Royal* being part of the squadron based in Bantry Bay. During his period on *Polyphemus* Tench was away from Britain during the naval mutinies at Spithead and The Nore in 1797, but now experienced the mutiny that broke out on some ships of the Bantry Bay squadron in late 1801. One of the key responsibilities of the Marines onboard naval vessels was policing,

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William Cutler Library at the University of Witwatersrand for their assistance in providing copies of these papers.

<sup>418</sup> T.H. Bowyer, 'Brooke, Robert (1774-1811)', *ODNB Online*, accessed 5 Feb 2011.

<sup>419</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 241.

<sup>420</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 44.

which included the protecting the ship and its officers from unruly and mutinous behaviour. The Marines were determined to show their loyalty and the entire complement of non-commissioned officers and privates on *Princess Royal* wrote to Tench as their commanding officer expressing their 'determination to oppose, with all our might and power, all unlawful combinations, and our readiness to obey our officers night or day'.<sup>421</sup> Given Tench's deep commitment to loyalty and the Marines in general, he would have been well satisfied to receive the letter and perhaps more so after the Marines at Bantry Bay received a letter of congratulations from the Admiralty.<sup>422</sup>

Tench left HMS *Princess Royal* at Portsmouth in April 1802,<sup>423</sup> and in July the following year was promoted to Major in the Marines.<sup>424</sup> He had now reached the rank when Marine officers no longer received sea postings and he spent the remainder of his career ashore. He continued to progress through the ranks becoming a Colonel in the Army in April 1808 and Colonel Commandant en Second of the Chatham Division of the Royal Marines in July 1809, followed by promotion to the Army rank of Major General in June 1811. Chatham was considered the senior division of the Royal Marines and as second in charge Tench became involved in considerable administrative leadership.<sup>425</sup>

Apart from his command duties as second to the Commandant at Chatham, Tench had numerous administrative responsibilities, such as Chairman of the Divisional committee overseeing the Corps' Widows' Fund.<sup>426</sup> These support funds across all the branches of the armed forces were important not just for the financial support they provided but also for the general morale of officers and men who could rely on some support, however small, for their families in the

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<sup>421</sup> Letter reproduced in C. Field, 'The Marines in the Great Naval Mutinies, 1797-1802', *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, 62 (Feb-Nov 1917), 737.

<sup>422</sup> Field, 'The Marines in the Great Naval Mutinies', 737.

<sup>423</sup> HMS *Princess Royal* Muster, TNA ADM 36/13807.

<sup>424</sup> Army List 1 Jul 1804.

<sup>425</sup> Dates of Tench's promotions are contained in the Army Lists of 1810 and 1813. The date of his appointment to Chatham is included in the Navy List of 1814.

<sup>426</sup> 'Proceedings of a Committee of the Subscribers to the Widows' Fund of the Royal Marine Corps', 20 Jul 1819. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, At78.

event of their death. Government pensions also existed of course, Anna Maria Tench being a beneficiary after Watkin's death.

At the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars the Admiralty found the Navy and Marines over-manned for peace conditions, and forces were substantially reduced. There was also the practical matter of a large number of Royal Marine officers locked in to the tight structure that limited promotion opportunities, particularly in the junior ranks, who were expressing dissatisfaction with their restricted opportunities for advancement. The Admiralty's immediate response was to free up senior positions and Tench along with other senior officers of his rank and position, were 'allowed to retire on full pay' on 1 January 1816,<sup>427</sup> a move that may have satisfied some of the more junior officers, but would not have made any financial savings to the government's budget.

During his temporary retirement, Tench involved himself in some local civic affairs and became a member of the Grand Jury appointed to investigate conditions in the Plymouth town gaol, urging the Mayor to expedite the group's inspection of the gaol premises.<sup>428</sup> He had earlier expressed confidence in the town and its future by investing £100 in a tontine raised to finance the development of a new market. The tontine was established in 1804 to raise £10,000 for the construction costs of the market and offered returns of 5.1% rising to above 6% as the annuity period progressed and annuitants left the scheme.<sup>429</sup> The importance of the market to towns like Plymouth is shown by the highly organised and celebratory nature of its opening in September 1807. The event was a grand affair with appropriate speeches, a church service embellished by a 'most magnificent sermon', and concluding with a 'grand dinner' for two hundred of the town's leading citizens, a group that presumably included the investors.<sup>430</sup> He also showed a willingness to contribute to charity when in May 1803 he attended a meeting of the local Devonport medical practitioners, and donated half a guinea to a program designed to encourage

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<sup>427</sup> Army List, 1816.

<sup>428</sup> Watkin Tench to Peter Tonkin, Mayor of Plymouth, 5 Nov 1817. Plymouth and West Devon Record Office. (PWDRO), Plymouth Municipal Records 1/702/51.

<sup>429</sup> PWDRO, Plymouth Market Tontine, 1/691/126; 1/691/176; 1/591.

<sup>430</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 1 Oct 1807.

cowpox inoculations.<sup>431</sup> Tench was well aware of the ravages of smallpox, still a major disease of the period, having seen the devastating impact on the Aborigines in New South Wales.<sup>432</sup>

Tench did not remain in retirement for long, when for reasons unknown he was recalled and appointed Colonel Commandant of the Plymouth Division of the Royal Marines on 1 October 1819.<sup>433</sup> This was the most senior appointment a marine officer could aspire to, and when Tench was promoted to the army rank of Lieutenant General in July 1821 he would have expected to end his career within a few months with complete satisfaction, probably to be followed in due course by promotion to full General.<sup>434</sup> This was not to be and after he was dismissed from his position as Colonel Commandant he retired to Cornwall, although his name remained on the list of officers on unattached pay until his death in 1833.

## ii. The Condition of the Corps

Duty was not just to superiors, and Tench understood that his duty to the Corps included his duty to those of junior rank. In March 1811 he and his colleague Colonel Lawrence Desborough campaigned for improved conditions in the Corps. The two men wrote to Charles Yorke, First Lord of the Admiralty, drawing attention to present conditions and seeking wide ranging improvements. Their letter referred to a meeting the two had with Yorke on the same matters some six months previously, but politely noted that no action appeared to have taken place since that time. The letter made clear that the two officers had gained the impression from their meeting with Yorke that some action would be taken and had even communicated those impressions across the Corps' officer ranks, but being aware of the possibility that Yorke had no plans for any substantial changes, subtly noted that they were no strangers to

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<sup>431</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 12 May 1803.

<sup>432</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 146-9.

<sup>433</sup> Army List, 1820.

<sup>434</sup> Army List, 1822.

the 'language of official communication.....nor unaware of official circumspection'.<sup>435</sup>

Their letter also referred to a memorial submitted to the Admiralty by the senior captains of the Corps in March 1808, their principal grievance being the lack of opportunities for promotion. They noted that forty-nine captains who entered the service during the American War had not progressed beyond that rank, and compared their situation to other corps where officers with fewer years of service had been promoted to more senior levels. The basis of their complaint was a pay issue, as pay rates increased with promotion not years of service.<sup>436</sup>

Senior officers submitted three other memorials, bringing the total to four over three years suggesting a high level of dissatisfaction amongst the higher ranks of the corps. In expressing concern about the lack of opportunity for promotion the memorials claimed that the Marines were members of 'the only corps in the King's service where officers are eligible to nothing but regimental staff appointments'.<sup>437</sup> These limitations were real rather than bureaucratic, as apart from the eight positions of Colonel Commandant and Colonel Commandant en Second, the highest substantive rank a Marine officer could aspire to was Lieutenant Colonel. The Army, Navy and other Corps, such as engineers all had provision for promotion to substantive rank as high as full General or equivalent. The promotions that occurred across the services during the long period of wars with France up to 1815 highlighted the anomaly and helped reinforce both the perceptions and realities of the Royal Marines as a second class group, yet with a few isolated exceptions the Marines had continually proved to be totally reliable and loyal to the service of their country.

These wide ranging complaints covered what the officers saw as limitations and conditions when on shore as well as the general status and skills of the Corps. As the complaints revealed considerable dissatisfaction, Tench and

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<sup>435</sup> Colonels Desborough and Tench to Charles Yorke, 13 Mar 1811, in Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 377-381.

<sup>436</sup> 'Memorial of the senior captains of his Majesty's royal marine forces', 18 Mar 1808, in Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 370-1.

<sup>437</sup> 'The memorial of the field officers and senior captains of his Majesty's royal marine forces', in Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 374-6.

Desborough went to some effort and detail in ensuring that Yorke had these matters in writing and so placed on the official record. They highlighted several issues.

Firstly, the senior officers requested that Colonel Commandants be placed on the general staff. The current system of Marine officers holding brevet ranks of General excluded them from the benefits of full rank, including military and civil appointments available to Navy and Army officers. They also noted that a Militia colonel received a higher rate of pay than a commandant of a Marine division. One recently retired senior Royal Marine officer later complained in his memoirs of the low rates of pay he received during his service and emphasised that his promotion to Major General at the end of his career was 'not attended with any additional emolument'.<sup>438</sup> Both Tench and Desborough might be suspected of promoting their own self-interest here as both were at a level of seniority where they might expect promotion to brevet general rank, as happened three months later, but the general tone of their campaign and the manner in which they kept their fellow officers informed suggests otherwise.

They also complained of the lack of proper education for young officers and the absence of an academy for Marine officers. The systems in place since the inception of the Marines meant that young officers joined the corps without examination, spent a short time at drill, and were then posted to sea without preparation. Tench had undergone the same procedure when he joined the Marines, being posted to sea just six months after enlisting; in his case that posting was directly to a war zone. William Dawes' experience was similar when as a newly commissioned Second Lieutenant he was posted to sea and the American war seven months after his commission. Having completed a term at sea, officers found that they had 'no duties to perform' apart from occasional barrack guard. Tench and Desborough noted that even field officers had no substantial activities to occupy their time except 'wander around the fortifications....without object, interest, or employment'. The difficulty for the Marine officers was that although situated within a Marine barracks the area

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<sup>438</sup> Andrew Burn, *Memoirs of the Life of the late Major General Andrew Burn of the Royal Marines, Collected from his Journals* (London 1815), Vol.II, 157.

was under the overall command of a naval or army officer of general rank, and Marine officers were not part of the overall chain of command while on land.

This second-class nature of the Corps went to all ranks, and the letter made a special plea that sergeants who entered the retirement establishment at Greenwich Hospital be treated equally with army sergeants admitted to Chelsea Hospital. For the officers their status stretched from the military sphere into social activities a matter of particular concern. As Tench and Desborough pointed out, the most senior officers were 'never to be found at the table of the general officers' unless personally invited as a guest. They noted a number of other social disadvantages, and to emphasise the seriousness of these apparent 'privations of too small importance' when considered alone, claimed that in the broader context they were:

not devoid of consequence when viewed by reference  
to those principles by which, in some degree, the  
scale of rank and estimation in society is measured.<sup>439</sup>

Tench and Desborough added that the officers were upset that the recent fifth anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar had been a naval commemoration only, and the Royal Marines had not been included in the round of promotions accorded to naval officers, despite the fact that every ship in the battle had a Marine contingent on board. This was a significant slight on the honour of both the individuals and the Corps.

Their letter went on to stress that the claims of the senior captains of the Corps were of 'paramount' concern from men who had served between thirty and forty years, a situation 'without precedent in the military history of Britain'.<sup>440</sup> For all that, in practice society may not have been too concerned about distinctions of brevet and substantive ranks, if indeed they were known. The retired General Tench was a significant figure in society in Penzance, Cornwall, his rank placing him amongst the leading figures of the town, but all the same these differences

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<sup>439</sup> Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 380.

<sup>440</sup> Colonels Desborough and Tench to Charles Yorke, 13 Mar 1811, in P.H. Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 377-381.

were of considerable concern to the individual. Yorke simply acknowledged the letter and advised that the matter was still under consideration.

In February 1812, the matter was raised in the House of Commons by C.H. Hutchinson, MP for Cork. He drew attention to the contents of Tench and Desborough's letter, emphasising the disparities in pay. Hutchinson attempted to have the correspondence and memorials tabled, but Yorke successfully argued that the letter was a private one and it was inappropriate for it to be tabled in the House. He also argued away the issues raised by Hutchinson and the move was defeated. Hutchinson did not raise the matter again.<sup>441</sup> The author of the history that discussed the episode, written over thirty years later, concluded his account, 'and there it still remains'.<sup>442</sup>

In considering the status of the Corps and its apparent official treatment compared with the vital role it played, it is perhaps not surprising that Watkin Tench was a fierce and committed defender of the Corps and its members. However, if the Admiralty took no further action on these complaints, neither did it see the need to take any adverse action against Tench and Desborough. Both were promoted to Major General three months after writing the letter, and both were appointed as Colonel Commandants in October 1819.<sup>443</sup>

### iii. 'Taken by the "insolent foe"': Tench in France<sup>444</sup>

Watkin Tench's record of his period as a prisoner of war in France represents the return of Tench the observer and commentator following the chronicles of his experiences in New South Wales. Tench spent six months as a prisoner, although having been appointed by the *Alexander's* captain Richard Bligh to be his interpreter and aide-de-camp during their confinement, he was able to enjoy similar treatment to his commanding officer. Initially this was spent on board the prison ship *Normandie* where Tench complained conditions were less than

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<sup>441</sup> House of Commons 12 Feb 1812, at <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1812/feb/12/royal-marine-corps>, accessed 25 Feb 2013.

<sup>442</sup> Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 381.

<sup>443</sup> Army Lists 1813, 1820.

<sup>444</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 5.

ideal, before being transferred to accommodation in Quimper in Brittany, the main town of the French Republican department of Finistère. The capture of the *Alexander* in early November 1794 was a little over three months after the fall of Robespierre and the decline of power and influence of the Jacobins, and Tench's period of confinement thus took place during a period when the French navy and the local Bretons were adjusting to the change in political environment.

Tench's record of this period is contained in a series of twelve letters supposedly written 'to a friend in London'. The identity of the friend is unknown and may have been invented, a possibility considered by Gavin Edwards in his introduction to the re-published edition of Tench's compilation.<sup>445</sup> Edwards also presents the possibility that the letters were in fact prepared from a journal after Tench had returned to England, but whether the friend is real or fictitious does not have any significant impact on the contents of the publication. Tench had clearly intended to publish the letters and had spent some time on editing and revising them before they were published the year after his return to England.<sup>446</sup>

Tench's observations cover a broad range of subjects. He continually emphasises the inferiority of the French republicans as his comments move from scorn for the lower class revolutionaries who were in control of events, to sympathy for the displaced members of France's upper classes. His first encounters with the French were with members of the navy who shocked his sensibilities by their apparent lack of discipline and roughness of character. He was particularly affronted when the French sailors displayed a complete lack of discipline by ransacking his personal possessions and those of the *Alexander's* other officers. The conditions on board the French naval vessel, *Le Marat*, where he was briefly held before transfer to the *Normandie*, were summed up in trivial examples such as the lack of cutlery or a change of plates at meal times, and the excessive use of garlic in the food. He found he was unable to walk the

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<sup>445</sup> Watkin Tench, *Letters from Revolutionary France*, ed. Gavin Edwards, Cardiff 2001. Originally published as *Letters Written in France to a Friend in London, Between the Month of November 1794, and the Month of May 1795*, London, 1796.

<sup>446</sup> Tench refers to the revisions in his preface, *Letters from France*, 3.

quarterdeck, a preserve of officers in the British navy, finding it 'so crowded by the men, and so greasy and slippery'.<sup>447</sup> As offended as he probably was, underlying his criticisms were constant comparisons with the British Navy, British society and its political order. His letters make good copy for later publication, but they also reveal Tench's opinion of how tradition, bolstered by order and discipline, can quickly descend into a state not far removed from anarchy. Missing cutlery and excessive garlic may seem trivial, but for Tench they highlighted the fact that gentlemanly behaviour, and military and social order, fundamental to his sense of Britishness were lost in France. Not only did this emphasise the danger posed by revolution but also made clear the superiority of the British way of life.

Tench's initial reactions were tempered slightly as his observations became keener and more thoughtful, but the underlying comparison between Britain and revolutionary France remained constant. His first contact was with sailors who were committed revolutionaries wearing their red caps with tricolour badge, headgear that continued to be evident when Tench was on land. The caps caused him considerable offence by remaining firmly on the heads of local officials even in the presence of ladies, and where sailors and officers alike addressed one another as *Citoyen*. Tench would not have been alone in understanding that Britain's greatness came from a legacy stretching from Magna Carta to the 1689 Bill of Rights, and that the system and way of life based on those foundations was in stark contrast to the state of affairs witnessed in France.<sup>448</sup>

Tench was naturally curious about the French navy, and over the twelve letters he included a considerable amount of information about its ships, men and naval organisation, as it existed at the time. He even listed the names and size of the entire French fleet based at Brest while he was still on the prison ship *Normandie*. Remarkably, he provided a detailed description of the layout of the guns on the Brest fleet flagship *La Montagne*, noting the size of the guns and their placement.<sup>449</sup> This information was probably already known to British

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<sup>447</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 11.

<sup>448</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 12-13.

<sup>449</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 38.

naval intelligence, but if it was written and posted from France, it could have exposed Tench to considerable risk of accusations of spying.<sup>450</sup>

Tench identified some of the strengths of the French navy, but believed in the ultimate superiority of the Royal Navy. Although his letters were intended for publication and a general statement of that sort may have been appropriate for his audience, Tench makes it clear that this belief was genuinely held. When he is not including his own patriotic and personal views Tench can be very objective in his comments and those on the French navy fall into this category.

In addressing the subject of ship design, Tench noted that French ships could often escape their British counterparts, an advantage he put down to superior ship design. Tench believed the superior design of French vessels was due to the use of mathematics by 'men of science' on the design process and wondered why his own navy did not use it.<sup>451</sup> Recent analysis does not fully agree with Tench on this point, finding that in general, British ships were superior in size, speed and manoeuvrability, and armament, although many of the fundamentals of French design still influenced the period when Tench was in France. They were gradually discarded during the Napoleonic wars.<sup>452</sup>

Tench also described the nature and structure of discipline in the French navy, as well as the structure of its officer class and their pay and conditions. He described the manner of distribution of prize money, two-thirds of which was distributed across the whole navy, the remaining third going to the captors. Although he could see potential difficulties with possible disputes when distribution was over such a large group – 'I do not see how it could be reduced to practice among us, without giving rise to perpetual lawsuits' – he considered it to be much fairer for ordinary seamen compared to the British navy.<sup>453</sup> The Royal Navy's method of distribution was based on rank with the bulk of prize

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<sup>450</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 45-6. It is not known if the letters were actually written in and posted from France. Gavin Edwards suggests that they may have been written up in England from a journal, a possibility that seems most likely. Edwards' 'Introduction' in Tench, *Letters from France*, xxi-xxii.

<sup>451</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 28.

<sup>452</sup> Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 413-425. Rodger analyses changes in ship design from the Seven Years' War to the end of the Napoleonic war.

<sup>453</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 31-4.

money going to officers, especially senior officers. Many British admirals became wealthy individuals as they enjoyed the efforts of others, and dissatisfaction with the British system and demands for improvements was one of the demands that mutinous sailors made during the Nore mutiny of 1797.<sup>454</sup> Tench's claim for fairness was a common theme during his life. The concern he expressed for fairness for retired Royal Marine sergeants has been addressed earlier.

Tench praised the superiority of French charts claiming 'there is hardly a little harbour in Britain or Ireland which is not laid down in them', and lamented the failure of the British navy to keep its charts updated. He noted that the French signals that had long been recognised as superior to the British had now been surpassed by the system in the Royal Navy, although Tench was impressed by the efficiencies arising from the French navy having a class of junior midshipmen whose principal task was raising signals.<sup>455</sup>

Nevertheless, Tench continued to point out the inferior aspects of the French republican navy. He was contemptuous of officers who had never 'served in the navy of France' before the Revolution, and who had been promoted above their social station. Tench claimed there were no real seamen left in the navy as the experienced sailors had been sent off to fight as soldiers and replaced by recruited 'landsmen'.<sup>456</sup>

Tench's longest letter, written after he had been at Quimper for about ten weeks, was dedicated to affairs of state.<sup>457</sup> His comments on the current state of the French revolution reflected a not uncommon attitude of the time. Initial excitement that he had expressed while in New South Wales, 'that wonderful and unexpected event' that 'succeeded to amaze us'<sup>458</sup> had become revulsion at how the revolution had descended into a period of terror and oppression.

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<sup>454</sup> Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 448-50.

<sup>455</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 39.

<sup>456</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 37.

<sup>457</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 99-120 (Letter X).

<sup>458</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 170.

Although the local royalists at Quimper had told Watkin Trench of their hope for the return of a king and the restoration of their estates and social position, Trench felt that would never happen. Harking back to his days as a prisoner in America, he remembered similar sentiments expressed by many of the American loyalists he spoke to. He felt the French royalists would suffer similar frustration and he must have disappointed his new acquaintances by analysing the current situation in Europe. Prussia had made a peace; he thought Britain would not pursue hostilities, and within France the counter-revolutionary forces had made peace with the republic.<sup>459</sup> As it turned out, Trench was wrong in his forecast that France would not again have a king, even if future kings and emperors would prove to be temporary.

Trench's knowledge and sense of inquiry were impressive. His description of the state of the French economy, including the unreliability of the republic's paper money, and the impact of rising prices, not least as they impacted on his own finances, indicated a thorough understanding of the topic. He also analysed the cost of maintaining the local republican administrations, concluding that the structure of the republic would prove too expensive to maintain.<sup>460</sup> He attended and reported on the various public meetings held in the town that were intended to provide updates to the citizens of Quimper on the political situation as it was developing in Paris.<sup>461</sup> His long letter finished with a Trenchian flourish: 'my paper is exhausted, my eyes be dimmed, and my imagination haunted by racks, wheels, and guillotines dyed in human gore' (although it is unlikely he ever saw a guillotine in action).<sup>462</sup> Perhaps genuine tiredness but perhaps those dimmed eyes were more open to his readership.

But Trench had wider interests than politics and also considered the impact of the revolution on cultural activities. He lamented that the plays of Racine were no longer performed but was pleased to see church services returning. The fact that they were Catholic services aside, their limited restoration were positive signs of a return to social order.

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<sup>459</sup> Trench, *Letters from France*, 101-4.

<sup>460</sup> Trench, *Letters from France*, 122.

<sup>461</sup> Trench, *Letters from France*, 112.

<sup>462</sup> Trench, *Letters from France*, 120.

He found the local Breton dialect 'made me swear I was in Wales', and had difficulty conversing with many of the peasantry who could neither speak nor understand French. However, some of his English social class prejudices were allowed to slip through. He thought that the local rural workers performed their dances with 'less awkwardness than our clowns', and when inspecting a number of country dwellings found their condition somewhere between 'the neatness of the English, and the filthiness of an Irish country cottage' repeating a widely held stereotype of the Irish.<sup>463</sup> In common with some of his colleagues in New South Wales, Tench had mocked a group of convicts who escaped the settlement thinking they could walk to China. Tench observed: 'But it is certain that all these people were *Irish*' (Tench's emphasis).<sup>464</sup> Tench's twelfth and final letter is dated 11 May 1795 and written at Plymouth. Admiral Bligh was released through a prisoner exchange and had successfully requested Tench, as his aide, be allowed to return to England with him.

#### iv. 'Forthwith give up command': the end of a career

Watkin Tench reached the army rank of Lieutenant General in July 1821 after being appointed Colonel Commandant of the Plymouth Division of the Royal Marines in October 1819 and Tench had now reached the pinnacle of a Royal Marine officer's career.<sup>465</sup> However his career came to a sudden and unexpected end just one month after his promotion when he incurred the ire of the Commissioners of the Admiralty. Tench's dismissal from the position of Colonel Commandant, was the long-term, unintended consequence of a court-martial of a Royal Marine officer three and a half years earlier, in January 1818. The court-martial, the result of an ongoing personal feud between two senior officers of the Woolwich Division of the Royal Marines, had resulted in one being removed to permanent half-pay, and the other being dismissed from the Corps. A later decision to reinstate them led indirectly to Tench's dismissal.

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<sup>463</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 59.

<sup>464</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 244.

<sup>465</sup> Army List, Feb 1822. The most senior Royal Marine rank was Colonel Commandant that carried with it the brevet rank of a general officer in the Army. See Britt Zerbe, 'That most useful body of men', 66.

The details of the court martial need to be considered given its relevance to Tench's later career, but the proceedings are also valuable in providing an insight into early nineteenth-century concepts of honour and gentlemanly behaviour in the military.<sup>466</sup> The case revolved around a dispute between Lieutenant Colonels Thomas Abernethie and John Boscawen Savage in February 1815.<sup>467</sup> The two officers had disagreed over the seemingly uncontentious matter of the likely tax impost on Abernethie's purchase of a carriage and horses, leading to a wager between them. Both officers placed their purse on the table but Savage discovered he did not have sufficient funds on hand to meet the £10 stake, causing Abernethie to call off the bet, making disparaging remarks as he did. Savage responded to this slight with harsher language clearly intended to encourage Abernethie to issue a challenge to a duel. Abernethie resisted the opportunity and the matter dragged on for almost three years until December 1817 when Abernethie was finally goaded into making a challenge.

It was now Savage's turn not to accept, considering the time elapsed showed that Abernethie had not acted as a 'gentleman', and had been dishonourable in his conduct by not acting sooner to settle the matter. The whole affair finally became too much for the other officers in the Division, and it was referred to the Commissioners of the Admiralty. While declining to act, the Commissioners advised that a court martial would be convened if either party laid charges. Savage promptly laid four charges against Abernethie; all involving various aspects of ungentlemanly and dishonourable behaviour that he claimed would bring the reputation of the Royal Marine Corps into disrepute. After seven days of hearings held over two weeks, all four charges were resolved in Abernethie's favour, two as not proven, one as not within the competence of a court martial, and the fourth dismissed due to its 'vexatious and malicious' nature.

The Court was incensed by the unnecessary nature of the case and expressed both its disapproval of the language used and the time taken to resolve the

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<sup>466</sup> Navy and Marines, Courts Martial 1 Jan 1818 - 31 Jul 1818. Trial of Lt.Col. Thomas Abernethie, Royal Marine Barracks, Woolwich, 2 Jan 1818. TNA ADM 1/5458.

<sup>467</sup> Abernethie's name is occasionally spelt 'Abernethy' but I have maintained the common usage of the period.

matter without 'explanation or honorable adjustment'. It also expressed its disapproval of Savage in bringing on the case. The Court's findings were considered by the Admiralty and formally approved by the Prince Regent. However the Commissioners believed the matter required further action and determined that Abernethie should be removed to the list of permanent half-pay officers, and Savage dismissed from the Corps, decisions that were formally announced by the Prince Regent. To reinforce their obviously deeply held displeasure the Commissioners took the unusual measure of directing that the charges, Court decision, and action against Abernethie and Savage, be sent to each division for posting in the officers' mess and entered in divisional order books. The involvement of the Prince Regent, although a formality, and the posting of the details of the affair in this strong reaction by the Admiralty, would become important issues in the events leading to Tench's dismissal from his position three and a half years later.

As the defendant, described as 'the prisoner' in proceedings, Abernethie submitted a number of letters of support as to his character. In addition to Admiral Lord Keith, the supporters represented an impressive list of general officers in the Corps, including Sir Henry Bell, the Commandant in Town; Tench's colleague Major General Desborough; two other Generals; and Tench. The letters of support were all strong in affirming Abernethie as a respected officer and a gentleman, many adding references to his exemplary war service. Desborough, like Tench, was sufficiently close to Abernethie to write a personal rather than formal letter of support suggesting that Desborough and Tench had much in common, some of which was on display in their earlier campaign for improved conditions for Royal Marine officers.

Tench's letter of support was the longest and recalled that he and Abernethie had known one another over forty years since they were both young lieutenants in the American War. Tench made it clear he was unaware of the nature of the charges against Abernethie and, using typical Tenchian wording, wrote 'if my Dear Friend after forty years practice you have chosen to step aside from the Path of Honour and Integrity I can only lament', but went on to declare that he believed Abernethie to be 'incapable of a dishonourable or malicious action'. Tench and Abernethie's friendship had 'ripened into intimacy' since the

American war and as Tench related, they since had many opportunities of assessing 'each others conduct and character in public and private life as Officers and Gentlemen'. Tench concluded his letter by including his wife in his best wishes to Abernethie and his wife. The letter provides the only known instance of Tench's personal friendships outside of his family, and further demonstrates Tench's deep commitment to the ideas of loyalty, honour and integrity.<sup>468</sup> His friendship with Abernethie may explain his claim that he was unaware of the nature of the charges, but it is clear from the events of July 1821 that news within the Marine Divisions travelled quickly, and it would seem unlikely that Tench would not have known of a serious ongoing dispute between two senior officers, especially if one was a friend. We do not know what happened with the relationship after the findings of the court, but as made clear in the correspondence relating to his dismissal, Tench was deeply offended by the behaviour of the two officers.

In the three and a half years from the court martial until July 1821, both officers and their supporters carried on a strong campaign to restore their positions and they were eventually reinstated in the Corps at their previous rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Both officers had powerful connections. A sense of Abernethie's place in the Royal Marines can be gauged from the character references he produced at his court martial, and Savage's second name of Boscawen suggests a connection with the Boscawen family, Viscounts of Falmouth, who had produced senior Army and Navy officers. The Boscawens were also related by marriage to the Duke of Beaufort and according to a family biographer, Savage was on 'friendly' terms with the Duke of Clarence, later King William IV.<sup>469</sup>

Late in July 1821 word filtered through to the officers at the Plymouth Division that Savage and Abernethie had been reinstated to the Woolwich Division of the Royal Marines, where they were previously based. This news upset the officers at Plymouth sufficiently to prepare a memorandum to the Admiralty expressing their 'pain and concern' at the reinstatements. They described as

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<sup>468</sup> Proceedings of the Court Martial of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Abernethie. TNA ADM 1/5458.

<sup>469</sup> G.F.S.-A. (ed), *A Genealogical History of the Savage Family in Ulster*, (London: 1906), 259.

their principal concern the strength of the condemnation Savage and Abernethie's character and conduct by the King (then Prince Regent) at the time of the court martial, and particularly that notice of the decisions had been so emphatically endorsed by their unusually wide distribution. The officers made the final point that they had 'no other object than their own characters, and the honour and respectability of their corps, and for its continuance'. Once again, a matter of honour was involved.<sup>470</sup>

Tench held similar feelings to his officers, and in passing on the Memorandum to the Admiralty added that the assembly of officers had his sanction and 'the prayer of the Memorandum had my Concurrence'. Committing himself even further he went on to include his own opinions. He partially excused his old friend Abernethie by 'infinity of purpose or error of judgement' in waiting three years to demand 'Honorable Satisfaction', but was damning of Savage for bringing on the charges to a court martial. Tench said Savage had his 'Unqualified Execration'. The memorial stated that both officers had 'disgraced their Characters' but singled out Savage against whom the officers had the strongest feelings. The letter, addressed to J.W. Croker, Secretary of the Admiralty, was dated 5 August 1821. In a margin note dated 7 August, Croker noted he had forwarded the letter to Sir Henry Bell 'for his consideration and Report'.<sup>471</sup>

Bell replied to Croker the same day. He outlined the process that had led to the decision to reinstate the officers after Lord Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, had considered the matter. In coming to his decision to reinstate the officers, Melville had consulted directly with Bell and Lieutenant General Lewis, Colonel Commandant of the Woolwich Division. Melville was advised that Savage and Abernethie were very welcome back to the Division, an opinion supported by the officers at Woolwich, and it was considered by all that the two officers 'had suffered a very considerable length of punishment'. Bell noted that Savage had been a regular visitor to the barracks at Woolwich 'on terms of friendship and

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<sup>470</sup> Tench to J.W. Croker (Officers' memorial attached), 5 Aug 1821. Admiralty Correspondence, Letters Plymouth. TNA ADM 1/3281.

<sup>471</sup> Tench to J.W. Croker, 5 Aug 1821. Admiralty Correspondence: Out Letters Marines, TNA ADM 2/1225.

intimacy', and that Abernethie was 'much noticed and respected by the older officers of the corps'.

John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty, wrote to Tench the next day enclosing a copy of Bell's response. Barrow advised Tench of the Admiralty's 'surprise and displeasure at the line of conduct which you have thought proper to adopt, in sanctioning an improper interference on the part of the Officers of the Plymouth Division of the Royal Marines'. Further, 'their Lordships did not by any means consider it necessary to inquire the particular feelings of the Plymouth Division of Royal Marines respecting an occurrence at Woolwich'. Their Lordships were also upset that 'mostly *Junior* (Barrow's emphasis) would pronounce on the character of their *Senior*' (Barrow's emphasis).

In fact, although there were a number of Lieutenants signing the document, the signatories included a significant number of Lieutenant Colonels, even if they were obviously junior to Bell, Lewis and certainly the Commissioners of the Admiralty. The contents of the letter got progressively worse for Tench as Barrow noted that the Lords of the Admiralty concurred with the views of Sir Henry Bell of the 'extreme impropriety' of the actions of the officers. However their strongest criticism was reserved for Tench, as 'they still more deeply deplore that an Officer of your rank should have so far forgotten his station and duty, to encourage and support the memorandum' and 'have himself written a letter worded in a style, even more indecent and incorrect' that indicated he was 'imperfectly acquainted with the transactions to which you have so improperly adverted'.

Barrow passed on the censure of the Lords of the Admiralty but the final paragraph indicated the full extent of their displeasure. Barrow advised Tench that on receipt of the letter he was to 'forthwith give up command of the Plymouth Division', and immediately hand over command to an officer sent to succeed him, or if he had not arrived, to 'whatever Officer of the Division on the spot may be next in seniority to yourself'. Instant dismissal. Tench's immediate response was a short, formal letter advising that he had handed over command of the Plymouth Division to Lieutenant Colonel Roby as the next senior officer

on the spot. Ironically, Roby was the first signatory to the Plymouth officers' memorandum.<sup>472</sup>

The swift and decisive response indicated the extent to which Tench had overstepped the line. It was not enough that Barrow told him he and his officers were 'imperfectly acquainted' with the circumstances leading to the reinstatement of Abernethie and Savage. It also did not help Tench's position that, as Bell pointed out, the King had reinstated the two officers as an act of grace. In hindsight, Tench may have been better advised to make some discreet inquiries before acting as he did.

It was a week before Tench was able to send a thoughtful and reasoned response to John Barrow. This was a period when letters, especially official letters, were answered promptly and it is possible that the level of shock and disruption at his removal caused him to take time to carefully structure his case. Tench commenced his letter by regretting that he and the other officers at the Plymouth Division were not made aware of the background to the reinstatement of Abernethie and Savage, as, had he known, he would have respected the decision of his seniors and not acted as he did. He went on to emphasise that his actions were based solely on the degree of condemnation levelled at the two men after the conclusion of the court martial. The strength of his feelings had been hardened by the unusually wide distribution of the original decisions, as Tench said, making it 'a public document'. He concluded his letter by explaining his long commitment to the Marine Corps harkening as far back to when he joined the Marines:

the honor and respectability of the corps was cherished with enthusiasm by its old Officers, and inculcated with earnestness on the minds of the youths who joined quarters; and the first military impression stamped in my bosom remains unaffected.

Even allowing for the language of the period and Tench's tendency to use three words when one would suffice, that statement provides convincing evidence of

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<sup>472</sup> Barrow to Tench, 8 Aug 1821 with enclosure Bell to Barrow, 7 Aug 1821. Admiralty: Out letters. Marines. TNA ADM 2/1225. Tench to Barrow, 11 Aug 1821. Admiralty Correspondence: Marine Officers. Letters from Commandants at Plymouth. TNA ADM 1/3281.

his abiding commitment to and belief in the Royal Marines and his deep sense of honour and duty.<sup>473</sup>

Tench's actions in forwarding the officers' petition, exacerbated by his own covering letter supporting their sentiments, would alone have been enough for him to be in considerable trouble with his superiors, but it is possible that the timing of his perceived challenge to authority added weight to the Admiralty's swift decision. The country was in a state of social and political unrest at this time. The shock waves emanating from the Peterloo massacre two years before were still being felt, and the so-called Cato Street conspiracy to kill the Prime Minister and his cabinet, had been discovered in early 1820. In July 1821, just a few weeks before Tench's dismissal, there were riots in London over the treatment of the Queen and her exclusion from the coronation of her deeply unpopular husband, George IV. The government was in a position where the loyalty of the armed forces was vital and it could not afford to allow a senior officer to be challenging order and authority.

Shortly after, Tench retired from the Royal Marines and began a new life in Penzance, Cornwall. As he was in the process of moving to Cornwall, the details of his dismissal, including findings of the Abernethie court martial and verbatim reports of correspondence between Barrow and Tench, were given to the press by an anonymous Plymouth correspondent styling himself 'A British Officer'. In his letter, the correspondent said of Tench:

his public character is that of spotless honor, his private spotless and generous, even to romance, and his attainments in literature and science have commanded the respect of every circle in which he has moved.

The author went on to say that the dismissal 'of this high minded soldier and accomplished gentleman' had shocked both his own corps as well as the 'neighbourhood at large'.<sup>474</sup> The letter and attachments was copied in other newspapers including *The Times*, causing Tench to dissociate himself from the publications. Writing to the newspaper he stated that 'whether I have been thus

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<sup>473</sup> Tench to Barrow, 18 Aug 1821. Admiralty Correspondence: Marine Officers. Letters from Commandants at Plymouth. TNA ADM 1/3281.

<sup>474</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 4 Oct 1821.

dragged into public view by a stupid friend, or a malicious enemy, I hope shortly to discover'.<sup>475</sup> Apparently nothing came of his attempts at discovery but either way it was important that he not upset the Admiralty and its influential Secretary any further.

Two occurrences hint at some background manoeuvres leading to the reinstatement of Abernethie and Savage. The 1818 court martial papers include an inserted note that is undated but appears to be written in a contemporary or near contemporary hand. It notes that the digest of the proceedings and final decision had 'papers attached', however these papers 'appear to have been separated from the minutes of the Court Martial, and can now nowhere be found'.<sup>476</sup>

The second occurrence was when a brief editorial notice appeared in an Exeter newspaper shortly after Tench was dismissed. It referred to rumours, based on sources 'we can depend on' that both the reinstatement of two officers and Tench's dismissal involved a 'Noble Marquis'.<sup>477</sup> 'Noble Marquis' or not, there were some powerful forces at work. Both Abernethie and Savage went on to successful careers in the Royal Marines. Abernethie ended his career as Colonel Commandant of the Plymouth Division and as a Lieutenant General with a knighthood. Savage also ended his career knighted as a Lieutenant General in the position of Deputy Adjutant General of the Royal Marines, having previously been Colonel Commandant of the Corps' Chatham Division.

It was a dramatic and unfortunate end to a successful career and a significant lapse in judgement by Tench. Having been promoted to Lieutenant General just three weeks before to his dismissal, Tench would have ordinarily looked forward to an honourable retirement and a possible knighthood within months, but his sense of honour and commitment to the good standing of the Royal

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<sup>475</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 20 Oct 1821.

<sup>476</sup> Proceedings of the Court Martial of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Abernethie. TNA ADM 1/5458.

<sup>477</sup> Unfortunately, the involvement of the unidentified 'Marquis' stands as a rumour claimed by an anonymous correspondent, and although Savage had family connections with Castlereagh there were at least nine marquesses in the Liverpool ministry at one time or another and speculation as to the individual's identity is futile.

Marines appear to have done him few favours in the end. His harsh lesson is a reminder that behind words such as 'honour' and 'gentleman' was a system (referred to at this time as 'Old Corruption') in which advancement was often due to family and influence. In the end Tench did not have enough friends in high places.

## Chapter 9

### County Gentleman

Tench's dismissal does not appear to have had any negative impact on his standing in society, at least in Penzance, Cornwall where he and his family moved two months after the event. They arrived at the same time the affair was receiving widespread coverage in the newspapers, but the locals must not have considered the matter to be relevant, and as we shall see Tench quickly became a respected citizen engaged in the various gentlemanly pursuits the small community had to offer.

The family's arrival was announced in the local newspaper.<sup>478</sup> They settled in Chapel Street that leads down to St. Mary's Chapel and Mount's Bay and was described as the most important street in town.<sup>479</sup> The northern end of the street housed the Geological Society and the Penzance Library, both of which would become two of Tench's keen interests, as well as two of the town's banks.<sup>480</sup>

The Tench house, 'Mincarolo' at 45 Chapel Street, was built for the Oxnam family, one of the founders of the Penzance Bank.<sup>481</sup> The house was comfortable and 'commodious', no doubt very suitable for a retired General and family, as Tench and his wife were accompanied by the four orphaned children of Anna Maria Tench's late sister. When Tench and his wife returned to Plymouth in 1833, the sale notice for the house described it as having five bedrooms, four attic rooms for servants, a large dining room, 'drawing room etc', together with a coach house, stables and a walled garden with 'excellent' views of the sea and was 'a most desirable and immediate residence for a large family'.<sup>482</sup> The house had a large garden, later divided for a National School, and later again divided to allow for the construction of a New Connexion

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<sup>478</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 13 October 1821.

<sup>479</sup> Louise Courtney, *Half a Century of Penzance (1825-1875)*, (Penzance: 1878), 22.

<sup>480</sup> Courtney, *Half a Century of Penzance*, 25,28.

<sup>481</sup> Courtney, *Half a Century of Penzance*, 25.

<sup>482</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 13 April 1833.

Chapel.<sup>483</sup> The house still stands, although now divided into two, and the views of the sea have become impeded by later development.<sup>484</sup>

Penzance was a town of approximately 3,400 people at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It experienced a three-fold growth in population over the next seventy years, part of the surge in population growth across Britain during this period. Its commercial prosperity had earlier come principally from its rights to mint tin coinage, its wharf and the town market.<sup>485</sup> It had an active commercial base that included a number of prosperous local banks. Until the first decade of the 1800s, Penzance had been a quiet backwater owing to the difficulties of access, but as one later observer noted, it became more popular when the Continent ceased to be accessible during the Napoleonic Wars and the south west coast became sought after for 'fresh air and the newly discovered benefits of sea bathing'.<sup>486</sup>

The local banking families would become important participants in Tench's life with their names appearing regularly with Tench in cultural and commercial activities. The Boase, Bolitho, Grylls and Carne families were all partners in the three banks in Penzance, which after a series of inter-family marriages and commercial takeovers were merged into Barclays Bank in 1896, when that company absorbed many provincial banks across the country.<sup>487</sup> Apart from the social relationships, Tench would later become related by marriage to the first three of those families via the marriages of his Bedford nephews.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Courtney, *Half a Century of Penzance*, 25.

<sup>484</sup> Personal visit 16 Oct 2012.

<sup>485</sup> P.A.S. Pool, *The History of the Town and Borough of Penzance* (Penzance: The Corporation of Penzance, 1974) 72.

<sup>486</sup> Sir John Betjeman, *Cornwall: A Shell Guide*, (1964), p.97, quoted in Pool, *History*, 185.

<sup>487</sup> Pool briefly covers the growth of the local banks in Penzance at 123-124. The Bolitho families were also owners of a tin smelter.

<sup>488</sup> Over a century later, Miss V.B. Grylls, a direct descendant of Delbouef Bedford, gifted a copy of a miniature of Tench as a young Marine officer together with copies of some letters from Tench to his family, to the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

Tench soon joined the committee of the newly formed Penzance Library and from 1824 until 1833 was its second President.<sup>489</sup> It was established in 1818 as a private subscription library and in November that year moved to be a genuine local library when its Council agreed 'it was desirable to procure every book relative to the history of Cornwall'.<sup>490</sup> The Library subscribed to the leading magazines of the day including *Edinburgh Review*, *Quarterly Review*, *British Review*, *British Critic*, *Monthly Review*, *Gentlemen's Magazine*, *Monthly (Phillips') Magazine*, and *Literary Gazette*. Its first home was in the building known as Geological House, which it shared with the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall and the Cornwall Agricultural Society, this latter Society, as we shall see, having already become important in George Worgan's life.<sup>491</sup> By 1825 it had twenty-five subscribers paying an annual fee of one guinea. The writer of the official history of Penzance remarked that the Library's influence on cultural life in Penzance was 'very great'.<sup>492</sup>

Tench understood the importance of libraries. Visiting Rose Hill in New South Wales during December 1791, he expressed confidence in the colony's future, and amongst the imagined grand official buildings situated on a 'magnificent square' housing a treasury and an admiralty he envisaged a public library, a building he considered equally as important as the key functions of government.<sup>493</sup> After he became President of the Penzance Library in September 1824, Tench oversaw the gradual expansion of its holdings and, importantly, its move to new premises in the town in 1827. The move was prompted by damp in its current location, but its holdings were outgrowing the space available and the increasing number of visitors was causing disruption to the other organisations in the building. The move was an expression of confidence, driven as it was by necessity, but it was also costly. The fit out costs of the new premises were above £100 and annual rental increased

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<sup>489</sup> Cyril Noall, *The Penzance Library 1818-1968* (Penzance: Penzance Library, 1968), 32.

<sup>490</sup> Noall, *The Penzance Library*, 7.

<sup>491</sup> Noall, *The Penzance Library*, 6,7.

<sup>492</sup> Pool, *History of Penzance*, 121.

<sup>493</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 246.

significantly and by the beginning of 1829 the Library's debt was in excess of £81. However, the move was judged to be successful.<sup>494</sup>

Tench replaced Sir Rose Price as Library President, an influential figure in the local gentry. Price was a substantial local landowner with important connections, and in 1814 served a term as High Sheriff of Cornwall, an appointment made by the Duchy of Cornwall. Price also had interests overseas. As reported by Zachary Macaulay, William Dawes' old friend and colleague, Price owned a plantation in Jamaica that in March 1824 operated with almost five hundred slaves, a factor that may have influenced later antipathy towards him.<sup>495</sup> Like many of the district's elite, Price served on a number of bodies including the Geological Society and was President of the local committee of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), of which Tench was a member.

From the limited written material we have from Tench it is not obvious that he had any strong religious beliefs. His writings about New South Wales and his period in France reveal an interest in religious beliefs but little more, although that was at a time when he was a young man recently returned from war, and perhaps more influenced by the humanist tendencies of the enlightenment. Alan Atkinson has suggested that none of the Marine officers in New South Wales were 'particularly devout'.<sup>496</sup> In Cornwall, not only was Tench some thirty-five or so years older but he was also a prominent figure in a small community and it made sense to behave as one of the establishment. In addition to his involvement in the SPCK, Tench convened a meeting in 1831 to establish 'an Auxiliary of the Naval and Military Bible Society'.<sup>497</sup> The Society had been established in 1779 and had as its purpose the supply of Bibles to sailors and soldiers free of charge. By being proactive in the formation of a local support group Tench acknowledged the perceived benefits of this basic religious support to the armed forces particularly as a means of discouraging

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<sup>494</sup> Noall, *The Penzance Library*, 9.

<sup>495</sup> Zachary Macaulay (ed), *Anti-Slavery. Monthly Reporter*, Vol. III, (June 1829 - Dec 1830), London 1831, 136.

<sup>496</sup> Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia*, 178.

<sup>497</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 5 Feb 1831.

rebellious behaviour.<sup>498</sup> He supported the construction of the new St Mary's Chapel with a gift of £10 to its appeal, and outlaid £50 to purchase a pew in the new building, although he never got to sit on it as the church was not completed by the time he left Penzance.<sup>499</sup>

Tench publicly declared his political allegiances in 1826 when he joined a large number of other signatories in contributing to a public notice supporting the re-election of John Hearle Tremayne as local MP.<sup>500</sup> Tremayne had been Member for Cornwall since 1806 and continually expressed his 'independent views'. At the 1826 election he found himself caught between Whig and Tory candidates and withdrew his candidacy.<sup>501</sup> At the other end of the spectrum of gentlemanly responsibility, Tench was present with Rev. C.V. Le Grice, the local curate, as one of the 'highly respected auditory' listening to the annual recitations by boys at a local private academy.<sup>502</sup>

As the new, and only, General in town he reviewed a field day held by the Second Cornwall Yeomanry Light Dragoons, and with other officers present expressed himself 'much pleased with the behaviour of the men and their steady conduct on the field'.<sup>503</sup> His opinion was a long way from the one he held in New South Wales when he summed up his attitude to the militia as 'do you want to make your son sick of soldiering? Show him the Trainbands of London on a Field-day'.<sup>504</sup> This earlier reference reflected a commonly held view of volunteer forces that have been described as 'fair game to caricaturists and satirists who made the most out of their portly efforts at marching or on horseback'.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Richard Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy 1775-1815. Blue Lights & Psalm-Singers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 96.

<sup>499</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 26 Apr 1828, 3 May 1828.

<sup>500</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 3 Jun 1826.

<sup>501</sup> R.G. Thorne, 'Tremayne, John Hearle', in *History of Parliament Online*. [www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/members/tremayne-john-1780-1851](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/members/tremayne-john-1780-1851). Accessed 11 Sep 2014.

<sup>502</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 18 Jun 1831.

<sup>503</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 21 Sept 1822.

<sup>504</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 24.

<sup>505</sup> Roger Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon. The Organization of Victory 1793-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 81.

At the seventeenth annual meeting of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall in 1830, a vote of thanks to Tench was recorded for the donation of 'Specimens from Brazil, consisting of Topaz, Amethyst, Semi-Opal, Rock Crystal, Gold imbedded in micaceous Iron, etc'.<sup>506</sup> As it is not apparent that Tench had visited Brazil since the First Fleet arrived in Rio de Janeiro en route to New South Wales in 1787, he may have been holding these specimens for over forty years. However they could have been collected in more recent times as 'mineral collections were very fashionable at this period' and Tench was a member of a geological society after all.<sup>507</sup> Having the collection might even have helped him to be elected a member of the Society's committee in 1827 and a Vice President in 1829.<sup>508</sup>

The mineral specimens were not the only items Tench collected. With a number of his colleagues, he brought back from New South Wales some Aboriginal weapons and perhaps other items, the fate of which are unknown.<sup>509</sup> He recorded one instance when he acquired 'a fine barbed spear' after some tough negotiating by its original owner, who was sufficiently impressed by Tench's efforts in meeting his terms to reward him with a throwing-stick, 'gratis'.<sup>510</sup> Botany also featured in the items he brought back. In 1792 the renowned botanist, William Curtis, inspected 'a vast number of the natural productions of Botany-Bay' that Tench had collected 'with great assiduity'. The collection included various specimens of soil in 'very small bags', possibly the samples collected during an expedition to Broken Bay with Dawes and Worgan in September 1790.<sup>511</sup> Curtis correctly suspected the soil samples may contain

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<sup>506</sup> Reported in *The Philosophical Magazine*, Vol. 8, (1830), 462.

<sup>507</sup> Denise Anne Crook, 'The Early History of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall 1814-1850', (PhD thesis, The Open University (UK), 1990), 55.

<sup>508</sup> *The Philosophical Magazine or Annals of Chemistry, Mathematics, Astronomy, Natural History and General Science*, Vol.II, Jul-Dec 1827, 458, and Vol.III, Jan-Jun 1830, 148.

<sup>509</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 283-4. In providing a description of many of the Aborigines' 'manufactures' he observed that examples are now (c.1793) included in collections at 'many' museums in England.

<sup>510</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 187-8.

<sup>511</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 175.

seeds and successfully raised fourteen plants, 'most of which were altogether new'.<sup>512</sup>

Collecting was a product of the enlightenment urge to know, and to develop knowledge and understanding as well as to satisfy the curious. It was a favourite pastime of the upper classes in the eighteenth century, an era where a gentleman's 'cabinet of curiosities' displayed minerals, shells, stuffed birds and animals, and sundry ethnic exotica from mysterious regions of the globe.<sup>513</sup> A number of these collections represented genuine repositories of determined scientific study, but such cabinets were often little more than decorations, used to reveal the owner's intellectual taste and collecting skills, though many had not roamed beyond their parish or London dealers' rooms, for collecting was 'a form of self-fashioning'.<sup>514</sup> Tench's collections are representative of what Maya Jasanoff calls 'collections of empire', which were an essential part of 'shaping the images of the empire at home'. Jasanoff provides an insightful examination of such collecting as 'a form of cultural exchange' and successfully argues that imperial collecting can also be seen at a higher level, empires themselves being 'collections of people'.<sup>515</sup> To the extent that Tench's life is a micro study of an individual experience of empire, so his collections are micro studies of the imperial impulse to collect.

There is no evidence that Tench's collecting interests were anything more than a general fascination with the unfamiliar.<sup>516</sup> As well as his Brazilian mineral collection, he noted in 1787 that Rio de Janeiro was a good source of bird and insect specimens for a naturalist's collection.<sup>517</sup> His bargaining episode for his Aboriginal spear and his collection of soil samples during the September 1790

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<sup>512</sup> William Curtis, *The Botanical Magazine, or, Flower-garden Displayed*, Vol.8, (London, 1794), 287.

<sup>513</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 252-3.

<sup>514</sup> Maya Jasanoff, 'Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning', *Past & Present*, 184 (Aug 2004), 111.

<sup>515</sup> Jasanoff, 'Collectors of Empire', 113.

<sup>516</sup> While this represented the influence of Enlightenment thinking and values, there is also the likelihood that Tench's activities represented what John Gascoigne has described as 'an element of disinterested fascination'. John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86.

<sup>517</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 25.

expedition to Broken Bay may indicate a genuine scientific interest, but as he parted with them on his return to England, he may also have seen the possibility for a commercial transaction in their disposal.

In other activities, Tench took a lead role at a meeting in Penzance at the end of January 1826 'for the purpose of forming an Anti-slavery Society', an auxiliary of the parent body in London. Tench had previously voiced his opposition to slavery,<sup>518</sup> a position that would have placed him at odds with his maternal family, as his Tarleton cousins were still actively supporting the need for slave labour as a vital economic basis to the success of the West Indian sugar industry.<sup>519</sup> Members of the Bolitho and Carne families and Rev. Le Grice were also present at the meeting. The parent society had been formed in 1823 and included on its committee William Wilberforce and Zachary Macaulay, people well known to William Dawes.

Tench's active involvement in a number of voluntary societies reflects the rapid and sustained growth of these groups since the 1780s. As R.J. Morris established, these societies provided an interlocking social and power structure for the elite of the middle class. The committees of these Penzance societies all contain common names that confirmed the leadership role of middle class families in the town, as British society continued its move from control by the aristocracy. The local societies were often branches of larger organisations usually based in London, as in Tench's membership of the SPCK, structures that allowed for local communities to be more closely connected to the national scene.<sup>520</sup>

Tench's anti-slavery opinions were strongly expressed while he was imprisoned in France. Arguing that British trade would not be disadvantaged by the abolition of slavery, he went on:

if the opulence of England be founded on the basis of African slavery; if the productions of the tropics can be dispensed to

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<sup>518</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 108.

<sup>519</sup> James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History*, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 169, 182-4.

<sup>520</sup> R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *The History Journal*, 26, 1 (Mar 1983), 95-118.

us only by the blood and tears of the negro, I do not hesitate to exclaim – “Perish our commerce;” let our humanity live!<sup>521</sup>

Tench has taken the quote from the debate raging at the time on the negative impact of the war with France on Britain’s trade and commerce, the argument of a Member of Parliament, Jasper Wilson, for war with France being ‘Perish our commerce, if it must perish, but let our constitution live’. The quote was well known having been recently published in *The Monthly Review*, the magazine’s Whiggish bias reflecting many of Tench’s own sympathies.<sup>522</sup>

Tench was not entirely removed from his previous life as a Marine. In 1827 he made a gift to the Plymouth Naval Club of a model of the foremast of HMS *Victory* ‘as it appeared immediately after the Battle of Trafalgar covered with wounds’, destined to be the table centrepiece at Club dinners.<sup>523</sup> The centrepiece took pride of place when the Duke of Clarence, in his role as Lord High Admiral, dined at the Club later that year.<sup>524</sup> We do not know if Tench was present although it is unlikely given that although still on the list of officers on unattached pay, he had no official position in the Royal Marines. His old friend Lieutenant Colonel Abernethie, one of those indirectly the cause of his dismissal, was there.

A forerunner to the modern day ex-servicemen and women organisations, the Plymouth Naval Club was a social association of former naval officers, formed after the Napoleonic wars, who dined together on the anniversaries of various Royal Navy victories.<sup>525</sup> Its dinners were regulated by a standard toast list that specified that only the toasts to the Royal family and ‘The Heroes of the Day’ were allowed to be cheered, others to be met only with applause.<sup>526</sup> The Club lasted from 1816 to 1835 when its membership finally succumbed to the passage of time. The Club met in the rooms of Whiddon’s Royal Hotel, one of the leading hotels in Plymouth at the time, and dinners were graced with ‘a

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<sup>521</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 108.

<sup>522</sup> The quote and debate can be seen in a number of issues of the magazine, see for example September 1793, p.189.

<sup>523</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 27 Jan 1827.

<sup>524</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 21 Jul 1827.

<sup>525</sup> Henry Francis Whitfield, *Plymouth and Devonport: in Times of War and Peace*, Plymouth, 1900, 362.

<sup>526</sup> Whitfield, *Plymouth and Devonport*, 363.

model of the Victory, showing the shot-holes it received at Trafalgar', that 'was always used as a table centrepiece'.<sup>527</sup> Unfortunately, this record failed to acknowledge the centrepiece's donor. The Royal Hotel may have been the scene of celebrations of victories over the French, but it lost the battle with the German air force when it was destroyed by bombing in 1941.

Tench's name appears on a list of subscribers for the benefit of members of the French Royal Guard 'wounded in the fatal contests of July 1830', the revolution that led to the abdication of Charles X as King of France. He gave one guinea to support the Soldiers who were 'true to their colours and faithful to their oaths'. The gesture was symbolic of his commitment to the principles of duty and loyalty and perhaps also his opposition to revolution. Interestingly, he sought the widest notice of his support by sending his donation to the *Morning Post* via *John Bull Magazine* asking the latter publication to send it on. *John Bull Magazine* also published the letter (no doubt as intended), accompanied by an editorial introduction on the worthiness of the cause.<sup>528</sup>

Tench spoke often of his experiences in New South Wales and hearing a first hand account would still have been a novelty to many an audience. In his book of reminiscences, Cyrus Redding wrote of his meetings with Tench, 'frequently' at table in the dining room at the Plymouth Marine barracks and in private homes, where Tench gave his opinions on the convicts and the indigenous people.<sup>529</sup> Redding noted that 'The General could say nothing about the language spoken by these aborigines', at odds with what Tench had written in *A Complete Account* about his experiences and thoughts on the language and his work with William Dawes in this area.<sup>530</sup> Redding also recounted how Tench had found the female convicts to be 'far less depressed in mind' as to their fate than their male counterparts, for reasons Tench could not explain.<sup>531</sup> The female convicts may have been stronger of mind, but as Tench and his fellow chroniclers of the period were keen to point out, their moral standards were not considered to be so positive. However we get the impression that 'The

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<sup>527</sup> Whitfeld, *Plymouth and Devonport*, 362.

<sup>528</sup> *The Morning Post*, 8 Mar 1831; *John Bull*, 7 Mar 1831.

<sup>529</sup> Redding, *Personal Reminiscences*, 262.

<sup>530</sup> Redding, *Personal Reminiscences*, 272.

<sup>531</sup> Redding, *Personal Reminiscences*, 264.

General' obviously enjoyed telling his stories even if they were 'in some few cases abused by sitting too long, and taking a glass too much'.<sup>532</sup> Another writer said of General Tench that he 'very much liked to hear himself talk'.<sup>533</sup> Both comments were written some forty years after Tench's death and the tale of Tench's supposed loquaciousness may well have been apocryphal or enhanced over time, but perhaps he monopolised the table conversation a little too often. There are recurrent hints in Tench's writings that he was perhaps inclined to use many words when a few would suffice. His use of many references to and quotes from classical and more contemporary literature suggests that he enjoyed the use of words, probably since his student days.

Tench's death was sudden. One newspaper reported that he died 'after and short and painful illness'. Certainly he died soon after leaving Penzance, and perhaps he returned to Plymouth to be under the care of his brother in law, Dr Daniel Little at whose home he died on 7 May 1833, aged seventy-four.<sup>534</sup> A brief notice of his death appeared in the May 1833 edition of *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>535</sup>

Watkin Tench had become a leading citizen during his time in Penzance. He was involved in important cultural organisations that included members of the prominent families and actively supported the causes that mattered in the local context. However, his legacy in Penzance is almost non-existent, and his time there is virtually lost to history. Those twelve or so years left little mark, or apparently, little memory. The Penzance Library, where he made major contributions to its growth and development has no lasting memorial other than his name in the minute books. Local histories mention that he was President of the Library, but only as a statement of fact. The only other mention in local histories is a short sentence identifying his house as part of a general description of the town.<sup>536</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> Redding, *Personal Reminiscences*, 276-277.

<sup>533</sup> William Bottrell, 'Parson Spry, the Curate of Sennen & St. Levin, Half a Century Ago, and His Wooden Horse, and Dog "Sport"', *Traditions and Hearthside Stories of West Cornwall*, Vol.1, (Penzance 1870).

<sup>534</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 18 May 1833.

<sup>535</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan - Jun 1833 (Vol.CIII), 476.

<sup>536</sup> The archivist at the Morrab Library, the current name of the Penzance Library, confirmed that Tench has very few mentions in later histories of

One private memorial does exist. His nephews installed a memorial plaque acknowledging their debt to Tench and his wife in St. Mary's Church, Penzance, after Anna Maria Tench's death in 1847. However the plaque's prime purpose was to serve as a memorial to their sister Sarah who died aged nineteen at the family home in Chapel Street, but makes no mention of them having lived in the town.<sup>537</sup> It is high enough up the wall of the church to make it difficult to read. Tench was not wealthy at the time of his death but was financially comfortable. He owned a substantial house in Penzance and over time built a spread of popular investments, comprising various bonds and consols. At his wife's death in 1847 this amounted to just under £10,500.<sup>538</sup>

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Penzance and district. Personal discussions with John Simmonds, Archivist, Morrab Library, Penzance, 16 Oct 2012.

<sup>537</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 17 Mar 1832. The plaque was personally read on 21 Oct 2012.

<sup>538</sup> Account of the Executors of Mrs. A.M. Tench with Messrs. Coutts & Co., included in 'Papers of the Tench and Bedford Families in the possession of Miss V.B. Grylls, 18 Holland Avenue, Wimbledon, S.W.20', SLNSW Microfilm MAV/FM3/722.

## Chapter 10

### Family

Carrying the Marines back from New South Wales, HMS *Gorgon* arrived at Portsmouth in mid June 1792 after a six-month journey.<sup>539</sup> Tench returned to his Division at Plymouth and that October married Anna Maria Sargent, daughter of Robert Sargent, surgeon of Stoke Damerel. Stoke Damerel was a parish on the north east edge of Devonport; close to the Marine barracks at Stonehouse. Tench considered Stoke Damerel to be his home until moving to Penzance in 1821. It is now absorbed into Plymouth.

Tench and his wife had no children of their own, but in 1821 they took responsibility for the children of Anna Maria Tench's sister, Sarah Bedford, after her death in February 1821. Sarah Bedford was the widow of Captain John Bedford of the Royal Navy, who had committed suicide in 1814 when Captain of HMS *Childers*, then based at Halifax, North America. Bedford had a distinguished career in the Navy, including service on HMS *Tonnant* at the battle of Trafalgar, and had lost a leg in action some years previously.<sup>540</sup> At the time of their informal adoption, the four Bedford children, three boys and one girl, were aged between nine and sixteen and this new responsibility would have been a major life change for Watkin and Anna Maria, made more difficult as the children came without any material wealth. After the death of her husband, Sarah Bedford had been forced to apply for a pension from the Admiralty charity for the 'relief of poor widows'. To qualify for this support, she was obliged to certify that her annual income was less than £160.<sup>541</sup>

There is no known evidence of Tench's relationship with his Tench family. His only surviving sibling was his older brother John who was married with children at the time of Fisher Tench's death in 1784. From Watkin Tench's will it is

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<sup>539</sup> Mary Ann Parker *A Voyage Round the World in the Gorgon Man of War: Captain John Parker*, London 1795, in Coleman, *Maiden Voyages*, 220.

<sup>540</sup> *The Naval Chronicle for 1814*, Vol. XXXII (July to December), 263.

<sup>541</sup> Application of Sarah Bedford to the 'Charity for the Relief of Poor Widows of Commission and Warrant Officers of the Royal Navy', 21 September 1814. TNA ADM 6/352.

evident that he had some contact with his brother's son, another John Tench, although that may have only been a familial responsibility. The will describes John Tench 'as my only surviving nephew' and Tench left him £500 plus the family portraits and pictures, other than of himself, and 'all items of plate on which my arms are engraved'.<sup>542</sup> At the time of Watkin Tench's death, John Tench was an Assistant Commissary General in the British Army, based in the West Indies.<sup>543</sup> Having no children of his own, Tench passed on to his nephew, now the eldest surviving male descendant of Fisher and Margaret Tench, what would usually have been bequeathed to an eldest son.

Tench appears to have enjoyed a good relationship with his wife's family. At a formal level it involved duties such as acting as executor of his father-in-law's will,<sup>544</sup> while at a more personal level it manifested itself as a relationship of care and affection with the children of his wife's sisters. The relationship appears to have been reciprocated. In a letter written in 1820 to the elder Bedford son, John Sargent Bedford, Tench was congratulatory and encouraging of the fifteen year old's experiences as a cadet at the Royal Military College, Bagshot. Commending young Bedford for not being involved in a recent student disturbance at the College, Tench commented on the lessons to be learned from the fate of five young cadets expelled over the incident. In true Tench style, he took the opportunity to emphasise to his nephew the importance of duty and honour. To be the father of one of the expelled cadets would have caused Tench 'the deepest distress'. He would have felt 'dishonored' by having sent a son to 'an Institution supported at the public expense' whose conduct resulted in such a penalty. Tench went on to ask his nephew to pass on his regards to his fellow cadets who were also not part of the incident.<sup>545</sup> There is of course a strong element of parental advice contained in his letter, but as seen in many other instances Tench was deeply committed to the opinions and attitudes he was passing on.

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<sup>542</sup> Will of Watkin Tench, 5 Apr 1832. TNA PROB 11/1818.

<sup>543</sup> Army List 1840.

<sup>544</sup> Will of Robert Sargent, 21 Aug 1804. TNA PROB 11/1484.

<sup>545</sup> Tench to John Bedford, 6 Apr 1820. Papers of the Tench and Bedford families, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MAV/FM3/722.

Writing again to John Bedford some ten years later, Tench was pleased to advise him that his younger brother, Delboeuf Bedford ('our dear Del'), had his commission as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy and appointment to a navy ship confirmed. Tench conveys a sense of pride in the letter, especially as it appears he had been instrumental in obtaining the appointment. The letter also shows that Tench was providing financial support to his nephew, asking John Bedford to tell his brother 'all his Drafts upon me are honored'. Tench signed off his letter as 'your affectionate friend and uncle'. The short letter provides more information about Tench. He had met the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Melville, to secure his nephew's appointment. He noted to John Bedford, 'Lord Melville has behaved very handsomely to me since he came to town', a statement that suggests that any negative issues surrounding Tench's dismissal from his position at Plymouth nine years earlier had dissipated. Melville was First Lord at the time of the dismissal and would have agreed to and authorised the decision. The letter also shows that long after leaving the Royal Marines, Tench still had sufficient influence and respect to arrange a junior officer's commission directly with the First Lord.<sup>546</sup>

The three Bedford nephews had successful careers, the two eldest as respected citizens of Penzance. The youngest, Robert Tench Bedford, became a naval officer and in 1846 was appointed Gentleman Usher in Residence to the Queen Dowager, Queen Adelaide, and in 1854 was appointed to the household of Queen Victoria.<sup>547</sup>

John Sargent Bedford did not continue his military career and after marrying into the Bolitho family of Cornwall joined the family bank, Mounts Bay Bank, finally becoming Managing Partner in 1856. His brother Delboeuf followed a short naval career before becoming a commercial competitor to his brother when he was appointed Secretary of the Penzance Savings Bank. Delboeuf

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<sup>546</sup> Tench to J.S. Bedford, 23 Apr 1830. Papers of the Tench and Bedford families, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MAV/FM3/722.

<sup>547</sup> *The London Gazette*, 2 Jan 1846, 28 Feb 1854.

married another Bolitho and their daughter, Anna Maria Tench Bedford, married into the Grylls family cementing connections with the leading local families.<sup>548</sup>

Tench appointed another nephew, Robert Tench Little, as his executor. His will details legacies to all his Bedford and Little nephews. Writing to his cousin J.S. Bedford after Tench's death, Little provided some details of Tench's investments in Consols, Mexican Bonds and shares, all of which were common interest bearing investments. Coutts Bank managed Tench's investments and general banking affairs.<sup>549</sup>

Detailed accounts drawn up by Coutts after the death of Anna Maria Tench in 1847 show a similar portfolio of investments totalling £10,496 as noted previously.<sup>550</sup> Since her husband's death, Anna Maria Tench had also been receiving a widow's pension from the Navy of £120 a year.<sup>551</sup> Tench was in the wrong service to earn a fortune during his military career but it appears he was financially comfortable during his retirement.

Tench's character and personality were shaped by the twin influences of the Enlightenment and his father's strong cultural background both of which are evident in his writing. Throughout his life he remained loyal to his key values: loyalty, duty and honour. As a dedicated member of the Marine Corps, he was a committed believer in the institutions of Britain and its established values and continually demonstrated a devotion to honour and duty, at personal cost. He not only physically defended those institutions, but also prosecuted their virtues to those he considered he could influence.

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<sup>548</sup> Anna Maria Grylls' granddaughter, Violet Grylls, gave copies of the Bedford Tench correspondence and a miniature of Watkin Tench to the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

<sup>549</sup> R.J. Little to J.S. Bedford, 30 May 1833. Papers of the Tench and Bedford families, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MAV/FM3/722.

<sup>550</sup> Messrs Coutts, accounts with J.S. Bedford and accounts of the Executors of Mrs. A.M. Tench. Tench and Bedford papers.

<sup>551</sup> House of Commons, Accounts and Papers, 'Return of Expenditure of Sums voted in Navy Estimates of 1836-37 for Widows of Officers', 1837. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online.

## Part III

### George Worgan: A Life.

#### Chapter 11

##### Early Years and the American War

##### i. Early years

George Bouchier Worgan was born in 1757, the son of John and Sarah Worgan, and was baptised at St. Andrews, Holborn, London on 3 May that year.<sup>552</sup> Almost all John Worgan's siblings were involved in the world of music, an involvement that became a major preoccupation of later generations. The commitment to music composition and performance appears to have begun with John Worgan's elder brother James, one of the original subscribers to the Royal Society of Musicians, established as a charity for the benefit of impoverished musicians in 1738. James Worgan was joined in this by some of the leading figures in music of the time, including Thomas Arne and George Frederick Handel. John Worgan continued the Handel connection and became recognised for his championing of the great composer's works, especially his keyboard pieces.<sup>553</sup>

Dr. John Worgan became a renowned organist and composer although most of his works have not lasted the test of time.<sup>554</sup> Charles Burney, who as a young man had been amused by Fisher Tench's antics at Chester Cathedral, described Worgan as 'an excellent Fughist, a neat player of Scarlatti's Lessons, and a perfect master of the touch of the Organ'. At the same time he was

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<sup>552</sup> John Cobley, 'Worgan, George Bouchier (1757-1838)', *ADB Online*.

<sup>553</sup> Musical biographies of the Worgan family are in Pamela McGairl, 'Worgan', in Stanley Sadie (ed), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, (London: Macmillan, 2001) Vol. 27, 565-567; and Highfill et al, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors*, Vol.16, 273-274. Also for John Worgan see Robert J. Bruce, 'Worgan, John (bap. 1724, d.1790)', *ODNB Online*.

<sup>554</sup> John Worgan obtained his Mus.D from Cambridge University in 1775. *The New Grove*, 566.

unimpressed with Worgan's compositions as the 'melody was often uncouth, never graceful', and his harmony and modulation 'too studied and unnatural to please the public, or even connoisseurs of good taste'.<sup>555</sup> Worgan spent many years as organist at some of the principal churches in London and at Vauxhall Gardens, where he gained considerable renown after succeeding his brother James to the post in 1751. John Worgan also composed a number of songs, adding to the Vauxhall songbook that also included compositions by leading British composers Thomas Arne and William Boyce, as well as J.C. Bach.<sup>556</sup> The pleasure gardens at Vauxhall, described by one historian as 'London's first great fashionable resort',<sup>557</sup> offered summer entertainment in an atmosphere that gradually became more genteel as the century progressed. It presented orchestral music, art and sculpture, and organ recitals.<sup>558</sup>

George Worgan's schooling is unknown, but it is likely that he experienced a tumultuous home life. When he was twelve his father took a case for divorce to the House of Lords. The details of the divorce proceedings revealed his wife's alleged adultery with one of his pupils and two of his assistants, apparently resulting in John Worgan being treated for venereal disease that he claimed was from his wife. Sarah Worgan was also accused of disposing of some family plate to pay her personal household debts. In the proceedings a number of witnesses noted that some of the couple's children were present from time to time during these assignations. Based on the estimate of the children's ages given by one of the witnesses, it is likely that the children involved included either George or his brother Richard. The accused assistants were said to have taken advantage of John Worgan's absence when he was playing the organ at churches on Sundays, and also during his time at Vauxhall Gardens. John and Sarah Worgan were divorced by Private Act of Parliament in February 1769.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>555</sup> Klima et al, *Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney*, 56.

<sup>556</sup> Pamela McGairl, 'The Vauxhall Jubilee, 1786', *The Musical Times*, 127, 1726 (Nov 1986), 612.

<sup>557</sup> Roy Porter, *Enlightenment. Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, (London: Allen Lane 2000), 269.

<sup>558</sup> John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 64-68.

<sup>559</sup> *Private Act, 9 Geo III, c.57*. [www.legislation.gov.uk/changes/chron-tables/private/16](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/changes/chron-tables/private/16). Accessed 8 Oct 2014

The proceedings were later published for general consumption in all their salacious detail.<sup>560</sup>

George Worgan's parents are recorded as having nine children, but of his siblings the two who appear to have featured most in his life were his brother Richard and sister Charlotte. Richard, a sometime composer, was the recipient of George's correspondence from New South Wales and later supported him in his application to Arthur Young at the Board of Agriculture for employment in some agricultural pursuit. Richard appears to have had a peripatetic life, but became an intimate of Young and well regarded by William Wilberforce who, as we have seen, was a patron of William Dawes.<sup>561</sup> A drawing dated 1806 of Richard Worgan at the fortepiano with a small group shows his circle included the artist John Constable.<sup>562</sup> George's sister Charlotte, who also exerted much pressure on Arthur Young on her brother's behalf, later married Sir William Parsons, the Master of the King's Musick. Parsons continued his in-laws' enthusiasm for Handel when he selected some of the composer's works for the King's birthday celebrations at St. James Palace on 4 June 1807.<sup>563</sup> John Worgan twice remarried after the divorce and a son of his third wife, Thomas Danvers Worgan, became a teacher of music in London and a minor composer.<sup>564</sup>

It is clear that George Worgan grew up surrounded by the world of music, but encouraged by his father he decided to pursue a very different path: a career as a naval surgeon. His musical background and training did not leave him, as he

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<sup>560</sup> *Trials for Adultery: or, the History of Divorces being Select Trials at Doctors Commons for Adultery, Fornication, Cruelty, Impotence etc. From the year 1760 to the present Time.* Vol. II, (London 1780).

<sup>561</sup> Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, Vol.3, 420. Also Richard Worgan to Arthur Young, n.d., British Library (BL), Arthur Young papers, Add MSS 35130 ff.297-298.

<sup>562</sup> Drawing by John Harden, 19 Sep 1806, British Museum Prints and Drawings, regna. 1957.0413.3.

[www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_image.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_image.aspx). (Accessed 13 Feb 2012) Harden was an amateur painter and owner of a property near Windermere in the Lake District, and was a neighbour of Richard Worgan. Constable stayed with Worgan in October 1806.

<sup>563</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 5 Jun 1807.

<sup>564</sup> *The New Grove*, 567.

remained a skilled performer at the fortepiano. In bringing his piano to New South Wales he became a pioneer of Western classical music in the colony.

## ii. The American War

Worgan joined the Royal Navy in 1775 at the commencement of the American War, and after a period of apprenticeship passed his first examinations on 5 February 1778, to qualify as a Surgeon's Second Mate, third-rate. This was followed by a second examination in October 1779 and certification as a Surgeon, fifth-rate.<sup>565</sup> Admiralty records show his seniority dated from a Surgeon's Warrant issued on 18 March 1780.<sup>566</sup> There are no further records at the Company of Surgeons to indicate that he formally advanced these qualifications, but his career suggests that there was probably no need. The only ship on which he held the responsibility of surgeon with a mate to assist was HMS *Sirius*, classified by the Admiralty as a sixth-rate vessel. Worgan held this appointment until the vessel was wrecked off Norfolk Island, and he and other crew members returned to Britain. His qualifications, accredited for smaller naval vessels only, and his lack of any progress in upgrading those qualifications may be circumstance, or may reflect his negative attitude to the profession, as became clear later in his life.

Gaps in the records make it difficult to identify the details of Worgan's naval service. It is probable his first posting was to the naval cutter HMS *Pilote* where he may have served until the early 1780s. Either way his service on *Pilote* would have been short as the vessel only joined the Royal Navy late in 1779 as a captured French vessel of the same name. The exact date Worgan left *Pilote* is not known. When giving evidence to the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry in November 1803, Worgan said he had served as Surgeon's Mate on the Hospital Ship *Tiger* 'in the American War'.<sup>567</sup> The House of Commons had

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<sup>565</sup> Royal College of Surgeons archives; Company of Surgeons, *Examinations Book 1745-1800*, ff.304, 339.

<sup>566</sup> *The Medical Register for the Year 1783*, List of Royal Navy surgeons, 161.

<sup>567</sup> Evidence by Worgan to the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry. *The Seventh Report of the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry. Naval Hospital at East Stonehouse and Le Caton Hospital Ship*, House of Commons Papers: Reports of Commissioners, July 1804, 631. (Seventh Report)

decided to end the war three months before he joined *Tiger*, although the effects of the war would have been evident on a hospital ship for some time. The ship's muster shows he joined the vessel, moored at Plymouth, on 31 July 1782 as Acting Surgeon's Second Mate, but a lack of records make it unclear when he left. It is likely that he remained on *Tiger* until he joined HMS *Sirius* in 1786.<sup>568</sup>

Worgan was twenty-one when he passed his first examination to qualify as a Second Surgeon's Mate, third-rate.<sup>569</sup> It was not Worgan's own decision to pursue this career. Writing to Arthur Young in 1807, Worgan said it was based on his father's wishes. 'I had a dear honoured Father, whose wish was to bring me up to the defective (his emphasis) Art of Physic – his will was mine, I obeyed, pursued and completed my studies'.<sup>570</sup> Later, after Worgan had left the service, his sister Lady Charlotte Parsons told Young:

the relinquishing a Profession which his worthy Father, the late Dr. Worgan gave him and educated him for, carries with it I own, the appearance of great imprudence but Nature never formed him with strength of nerve requisite for that Profession, which perhaps accounts for his taking so unconquerable an antipathy to it.<sup>571</sup>

### iii. The naval surgeon in the late eighteenth century

Worgan entered a profession that, despite being essential to the Royal Navy, remained low in its hierarchy. It was not until the naval reforms of 1805-6 that surgeons began to enjoy an improved status. The pay was poor and remained unchanged for most of the eighteenth century. Indeed, the pay rates for surgeons and surgeon's mates had been in place since 1700 and did not increase until 1797, prior to the more far-reaching reforms to the naval medical service in 1805. There was also an imbalance between services as the pay for

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<sup>568</sup> *Tiger* Hospital ship muster. TNA, ADM 36/10150.

<sup>569</sup> Company of Surgeons, *Examinations Book 1745-1800*, 304.

<sup>570</sup> Worgan to Arthur Young, 16 Feb 1807. BL, Young papers, Add MSS 35129 f.369.

<sup>571</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, 20 Mar 1807. BL, Young papers, Add MSS 35129 f.389.

a surgeon's mate was £2 per month, far less than that for the equivalent position in the Army. Added to this was the considerable social impact of the role. The Navy Board, and not the Admiralty, appointed surgeons and as their appointments were by warrant, not commission, they did not enjoy social classification as 'gentlemen', an automatic result of holding a commission in the Royal Navy or Army. Further, they were not afforded an identifying or specific uniform, and, as warrant officers, were not able to walk the quarterdeck with the naval officers. Surgeon's mates were even further down the hierarchy.<sup>572</sup>

In addition to low pay, naval surgeons were required to provide their own instruments and basic medical supplies. The purchase of drugs for onboard use was outlaid by the surgeon and reimbursement claimed from the Sick and Hurt Board. These reimbursements often took considerable time, a potential cause of financial strain for the surgeon. Worgan found he could not afford the cost of Peruvian bark (widely used as a treatment for fever) for the expedition to New South Wales and asked Governor Phillip to request a supply for the crew of HMS *Sirius*.<sup>573</sup>

To become certified as a naval surgeon a candidate was required to pass an oral examination given by the Company of Surgeons at Surgeons' Hall in London, after first making application to the Navy Board for an initial assessment. The Board did not employ medically skilled clerks to properly assess likely candidates. At the time of Worgan's entry the examination lasted about an hour and cost a fee of one guinea. This was followed by a further examination conducted by the Physician of Greenwich Hospital intended to assess general medical skills. If the candidate was successful, the Navy Board then issued the relevant Warrant.<sup>574</sup>

The certification of surgeons was based on the level of their assessed competence for duty and therefore restricted to specifically rated vessels. The Admiralty rated vessels according to size and number of guns. These

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<sup>572</sup> P.K. Crimmin, 'The Shortage of Surgeons and Surgeons' Mates c.1740-1806: "An Evil of a Serious Nature to the Service"', *Transactions of the Naval Dockyards Society*, 6 (June 2010), 51-52.

<sup>573</sup> Worgan to Phillip, 23 Nov 1786. *HRNSW*, Vol. 1, Pt 2, 30.

<sup>574</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 50-51.

established the strength of the ship's complement, and by implication the level of activity expected of a surgeon. The crews of all naval vessels were likely to be confronted with the same risks of injury or sickness, but a third-rate, 74 gun ship of the line for example, had a total complement of around six hundred men presenting a massive task of management and leadership for the ship's surgeon, assisted by only two surgeon's mates, especially at a time of action.<sup>575</sup> All naval vessels were required to have a surgeon on board although the number of surgeon's mates was governed by the vessel's rate.

It was a difficult occupation. In addition to surgical skills, mostly required at times of enemy action, there was a wide range of general skills needed to combat the many illnesses and diseases. Some, such as venereal disease, scurvy, and fever had standard treatments that varied little over time, but a naval surgeon needed to be ready to treat any ailment or physical injury usually without the support of a third party. There was little chance of a surgeon or his patient seeking a second opinion. To ensure the efficient operations of the vessel there was also the important task of maintaining general hygiene and good physical condition amongst the sailors. Worgan may not have had the highest rated qualifications, but he was deemed sufficiently well qualified to take on the responsibilities of the health of the crew of a Royal Navy vessel, a skill he later displayed in the round the world voyage undertaken with John Hunter on HMS *Sirius* in late 1788.

Worgan's first qualification would have entitled him to a base pay of £2 per month.<sup>576</sup> It was 'rapidly rising prices in the 1790s' that initiated small increases in 1797, and small they were as the pay for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Mate rose from £2 to £2-5-6 per month.<sup>577</sup> Although Worgan had progressed along the pay scale, these conditions would have further encouraged him to look for an alternative occupation away from a job he already disliked, especially as he had newly married since returning from New South Wales and probably had a family in mind.

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<sup>575</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 51.

<sup>576</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 52.

<sup>577</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 52-53.

The poor conditions of service resulted in a severe shortage of qualified surgeons in the Royal Navy, providing the impetus for the reforms finally introduced at the end of the eighteenth century. One surgeon at the Forton naval prison hospital summed up the conditions when, on resigning from the service in 1797, considered his position to be 'neither profitable, comfortable nor respectable'.<sup>578</sup> Pay rates increased again in the major reforms of 1805 when surgeons were also given the wardroom rank of a Lieutenant, a uniform, and the government now paid for drugs, but not instruments.<sup>579</sup> These latter changes meant that surgeons were now officers and gentlemen and entitled to wear a sword indicating that status.<sup>580</sup> The 1805 reforms brought the conditions and status of Royal Navy surgeons closer to those of French naval surgeons, a point made a decade earlier by Watkin Tench. Writing during his period as a prisoner of war in France during 1794-5, Tench was impressed that the French surgeons were 'considered with all the respect due to gentlemen, and live in the society of the principal officers'. These conditions had been introduced since the French revolution, a change Tench was willing to acknowledge: 'the faculty owe obligations to the revolution'. Tench also noted that a French 74-gun vessel carried a surgeon and five surgeon mates, compared to the equivalent British vessel's medical complement of a surgeon and two mates.<sup>581</sup> For Worgan, time was not on his side as the 1805 reforms came five years after he left the Navy.

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<sup>578</sup> Christopher Lloyd and Jack L S Coulter, *Medicine and the Navy, 1200-1900*, Vol.3 1714 -1815 (Edinburgh: E. & S. Livingstone, 1961), 10.

<sup>579</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 54.

<sup>580</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 53-54.

<sup>581</sup> Watkin Tench, *Letters from France*, 34.

## Chapter 12

### New South Wales

Worgan was aged thirty-one when he joined HMS *Sirius* late in 1786 taking with him a piano.<sup>582</sup> Little is known of his experiences during the passage to New South Wales described to his brother Richard as 'a tolerably pleasant Voyage of 10 weeks & 2 days'.<sup>583</sup> At Rio de Janiero Worgan entertained a group of officers, including Phillip, to a piano recital on board *Sirius*, the event followed by supper.<sup>584</sup> He twice dined with Arthur Bowes Smyth, surgeon on the transport *Lady Penrhyn*. Smyth found Worgan to be 'a very sensible good kind of man'<sup>585</sup> and the two men planned to go ashore and 'visit two Monasteries where there were excellt. Organs', although there is no record of the visit taking place.<sup>586</sup>

While the new settlement was establishing itself, Worgan and the officers of *Sirius* had little to do in the way of formal duties. Led by John Hunter, the ship's captain, Worgan and William Bradley, First Lieutenant on *Sirius*, undertook a series of short journeys that were a combination of exploration, inquiry and pleasure. Worgan described one particular day's outing up harbour as 'a most delightful Excursion'. The day involved a boat journey, a walk in the bush and a picnic consisting of 'cold Kangaroo Pie and a Plum Pudding, a Bottle of Wine etc'. In relating the day's outing, Worgan reveals how he was impressed with the country, recording that large areas resembled 'a Beautiful Park', although he noted that some of the vegetation clearly differed from what was to be found back in England. His language is rich in its descriptions: the 'luxuriant' grass,

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<sup>582</sup> This was most likely a fortepiano, also known as a square piano, which was mounted on removable trestle legs. Dr. Geoffrey Lancaster, musician and academic, has claimed to have discovered the present day whereabouts of Worgan's piano. I am grateful to Dr. Lancaster for allowing me to read his unpublished draft manuscript, 'The Role of the Piano in the Development of Australian Musical Culture', Vol.1 'The First Fleet Piano', n.d. (c.2012).

<sup>583</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 1.

<sup>584</sup> Smyth, Arthur Bowes, *The Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth: Surgeon 'Lady Penrhyn 1787-1789*, 35.

<sup>585</sup> Smyth, *Journal*, 29.

<sup>586</sup> Smyth, *Journal*, 29,35.

the 'particularly beautiful Verdue' of the leaves of a tree, which was itself 'very delicate'.<sup>587</sup> Worgan's account is in a letter to his brother Richard to whom he was quite close and thus it is in a freer and more personal style than the more formal journals of contemporaries destined for publication.

In May 1788 Worgan accompanied Hunter and Bradley to Sydney Harbour's South Head to determine the site's latitude, then four days later to North Head. While Hunter and Bradley 'were Astronomizing', Worgan and his servant (described in his account as 'my Man Friday') were 'rambling about to shoot a few birds'.<sup>588</sup> The nature of his excursions has prompted one historian to suggest that Worgan may be 'Australia's first bushwalker' and if his 'rambles' in the bush are the measure,<sup>589</sup> then the acknowledgement may well be justified but with the important acknowledgement of being the 'first European bushwalker'. The indigenous inhabitants had been walking the bush for millennia. In June 1788 Worgan joined the search for two of John Hunter's servants apparently lost ashore. Worgan described the two-day venture in a light-hearted manner recording that he joined the search party as he was 'having a Mind for a Ramble'. At the night's camp he and his companions 'sang the Evening away'.<sup>590</sup> He also added a description of the country suggesting the soil was suitable for 'producing any kind of Grain' but considered that the task of first clearing the heavily timbered country would be an arduous and time consuming task.<sup>591</sup>

Worgan's final journal entry is dated 2 Jul 1788 and what details we have of his activities after that date are from third parties and official documents. We know he had an early break from his sojourn in New South Wales when in late 1788 Phillip sent HMS *Sirius* to the Cape of Good Hope for provisions. This was to be a remarkable round the world journey as John Hunter chose to take an easterly direction around the wilds of Cape Horn. Hunter was rightly pleased with his achievement and noted that many at the Cape of Good Hope

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<sup>587</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 45.

<sup>588</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 47, 49.

<sup>589</sup> Melissa Harper, *The Ways of the Bushwalker. On Foot in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>590</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 55.

<sup>591</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 56.

expressed admiration for the non-stop journey taking just over ninety-one days.<sup>592</sup> He was assisted in achieving this goal by the ministrations of his ship's surgeon. Worgan made sure the sailors were constantly available for work by insisting on daily doses of malt to ward off scurvy, and, by caring for forty sick sailors at onshore sick quarters at the Cape, he pleased Hunter with 'their expeditious recovery'.<sup>593</sup> HMS *Sirius* left Sydney on 1 October 1788 and returned safely on 8 May 1789.

Once returned exploration took much of his attention. Again with Hunter Worgan was a member of two expeditions to Broken Bay during 1789. Phillip led the first in early June 1789, which comprised a large party including David Collins, the colony's Judge Advocate, and John White, surgeon to the colony. The group were away ten days and during the period they discovered and named the Hawkesbury River. Hunter described the expedition in great detail and noted the discovery of a number of human skeletons that were believed to be Aboriginal people killed by smallpox. Two weeks after returning to Sydney Cove the group, minus Phillip, went out again to explore the Hawkesbury River upstream and survey the wider Broken Bay area. The party was away fifteen days.<sup>594</sup> Worgan returned to South Head in January 1790 with Hunter and White where they established a flagstaff camping there for ten days.<sup>595</sup>

Worgan travelled with Dawes and Tench early in August 1790 venturing southwest from Rose Hill. Tench recorded that they discovered a river he identified as near the source of the Nepean River that he named the Worgan River. Worgan's claim to enduring recognition however has long passed into history as the name quickly dropped from usage. The party returned to the Nepean again two weeks later, this time travelling in northwest direction from

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<sup>592</sup> Hunter, *An Historical Journal*, 77.

<sup>593</sup> Hunter, *Journal*, 65; 77. Worgan was adopting current practice in its usage but malt's value in combating scurvy was later discredited and its use ceased. The maritime historian Pat Crimmin has discussed the progress of treatment of scurvy in the Royal Navy in Pat Crimmin, 'The Sick and Hurt Board and the problem of scurvy', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 15, 1, 47-53.

<sup>594</sup> Hunter, *Journal*, 95-108.

<sup>595</sup> Hunter, *Journal*, 117.

Rose Hill. Another expedition with Tench and Dawes in September 1790 involved a three-day journey to Broken Bay.<sup>596</sup>

The final expedition in which the three were together was the well-known punitive expedition of December 1790 discussed in previous chapters. Worgan and his Surgeon's Mate, John Lowes, were included presumably as it was considered the expedition may well have involved armed conflict. Based on what is evident of Worgan's character and personality during the course of his life, it is likely that he would have found the purpose and prospect of the expedition repugnant. However the expedition was a failure and Worgan's surgeon's skills were not called upon, probably a great relief to him.

Worgan's accounts of his journeys in the colony have a similarity in his description of the land and of his own enjoyment. 'Our excursions', he told his brother, 'put me in Mind of your going a Steeple Hunting', taking food, 'a Bottle of *O be joyful*', a 'Brace of Pistols', and a 'Musket', for an enjoyable outing of hunting and camping. The closeness between the two brothers is seen again as Worgan goes on to relate that at night the expeditioners made a 'rousing Fire, cut Boughs & made up a Wig-Wam.....and eat as hearty a Fare as You of your Dainties'. Worgan added 'I enjoy these little Rambles, and I think you would, however, I think it is hardly worth your while to come and try them'.<sup>597</sup>

Deidre Coleman has argued that Worgan wrote 'several swaggering and boastful' letters to his brother, an observation made in isolation and without the benefit of knowing greater details of his life.<sup>598</sup> In fact, the letter to his brother reveals the thirty-one year old Worgan as relaxed, somewhat gentle in character, with an active sense of humour, and distant from his occupation as a ship's surgeon. This window on Worgan's personality also reveals a man without wider responsibilities. It was only later, after his return to England, when marriage and children and the need to provide for them created heavy pressures. In a letter to his mother written in July 1790, Daniel Southwell, the young Master's Mate from HMS *Sirius* who was then stationed at the lookout on

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<sup>596</sup> Scott, *Remarks on a Passage*, 57; Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 175.

<sup>597</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 46.

<sup>598</sup> Coleman, *Romantic Colonization*, 179.

South Head, wrote that Worgan intended to 'bring his nightcap here and stay with me and my lonely companion'. Worgan, he said, was one of a few who 'are all very kind, and was 'not the least in favour'.<sup>599</sup>

Worgan's period in the colony was not all exploration and excursions as there were his medical responsibilities to consider. Until HMS *Sirius* left for Norfolk Island in March 1790, he was still responsible for the medical needs of the ship's crew and was also occasionally called upon to assist other medical men in the colony. In May 1788, Worgan and John White examined two sick Marine officers and recommended their return to England.<sup>600</sup> In December 1789 Worgan examined Lieutenant George Maxwell of HMS *Sirius* and declared him to be insane. At Phillip's request a second examination was held with White and White's assistant who confirmed the original diagnosis.<sup>601</sup>

There was more to the new colony than exploration and farming and national celebrations were included from the beginning. Five months after reading the proclamation of the colony Phillip organised celebrations for the King's birthday. George Worgan enjoyed himself immensely. After a detailed description of the flag raising and twenty-one gun salutes, the officers moved to Phillip's residence for lunch. Local ingredients, including fish and 'Kangaroo' featured on a substantial, well lubricated menu. The lunch included 'three Huzza's' for Phillip, much to the Governor's pleasure. It commenced at 2.00pm and finished three hours later when the officers went out to watch the bonfires, 'really a noble sight', before returning to Phillip's residence for supper. The evening lasted until 11.00pm when Worgan and Hunter returned to their bunks on HMS *Sirius*.<sup>602</sup>

Unlike his colleagues Dawes and Tench, Worgan's records are too brief to provide an idea of his interest in the local language. His only comment of any substance is a dismissive 'their Language being such an inarticulate, unintelligible Jargon'.<sup>603</sup> But then, perhaps he had no particular interest in the

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<sup>599</sup> Daniel Southwell to Mrs. Southwell, 27-30 July 1790, *HRNSW*, Vol.2, 719.

<sup>600</sup> *HRA*, Vol.1, 64.

<sup>601</sup> *HRA*, Vol.1, 263-4.

<sup>602</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 52-4.

<sup>603</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 19.

subject. However he did show a strong interest in the people themselves and provided a considerable amount of description and information to his brother Richard as to the Aborigines physical attributes and customs as well as observations on the initial encounters between the two cultures.

Worgan was like several of his colleagues in finding the environment of the new colony strange and perplexing. His first impressions of the country around Port Jackson were through eyes still programmed to the English countryside and yet to be adjusted to a new way of seeing. Worgan saw 'a Variety of Romantic Views, all thrown together with sweet confusion by the careless hand of Nature'.<sup>604</sup> In general he found the climate to be dry, clear and serene with the added advantage that through the winter there were 'green Trees in abundance', an advantage he told his brother 'is more than you can say in your Winter Master Dick'. The lightning and thunder however were 'astonishingly awful' and like a number of his colleagues described the death of livestock sheltering under a tree struck by lightning. Wisely, he recognised that a proper assessment would require 'a Round of y(e) Seasons'.<sup>605</sup>

There is no evidence that Worgan displayed any particular interest in agricultural matters during his stay, an activity that later involved much energy, money and anguish. Still, although living on board HMS *Sirius*, he established a small kitchen garden ashore, 'one of my Amusements', and discovered like others that the poor quality of the soil at Port Jackson meant that although seeds would germinate, 'the Plants degenerate in their Growth exceedingly'.<sup>606</sup>

Worgan was well regarded by many in the colony. As we have seen, his medical skills impressed John Hunter, while his personality and good humour had made a positive impression on Bowes Smyth and Daniel Southwell. The author of 'A Letter from Sydney' praised Worgan as 'a young gentleman of approved character and merit'.<sup>607</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur lamented Worgan's early

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<sup>604</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 7.

<sup>605</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 13, 22-3.

<sup>606</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 12-13.

<sup>607</sup> 'A Letter from Sydney' 24 Mar 1791, (published in the Edinburgh newspaper *The Bee* 15 May 1792), *HRNSW*, Vol.II, 778.

departure from the colony writing that his loss meant 'a considerable branch of our society will be lopped off'.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>608</sup> Elizabeth Macarthur to Miss Kingdon, 7 Mar 1791, reproduced in Macarthur-Onslow, *Early Records*, 28-9.

## Chapter 13

### Missstep: The *Le Caton* affair

Worgan returned to England from New South Wales on the former Dutch vessel *Waaksamheyd* with other crew of HMS *Sirius*, arriving at Portsmouth on 22 April 1792. In early 1793, he was appointed Assistant Surgeon of the hospital ship *Le Caton*, moored at Plymouth remaining in that position until he left the service.<sup>609</sup> His superior on *Le Caton* was Dr Thomas Mein, described earlier to his brother Richard as my 'Friend Mr. Mein of Fowey' whom Worgan also wrote to while in New South Wales.<sup>610</sup> The friendship would later lead to difficulties.

Worgan's marriage in May 1793 may have caused him to consider opportunities to supplement his naval income, as on 1 March 1794 he signed an agreement with Samuel Keast, purser of *Le Caton*, to take over the vessel's victualling contract that Keast held with the Navy's Sick and Hurt Board.<sup>611</sup> This was a private assignment between the two men, but the primary contractual arrangements remained between Keast and the Sick and Hurt Board, which was not a party to the assignment. The arrangements envisaged profits to Worgan of approximately £200 per quarter. Worgan in turn had a side agreement with Mein to pass on half of the amounts earned, although Mein was not a party to the principal assignment.<sup>612</sup> The consideration for the arrangement was an annual payment of one hundred guineas to Keast, but Worgan later said he had paid additional super profits to Keast of £10 to £20 per quarter in busy times, such as when there had been 'a great number of Patients and many in Fevers'.<sup>613</sup> The agreement required Worgan to indemnify Keast against any liability for debts, and Keast was required to assist in the management of the contract. The additional £400 pa that Worgan enjoyed from

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<sup>609</sup> Seventh Report, 630.

<sup>610</sup> *Worgan Journal*, 57.

<sup>611</sup> The contracts between Worgan and Keast and Keast and the Board are included in Seventh Report, 627-628; 631-633.

<sup>612</sup> Worgan referred to this side agreement in his evidence, but did not say if it was written or oral. Seventh Report, 630.

<sup>613</sup> Seventh Report, 631.

the deal was a significant supplement to his income and would have provided him with the confidence to take on farming activities in late 1795 in addition to his naval duties. It would also have provided comfort in being able to commence a family – four children being born between 1798 and 1803.

Unfortunately for Worgan, his contracting arrangements coincided with a growing general awareness for the need to improve economic management and efficiency across government, which in the case of the Royal Navy culminated in the appointment of Lord St Vincent (formerly Admiral John Jervis) as First Lord of the Admiralty. The first indication of trouble for Worgan occurred as early as May 1796 when the Sick and Hurt Board (the Board) received a letter claiming widespread corruption by ‘the officers belonging to the Caton’ by re-directing food and other supplies to their own benefit. The letter also claimed that ‘the Purser (Keast) exclaims loudly and justly against their Rapacity’, which, if true, would be seen later as disingenuous at best.<sup>614</sup> The letter was signed ‘T. Martyn’, but as the Board claimed not to be able to identify the individual, it treated the letter as anonymous and took no action. A second letter from Martyn was sent to the Board in February 1798 repeating the earlier claims and specifically identifying Thomas Mein as the principal offender. Worgan’s involvement in the contracting arrangements was not mentioned, implying what was in reality Worgan’s subordinate role in the matter.<sup>615</sup> The letters may have also reflected some personal grievances against Mein.

The Prime Minister, Henry Addington (later Lord Sidmouth) appointed St Vincent as First Lord in February 1801. St Vincent had developed a reputation for reform and believed that ‘the civil branch of the Navy is rotten to the very core’.<sup>616</sup> He believed that the Navy Board was inefficient and was determined to confirm the primacy of the Admiralty in naval administration. A significant thrust of his campaign was a desire to abolish the various subsidiary boards of the Admiralty, including the Sick and Hurt Board.<sup>617</sup> Through St Vincent’s urging, Addington’s government created the Commission of Naval Enquiry which was charged with the task of examining any ‘Irregularities, Frauds or Abuses’ by

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<sup>614</sup> Seventh Report, 625.

<sup>615</sup> Seventh Report, 625-6.

<sup>616</sup> quoted in Rodger *The Command of the Ocean*, 476.

<sup>617</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 477.

persons currently or previously involved in the various naval departments.<sup>618</sup> In carrying out their brief, the Commissioners concentrated on management practices and contractual arrangements within the naval dockyards, a particular target of St Vincent, but cast their net wider when opportunities arose to criticise any of the various subsidiary boards. The First Lord's zealotry, described by one historian as 'megalomania',<sup>619</sup> caused considerable disruption to both shipbuilding and the development of naval stores, to such an extent that when war with France resumed in 1803, these deficiencies created significant logistical problems for the Navy.<sup>620</sup> The political fallout from St Vincent's reforms was a significant contributor to the fall of Addington's government in May 1804.<sup>621</sup>

The members of the Commission of Enquiry carried out St Vincent's mission with equal enthusiasm, and in 1803 their ever-widening net eventually caught up with George Worgan and his contracting arrangements. The trigger was a third letter, but this time addressed to St Vincent personally and signed by an identifiable author, Thomas Dawkins. Dawkins, who had been a naval purser for over forty years, was also a close friend of Samuel Keast (he and some family were also beneficiaries in Keast's will, adding to a whiff of intrigue about the affair).<sup>622</sup> In his letter dated 21 May 1803, he claimed Keast had been forced to assign his contract after complaining that 'a very extravagant Table was established on board', the costs of which were being 'defrayed out of the Profits of the Contract'.<sup>623</sup> The practice of provisioning the officers' table from similar arrangements was not uncommon in the Navy at the time, and in his later evidence to the Commissioners, Worgan noted that the purser of the hospital ship *Tiger* had carried out such a practice when Worgan served on that vessel during the American war.<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> See the wording of the relevant Act in the preamble to the Seventh Report, 363.

<sup>619</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 479.

<sup>620</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 479, and P.K. Crimmin 'Jervis, John, earl of St Vincent (1735-1823)', *ODNB Online*. Accessed 8 Jan 2013.

<sup>621</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 479. The political machinations around St Vincent and the Commission of Naval Enquiry are discussed in great detail in Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon*, 322-331.

<sup>622</sup> Will of Samuel Keast, 1800. TNA, PROB 11/1343/294.

<sup>623</sup> Seventh Report, 557.

<sup>624</sup> Seventh Report, 631.

In their findings, the Commissioners were not too concerned about the level of profits earned by the contractor Keast, as the supply of provisions to the officers' table and Keast's personal supply of food and wine (a fact notably omitted from the three letters of complaint to the Navy) were paid from profits and in reality self-funded, but they were concerned about the involvement of Mein and Worgan. The Surgeon and Surgeon's Mate had as their first duty the responsibility of ensuring proper care and nourishment of patients and the Commissioners found the activities of Mein and Worgan to be 'in the highest Degree censurable'.<sup>625</sup>

Worgan's examination before the Commissioners took place on 28 October 1803. Most of his responses to some straightforward questioning were non-committal, but they did reveal a lack of commercial acumen that allowed him to enter into contractual arrangements without a detailed consideration of the full situation. The contract provided for Keast to continue to pay all accounts, leaving Worgan unaware of the true costs of the arrangement, and causing him to believe Keast had even created fictitious accounts. Keast also continued to supply his own food and wine from the profits of the contract, profits that were now due to Worgan. Further, he explained that Keast never accounted to Worgan for any of the moneys received from the Board. The one-sidedness of the arrangements must have surprised the Commissioners, and when they asked why he accepted the situation, Worgan explained that Keast advised him that if challenged he would leave the service, resulting in the termination of the head contract with the Board.<sup>626</sup> Worgan's contractual arrangements for his farming enterprise at Bray, discussed later, displayed a similar lack of commercial acumen, to his great financial and emotional cost.

In his evidence, Worgan said he had retired to the Navy's half-pay list around late 1799 when *Le Caton* became a prison hospital ship, but he was still listed as a Surgeon on Steel's Navy List until 1807, his name finally ceasing to appear

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<sup>625</sup> Seventh Report, 560.

<sup>626</sup> Seventh Report, 630-1.

in 1808.<sup>627</sup> The censure by the Commissioners does not appear to have had any immediate negative impact on him, and in any event by 1800 he had already determined to leave the navy and become a full-time farmer.

The enquiry into the affairs on *Le Caton* deserves further examination as it shows a number of aspects of contemporary politics and the use of power and connections.

Mein emerges as the real power behind these contractual arrangements. The three letters sent to the Board and Admiralty were all aimed at Mein, containing accusations that Mein was acting oppressively in dealings with Keast. In addition, there would seem to be more than friendship that induced Worgan to share profits from the arrangements with Mein on an equal basis. Worgan commenced operating the farm at Bray in 1795 while still serving on *Le Caton*, and had revealed the enterprise required substantial capital, including a loan of £1500 from an unidentified source.<sup>628</sup> Considering the nature of the arrangements with Mein it is possible that Mein was the lender.

In finding the actions of Mein and Worgan to be 'highly censurable', the Commissioners made no recommendations as to action against the two, and neither Parliament nor the Admiralty appear to have imposed any penalties. The Commissioners examined only Thomas Dawkins, the author of the third letter, and Worgan, and in both cases the questioning was benign, merely seeking to confirm information they already had before them. Mein was not examined. The approach by the Commissioners suggests the real purpose of the enquiry was an attack on the Sick and Hurt Board. The evidence revealed a lack of checks and balances by the Board in supervising the contracts, a theme emerging from the various reports of the Commissioners in other areas. This was a key aim of St Vincent in his attempts at reform, and even after he left

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<sup>627</sup> *Steel's Original and Correct List of the Royal Navy* for 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808. Steel's List is usually a reliable source but it may be that Worgan should have been more correctly listed as on half-pay for at least some of those years.

<sup>628</sup> Memorial of G.B. Worgan to P.W. Mayow, 31 July 1804. Cornwall Record Office (CRO), Bray Papers, BRA 1737/45.

the Admiralty, the Commissioners continued in their task in a manner described as 'increasingly partisan'.<sup>629</sup>

Thomas Mein's activities are an example of an individual adept at taking advantages of the system of government contracting, as it existed in the late eighteenth century. They also provide an example of the relative ease that corruption could become endemic at various levels within the structure of government administration.

In his evidence to the enquiry, Worgan stated he left *Le Caton* at the time it became a prison hospital ship to care for wounded prisoners of war. This required new victualling contracts and the new contract for *Le Caton* was awarded to Mein on 21 December 1799.<sup>630</sup> At the same time, he was also awarded the contracts for Mill Prison at Plymouth; Forton Hospital and Portchester Castle at Portsmouth; the hospital at Stapleton near Bristol; and the *Bristol* hospital ship moored at Chatham. This arrangement had the potential to be extremely lucrative for Mein and he exploited the opportunity accordingly, but his contracts with the Sick and Hurt Board and the sums involved eventually became the subject of a specific examination by the Commissioners and this time he was questioned.

The evidence revealed that Mein was responsible for a series of contracts valued at over £137,000, an amount supplemented by claims for price increases in excess of £20,000. It is unclear how much profit Mein made from these arrangements, but it was sufficient to build his own fortune after making payments to his various agents at the different establishments. The Commissioners noted an example of the surgeon at the prison hospital at Forton who was paid £150 pa by Mein, an amount that almost doubled the surgeon's government salary of £174 pa. In their report the Commissioners referred to overcharging and the false inflation of patient numbers believing

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<sup>629</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 479.

<sup>630</sup> *The Thirteenth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry*. 'Contracts for victualling sick prisoners of war, between the commissioners for taking care of sick and wounded seamen and sick prisoners of war, and Dr. Thomas Mein, Surgeon in His Majesty's Navy'. House of Commons Papers: Reports of Commissioners, House of Commons Papers, May 1806. (Thirteenth Report)

Mein was involved in practices that were fraudulent. Mein was questioned over nine days however his examiners were met with a series of responses of 'I cannot say' and 'I do not recollect'. He had also destroyed most relevant documents supposedly because he considered them unnecessary once payments were received, an explanation that stretched the Commissioners' credulity.<sup>631</sup> For all that, there was no adverse finding against Mein. The Commissioners made it plain that fault lay with the Sick and Hurt Board in not exercising sufficient control and supervision over its contracting arrangements.

Mein made sufficient money to retire to his native Scotland and build Eildon Hall at Melrose, later described as 'a magnificent mansion'.<sup>632</sup> The property later became one of the homes of the Dukes of Buccleuch.

Mein's contracts also highlights the sharp increase in food prices at the time. In claiming compensation from the Board for increased prices, Mein submitted a schedule detailing substantial increases in the period December 1799 to April 1800. Beef had risen 68%; mutton 72%; bread 103% and beer 62%. Coal prices had increased by 66%. Even though the Commissioners considered Mein's claim to be excessive and unreliable, they did concede that 'prices and provisions had suddenly risen'.<sup>633</sup> Worgan in his agricultural survey of Cornwall eight years later also addressed the impact of rising prices.

The Sick and Hurt Board that oversaw the administration of naval surgeons and hospitals, was abolished in 1806 because of 'financial, not medical, negligence and inadequacy' – 'a victim of the party political in-fighting of this period'.<sup>634</sup> St Vincent's reform period was driven partly by politics, but as we have seen, St Vincent was also on a mission to streamline the functions of the Admiralty and reduce the number of subsidiary boards. The Sick and Hurt Board argued that it was hampered by its small structure of only three to four Commissioners and 'some thirty' clerks, a considerable impediment to carrying out its functions, as it

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<sup>631</sup> Thirteenth Report, 372.

<sup>632</sup> 'A Tourist', *The Border Tour throughout the most Important and Interesting Places* (Edinburgh, 1826), 118.

<sup>633</sup> Thirteenth Report, 368.

<sup>634</sup> Crimmin, 'Shortage of Surgeons', 54.

regularly pointed out to the Admiralty.<sup>635</sup> Despite protestations that they were understaffed and overworked, the Commissioners were usually absent from their duties, and its clerks mostly ran the Board. It was the Thirteenth Report that focused attention on the Board by identifying the serious abuses of contracts, exacerbated by what the Board admitted was 'the want of a system'. The government finally decided to have the Board wound up and its functions were taken over by the Transport Board from January 1806, a move welcomed by the First Lord, Charles Middleton, now Lord Barham, given the Transport Board's more positive reputation as being 'accustomed to the investigating of accounts'.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> E. H. Turner, 'Naval Medical Service, 1793-1815', *The Mariner's Mirror*, XLVI (1960), 120.

<sup>636</sup> Lloyd and Coulter, *Medicine and the Navy*, 5.

## Chapter 14

### Farming in the South-West

#### i. Introduction

The *Royal Cornwall Gazette's* edition of 31 May 1806 included a report of the Cornwall Agricultural Society's annual exhibition held at Bodmin, Cornwall four days earlier. It noted that amongst the prizewinners was Mr G.B. Worgan, awarded the Best Premium for his Shifting Double Plough. The award included a cash prize of £3.

Worgan had submitted three other agricultural implements, but the Shifting Double Plough caught the judges' attention, as it appeared to be 'applicable to all the purposes of a Double Mold-beard [sic] Plough'.<sup>637</sup> However, in awarding the prize, the judges noted that 'not having seen any of these implements in use [they] cannot speak as to the utility of them'.<sup>638</sup> Just three months later the same newspaper carried an advertisement for the sale of all Worgan's livestock and equipment as he finally abandoned farming. The advertisement noted that there were several implements 'entirely of new construction, and superior to any yet made'. They were the first to be auctioned.<sup>639</sup>

If anything, George Worgan's Shifting Double Plough can be seen as a metaphor for his life, particularly his life in agriculture. It was continual struggle of endeavouring to make the theoretical become practical, of dreams to become reality. The judges had not seen the plough in operation, but then Worgan had not or could not arrange for a simple demonstration.

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<sup>637</sup> The double mouldboard plough was a double plough that had its two arms brought together. It was often used to plough between rows of large bulbs such as turnips to build up the ridges and the earth around the plants.

<sup>638</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 31 May 1806.

<sup>639</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 13 Sept 1806.

## ii. Farming at Bray and Glynn, Cornwall

In view of George Worgan's 'unconquerable antipathy' to his profession as a naval surgeon it is no surprise that he finally began plans to leave the Navy after returning from New South Wales.<sup>640</sup> By September 1795 he had secured his position on the hospital ship *Le Caton* and now did not have to go to sea, and he had in place his victualling contract with the vessel that provided a sufficient supplement to his naval income to allow him to take on activities as a farmer.

Worgan was thirty-eight when he began his life as a farmer on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1795, entering into a twenty-one year lease of the farms at Bray and West Hendra near Morval, Cornwall, at an annual rent of £170. His landlord was Rev. Philip Mayow of Plympton Maurice, Devon and the lease document describes the property as including a 'Mansion House' and 'Other Houses, Outhouses, Barns'. Worgan is referred to as 'Surgeon'.<sup>641</sup> The lease included specific conditions for land management including minimum requirements for soil enrichment and basic crop rotation. When Worgan later undertook the agricultural survey of Cornwall for the Board of Agriculture, his section on leases suggests his own lease and its conditions appear to have been standard within the county.<sup>642</sup> It is difficult to try and calculate the size of the Bray property based on the annual rental, as in his *Survey* Worgan claimed that rents in the county varied between five and fifty shillings per acre, a span too wide to make sensible calculations.

It is evident from later correspondence that Worgan must have devoted a considerable amount of time to his farm, probably resulting in some level of neglect of his naval position. On present day roads Morval is approximately twenty miles (thirty-two kilometres) from Plymouth where *Le Caton* was moored, and in Worgan's time the journey from farm to vessel, including a ferry ride

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<sup>640</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, 20 Mar 1807. Young papers, Add MSS 35129, ff 389-90.

<sup>641</sup> Lease agreement. Mayow to Worgan, Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/31.

<sup>642</sup> G.B. Worgan, *General view of the agriculture of Cornwall. Drawn up for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*, (London, 1811), 20-21. (*Survey*) (all future references are to this edition).

across the Tamar River, would have occupied the best part of a day in each direction. When it is considered that Worgan was a long way down the scale of importance in the eyes of the Navy and yet was able to make these arrangements for himself, the intentions of Lord St Vincent and other reformers of waste and corruption in government agencies, becomes clearer. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was not only George Worgan pursuing an alternative career at cost to the Navy, but more importantly it was his supervisory body, the Commissioners of the Sick and Hurt Board, renowned for their absence from their duties, who were the target of reformers. Too many individuals were taking advantage of lax administration at great cost to the national purse.

Worgan would have been well satisfied with the lease arrangements for as he commented sometime later, the property appealed to him as a large and comfortable family home and the prospect of a gentleman landlord.<sup>643</sup> Newly married, he would have been comfortable in the knowledge that he had secured a positive future as a gentleman farmer and the house would have particularly appealed to him in presenting a successful face to the world. The house is thought to have been constructed for the Mayow family around 1600, and in Worgan's time was a substantial residence of three and two storeys with a large hall. It underwent substantial alterations in the mid nineteenth century and is presently listed as a Grade II property by English Heritage.<sup>644</sup>

Taking the lease at Morval turned out to be a bad move. Within five years of taking possession of the farm, Rev. Philip Mayow died and Worgan discovered he no longer had any rights under the lease. It became evident that Mayow was only entitled to a life tenancy of the property and had no power to grant a lease beyond his own life term, causing Worgan to become a victim of the provisions of the estate's entail. Writing to Worgan in November 1800, the new landowner, John Mayow, brother of the late Rev. Philip Mayow, tried to calm Worgan's fears by stating that 'I have no wish (& I believe my son also) to

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<sup>643</sup> Worgan to PW Mayow, Jan 1803. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>644</sup> English Heritage List entry 1140263. <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1140263>. Accessed 6 Sep 2013.

dispossess you of the Estate for I think you are a very excellent farmer & improving the value of it'.<sup>645</sup>

However, John Mayow let Worgan know that he intended to use the house as and when he was so inclined even though this would likely be only a few weeks a year. This was non-negotiable as far as Mayow was concerned and he told Worgan 'If it should not suit you, you can quit the Farm whenever you like'.<sup>646</sup> In the course of his letter, John Mayow took the opportunity to admonish Worgan for not taking more care before he signed the lease:

...if you had had the precaution to have desired me and my son to have join'd in the Lease I never wd have consented to be shut out of one's own Inheritance for a Term of twenty-one years, which is more than twice the Value of any of our Lives or indeed for any Term.<sup>647</sup>

We don't know why Rev. Philip Mayow granted a lease of twenty-one years if he did not have the power to do so. We also don't know why George Worgan did not make more detailed enquiries about the arrangement. However, on the face of it, he probably thought he had no reason to do so, especially as he was dealing with a clergyman from a respected local family. He was certainly very keen to take on the property as he had paid the previous lessee the substantial sum of two hundred guineas to give up his lease, but perhaps he should have hastened more slowly.<sup>648</sup> The arrangements add to questions about Worgan's general business acumen.

By 1802 John Mayow had died and his son and successor, Philip Wynell Mayow, soon made it clear to Worgan that he shared his father's views and that he too expected free and unfettered use of the house at Bray. However, P. W. Mayow proved to be a very different person to his father and uncle. Living in London, he was a member of Gray's Inn and intended to take the management of his family's estate very seriously.

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<sup>645</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 Nov 1800. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>646</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 Nov 1800. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>647</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 Nov 1800. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>648</sup> Worgan to Richard Rosdew, n.d. (c. Jul 1812). Bray papers, CRO BRA 1737/45.

Worgan chose to interpret the demand for shared use of the house as a major assault on his tenancy and tantamount to eviction. With hindsight this was an unwise course of action and Mayow was very quickly put offside by Worgan's ongoing local campaign against his perceived ill treatment. Mayow was warned in a letter from Rev. D. Stephens, a sufficiently close acquaintance for Christian names to be used in correspondence, that Worgan was concerned he would be evicted from the farm at Bray and had been making those concerns known around the area. Stephens gently advised Mayow that whatever his legal rights, he should be concerned that the affair did not 'damn your character in this country'.<sup>649</sup> Mayow responded by saying he had advised Worgan earlier in the year that he would be prepared to grant a lease of the farm but not of the house, and in that he was consistent with his father's attitude of which Worgan was aware. He added that he thought the manner in which Worgan has approached him was 'discourteous', a sign of the breakdown in the relationship between Worgan and his landlord. There is frequent evidence in the correspondence available that Mayow had quickly formed the impression that Worgan's story, as it was spreading around the local community, was causing harm to his reputation. His opinion was no doubt strengthened by Worgan's use of language that presented him as one badly wronged and who should be recompensed. Mayow's attitude to Worgan's situation can best be summed up in his response 'Blame my Uncle Sir'.<sup>650</sup>

However, the change of circumstances obviously turned Worgan's life upside down. He had spent all his capital on improvements to the property in the belief that positive returns would flow from the investment. His business decisions were made in the expectation that he had sufficient time in his lease to turn the farm into the means of building a modest family fortune. This may not have been an unreasonable approach for Worgan to take, as he had found a "clergyman of respectable Character and Connections...willing to grant me a

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<sup>649</sup> Rev. D Stephens to P W Mayow, 30 Oct 1802. Bray papers, CRO BRA 1737/45.

<sup>650</sup> Worgan to Richard Rosdew, n.d. (c. Jul 1812), Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

secure and permanent lease for 21 years of both House and Farm'.<sup>651</sup> But perhaps he invested much too quickly as he spent over £2000 in the initial five or so years, £1100 of which he claimed was 'his Patrimony' and £1500 as a loan.<sup>652</sup> Fifteen months earlier he had told Mayow that the sums he had spent were comprised of a bequest from his father of £1000 plus his savings from 'hard trying Service in my own Profession at sea' amounting to another £1000 plus an unidentified remainder as a loan 'from a friend'.<sup>653</sup> The variances in the details may not represent anything more than a confused mind under pressure, or poor record keeping, but what records we have from Worgan contain a number of these small inconsistencies. In any event, Mayow was unimpressed and apparently unconcerned. He did not believe that Worgan had made improvements beyond 'that any good Farmer, who understands husbandry would have done', and could not reconcile that expenditure with the fact that Worgan and his family had taken a house in Liskeard in addition to the farm.<sup>654</sup> Worgan had been living beyond his means as far as Mayow was concerned and cited Worgan's inducement of £200 to the previous tenant to give up his lease in Worgan's favour. 'I foresee that if Mr Worgan from mismanagement from living beyond his means or from any other cause is unsuccessful the odium of his misfortune is to fall on me', he wrote to Stephens. However, at this early stage of the breakdown in relationships, Mayow was particularly incensed that Worgan had been talking to everyone about his problems except to him – the only person who could help him in his predicament. 'He writes to my Aunt he complains to Mr Walker, but I have no direct communication with him', he added to Stephens.<sup>655</sup> When Worgan finally wrote to Mayow the style and comments were enough to upset Mayow further:

If I feel that you were wrong in not writing to me before,  
I feel ten times more strongly that you are wrong in

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<sup>651</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, n.d. (c. Jan 1803). Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>652</sup> Worgan memorial to P.W. Mayow, 31 Jul 1804. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>653</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, n.d. (c. Jan 1803). Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>654</sup> P.W. Mayow to Rev. D. Stephens, 25 Nov 1802, Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>655</sup> P.W. Mayow to Rev. D. Stephens, 25 Nov 1802. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

writing to me as you have done.<sup>656</sup>

Worgan further complicated the matter by constantly having to be reminded about paying outstanding rent, and Mayow finally gave a notice to quit at Michaelmas 1804 or at the end of the lease year in February 1805.<sup>657</sup>

The whole affair suggests an obvious question. When first advised by John Mayow that the lease was invalid, why didn't Worgan accept the position and negotiate a lease of the farm and arrange other accommodation? The house had managed a shared occupancy in the recent past and Mayow offered an apparent reasonable compromise. Worgan may even have been able to convince his landlord to build a house for him and his family. Perhaps it was pride, after all the 'Mansion House' was an important incentive for him in entering into the lease in the first place, but he severely misjudged the situation and especially misjudged his dealings with the Mayows. The Mayow family were local landowners as far back to at least the fifteenth century and Worgan, as a newcomer and mere naval surgeon, was not in a position to claim a superior social position.<sup>658</sup> Worgan's misjudgement of his landlords extended to his inability to see and adjust to the different personalities he had to deal with. All three were absentee landlords in a physical sense but there was a change in their intended use of the property. Rev. Philip Mayow displayed little interest in the estate other than for its income; John Mayow was a step closer in wanting to spend the occasional period in the country thinking he would want to spend 'a few weeks in the autumn'<sup>659</sup> while his son P.W. Mayow, simply took the view that he 'might like to live there and would not debar myself from doing so'.<sup>660</sup> Worgan claimed the reduced space could not 'accommodated neither my Family nor the Family of any other Tenant who would manage the Farm in a proper manner' and had become 'only a Tenant liable to be turned out of both House and Farm at a very short Notice'.<sup>661</sup> The claim may have been technically correct, but he had the opportunity to renegotiate his lease with a

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<sup>656</sup> P.W. Mayow to Worgan (draft letter), 3 Mar 1803. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>657</sup> 30 September.

<sup>658</sup> Allen, *History of Liskeard*, 229.

<sup>659</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 Nov 1800. Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>660</sup> P.W. Mayow to Rev. D. Stephens, 25 Nov 1802. Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>661</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, n.d. (c. Jan 1803). Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

then reasonable new landlord subject only to sharing what was a large house from time to time.

There were some bright spots however. There was the £3 he had won at a local agricultural show for agricultural implements he had designed even though the award was tempered somewhat when the local newspaper reporting the event noted that the implements had not been seen in operation and it was unclear if they worked. Still, they looked good and displayed a level of innovation.<sup>662</sup>

After leaving the farm at Bray, Worgan entered into a lease for a farm at Glynn, near Bodmin, further east in Cornwall, owned by Edmund Glynn, also a member of a long established Cornish family. Here Worgan would have found a farm in excellent condition as Glynn had a reputation as a successful landowner, and as a welcome change he also proved to be a more benevolent landlord, but Worgan was still unable to make farming a success. After having 'struggled very hard for two years', he advised his landlord that 'it was not serving me, and injuring yourself'. The arrangements cost Glynn two years rent amounting to £360, but he still allowed Worgan and his family to take household furniture on leaving the property.<sup>663</sup> That Worgan mentions he removed household furniture when he left Glynn, suggests he and his family had relocated there from Liskeard. The available correspondence does not refer to any accommodation 'superior to what is to be found in a Common Farm House', and it is unknown if the family lived in part of the grand residence at Glynn or 'a Common Farm House'.<sup>664</sup>

Glynn's magnanimity was in stark contrast to Worgan's previous landlord. Glynn found his own failure when the North Cornwall Bank in which he was a partner collapsed in 1822, and after becoming bankrupt he was forced to sell the property in 1825.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 31 May 1806.

<sup>663</sup> Worgan to Richard Rosdew, Jul 1812. Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>664</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, Jan 1803. Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>665</sup> John Prebble and B.H. Webber, *Wandering in the Gardens of the Mind: Peter Mitchell and the making of Glynn* (New York: Oxford University Press c.2003), 98.

George Worgan's failure at Glynn was no doubt greatly influenced by the limited capital he was able to take with him, what he described as 'the wreck of my fortune', even though Edmund Glynn had given him 'credit for five hundred pound's worth of Corn'. It is also appears he took some stock and machinery with him from Bray.<sup>666</sup> Glynn had waived the rent for the two years of Worgan's occupancy but Worgan would have needed a reasonable amount of capital to stock the farm and prepare crops. He would also have needed to devote his energies to the project rather than expending considerable emotional energy in his campaign against the supposed wrongs inflicted on him by the Mayow family at Bray.

Worgan's failure at Bray is harder to understand. After receiving his notice to quit, he petitioned his landlord P.W. Mayow to stay a further year on the basis that it would be rent-free and that his debt for outstanding rent, amounting to £425, be waived.<sup>667</sup> Mayow, understandably, declined the offer. As we have seen, while at Bray Worgan appears to have spent his available capital, including substantial loan funds, within a short period of taking on the lease and even though he was acting in expectation of at least a twenty-one year occupancy, he left very little for contingencies. The farm must have been income producing before he entered into the lease as he paid the previous lessee an incentive to quit his lease, and it is reasonable to assume that to some extent it would have continued to produce a level of income. Worgan noted that others had complimented him on his farming practices including the construction of stock pens, substantial earth works to improve drainage and soil maintenance, as well as the general farming activities with his livestock and crops. Poor financial management, poor farm management, or as his landlord suggested, simply 'living beyond his means' are all possibilities, but he was also distracted.<sup>668</sup> For the first four years of the lease he also had his official duties as assistant surgeon on *Le Caton* to attend to, followed by the Navy's formal inquiry into his contracting activities on the vessel in October 1803. There were undoubtedly a number of factors that contributed to his failure but if reasons are

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<sup>666</sup> Worgan to Rosdew, Jul 1812. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>667</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, 31 Jul 1804. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>668</sup> P.W. Mayow to Rev. D Stephens, 25 Nov 1802. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

to be apportioned, poor commercial judgement and particularly stubbornness and poor character judgement appear to have been the principal contributors.

While noting Worgan's difficulties in dealing with an entailed estate, one early historian of Liskeard considered Worgan's failure as a farmer was the result of 'being very theoretical in the management'.<sup>669</sup> There may be some validity to this assertion, and it was this aspect of Worgan's approach to agriculture that influenced his correspondence with some of the leading gentlemen farmers in the county, but to be fair, and based on the description of his farming practices in his letters to Mayow, he did put a number of his theories into practice.

Worgan's arrangements with the Mayows also illustrate the power relationship that existed between him and his landlord. The Bray Papers at the Cornwall Record Office do not contain any correspondence between Rev. Philip Mayow and Worgan, and the correspondence with Philip Wynell Mayow is concerned with the dispute between landlord and tenant and particularly Worgan's various plaintive appeals for redress for the supposed injustices he had suffered. But three letters from John Mayow, his second but brief landlord, provide a glimpse of the general contractual relationship between the two. John Mayow lived a gentleman's life that involved winters spent at Bath and summers at Saltash on the coast of the Tamar River where he was 'so fond of sailing', but as we have seen he also intended to spend 'a few weeks' in the autumn at Bray.

Mayow does not appear to have been unreasonable in his intention. He told Worgan that he intended to use part of the house when he visited, and added that he would 'retain an absolute and uncontrolled right of so much of the House as Capn Cambell or Mr Edwd Buller his predecessor had', making it clear that an occasional shared occupancy worked just fine as far as he was concerned. To put Worgan at ease, he added 'not that I shd wish to shut you out from every accommodation that I could spare even when I am there myself, nor from the whole of it as you now enjoy'. Certainly the English Heritage report on the property gives the impression that the house could well cope with a

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<sup>669</sup> Allen, *History of Liskeard*, 526.

shared occupancy.<sup>670</sup> When visiting, Mayow would bring his 'own Plate & Linnen & such other Things I might want' and he was happy to either install his own furniture or pay Worgan for the use of his.<sup>671</sup> Exercising both his superior business and social position, Mayow had Worgan outlay funds on his behalf for personal expenses including the cost of Mayow's mother's funeral. Although Worgan was told to deduct the expenses from his rent instalment, rents were paid in quarterly instalments potentially causing him to be out of pocket for up to three months, contributing in no small way to his tight financial position, not helped by Worgan's own poor cash management skills.<sup>672</sup> Worgan was also directed to remind a neighbouring tenant of Mayow's to ensure his rent was paid on time and advise him that requested repairs to a leaking roof would have to wait until after winter as Mayow was wintering at Bath. Mayow is but one example of an absentee landowner of the period, providing one experience of the power relationship that existed over a tenant as well as the relationship and gradations within a broad social class. Although Mayow and Worgan were both gentlemen, Mayow had the clear and distinct advantage of being a member of a long established and respected local family while Worgan, a newcomer to the district and son of a musician, belonged to the lesser gentry. Mayow also had a considerable financial advantage over his tenant.

The clearance sale held after Worgan gave up occupancy at Glynn reveals some information on the type of farming he was undertaking. The advertisement for the sale listed a flock of two hundred and forty four sheep; nineteen head of cattle included four working oxen, twelve pigs and ten horses, one of which was 'well worth the attention of any lady or gentleman', including seven working animals. There was also a large quantity of hay produced 'from about 26 Acres of rich Clover'. The advertisement also indicates that Worgan continued to improvise with agricultural implements in addition to owning standard wagons, ploughs and harvesting equipment as several were of 'new construction' and 'superior to any yet made'.<sup>673</sup> The advertisement is a

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<sup>670</sup> English Heritage List entry 1140263. <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1140263>. Accessed 6 Sep 2013.

<sup>671</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 Nov 1800. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>672</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 and 18 Oct 1800. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>673</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 13 Sep 1806.

snapshot of a typical smaller holding in central Cornwall and was the type of farming that Worgan addressed in some detail in his agricultural survey of the county.

### iii. The Agricultural Survey of Cornwall

On leaving the farm at Glynn, Worgan moved to London where he found employment as a shop assistant, working in an apothecary shop for a surgeon at Hampton, earning just £30 pa while his wife and family 'went to a poor Habitation at Liskeard'.<sup>674</sup>

Five months later, Worgan wrote to Arthur Young, Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, seeking his assistance in finding a position on an estate. Worgan thought Young 'may know a Gentleman possessing a neat cottage with a few acres attached, and which in sight of his mansion, he may wish it to be neatly cultivated'.<sup>675</sup>

The state of despair to which Worgan had sunk, evident in the correspondence with his former landlord, is again on display in his letter to Young. The letter commences 'Forgive this address from a much oppressed, injured Fellow Creature', and proceeds to summarise his life story from taking up 'the defective art of Physic' through to his current situation. He explained to Young in some detail his disastrous experiences with his landlords at the same time aiming to prove his credentials by outlining the methods he adopted in improving the farm he had leased at Bray. Having determined from Young's writings that he was 'a thorough good Christian', Worgan decided after 'walking one evening solitary and dejected by the side of the Thames at Hampton', he would write to Young and ask for help.<sup>676</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, September 1806. Draft letter marked 'not sent'. Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>675</sup> Worgan to Arthur Young, 16 Feb 1807, BL, Arthur Young papers, Add MSS 35129, f.369.

<sup>676</sup> Worgan to Arthur Young, 16 Feb 1807, BL, Arthur Young papers, Add MSS 35129, f.369.

The letter, comprising four pages, says much about Worgan's state of mind at the time; the letter becoming increasingly erratic as it progresses giving the appearance of having been written as an outpouring of emotion. At the letter's end he apologised for not having made any corrections to the many mistakes made in his writing, admitting that it was written 'under great agitation of mind' and he was 'not able to write it over again'. The letter shows that the George Worgan who, back in 1795, was looking for a farm with a gentleman landlord and 'a House possessing some convenience superior to what is found in a common Farm House' had now after twelve years finally acknowledged the reality of his situation.<sup>677</sup>

For once, Worgan had beneficial contacts, sufficiently so for Arthur Young to take up Worgan's cause. Worgan clearly knew of Young, probably through Young's series of publications *Annals of Agriculture* that had long provided practical advice and information on agricultural practices to gentlemen farmers across England, and he would have also been aware of the Board of Agriculture's first survey of agriculture in Cornwall published in 1794, Young however, had not heard of Worgan before receiving the letter.<sup>678</sup> That situation quickly changed as Young was soon bombarded with supporting correspondence from Worgan's brother Richard and undoubtedly more effectively, his sister Charlotte. Charlotte was married to Sir William Parsons, Master of the King's Musick from 1787. From 1796 he had taught music to the King's younger daughters. Parsons was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, where Sir John Sinclair, President of the Board of Agriculture was also a Fellow, and for a number of years served as a magistrate in London.<sup>679</sup> One correspondent later described Charlotte Parsons as 'a great favourite at the Court of George III'.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, Feb. 1803. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>678</sup> John G. Gazley, *The Life of Arthur Young 1741-1820* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), 512.

<sup>679</sup> For Parsons generally, see L.M. Middleton, 'Sir William Parsons', *ODNB Online*.

[http://www.oxforddnb.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/templates/article.jsp?articleid=21480&back=,29974#cosubject\\_21480](http://www.oxforddnb.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/templates/article.jsp?articleid=21480&back=,29974#cosubject_21480), accessed 3 Dec 2012.

<sup>680</sup> Robert Parker, 'Mr. George Worgan', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 29, 546 (1 Aug 1888), 490-1.

Young attempted to meet Worgan's request and approached Colonel Thomas Wood, MP for Breconshire, to provide Worgan with a suitable position. However Wood hesitated, understandably needing more information. The delay caused Lady Parsons to take immediate action by exerting her husband's influence. Writing to Young, Lady Parsons pointed out that if Wood was the individual who married Lady Caroline Stewart, daughter of Lord Londonderry, then her husband Sir William Parsons well knew 'all her connections' and 'they might consequently discover him [George Worgan] to be a brother of mine'.<sup>681</sup> In addition to being a Member of Parliament, Wood was well connected through his wife's family, particularly her brother Viscount Castlereagh, then Secretary for War and the Colonies. Wood was also a close friend of the Duke of Clarence who later, as King William IV, appointed Wood one of his executors.<sup>682</sup>

When it came to preferments and patronage, social connections mattered for all, and Charlotte Parsons' prompt reaction to exploit her connections was a practical intervention that represents social patronage in action, although to what extent Lady Parsons' intervention may have influenced Colonel Wood is not known, as for other reasons the proposal did not proceed. As his sister was furthering his cause with Arthur Young, Worgan had become very ill while working at Hampton and Lady Parsons decided to seek advice about the family's reaction to the proposed Wood arrangements from Worgan's wife, Mary. Mary Worgan promptly declined the opportunity to take up the arrangement with Wood. She was concerned that the proposal was not sufficiently permanent and they might again 'be turned adrift'. Mary Worgan also expressed concerns about the cost of relocating, as well as the loss of family and friends in having to move from the Liskeard area to Wood's family estates near the Welsh-Herefordshire border. She preferred to hold out for some more permanent arrangements and indicated she would approach a

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<sup>681</sup> For the Stewart family, see John Bew, *Castlereagh. Enlightenment, War and Tyranny* (London: Quercus, 2011).

<sup>682</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, n.d. (c. Apr-May 1807), BL, Young papers, Add. MSS 35129 f.384-385. 'Thomas Wood', *History of Parliament online*, accessed 30 Dec 2012.

Lawry family patron, Admiral Duckworth, for his assistance.<sup>683</sup> But even if he was prepared to help, Duckworth was at this time leading a small fleet in an obscure diplomatic action off the Dardanelles and was unlikely to have received any prompt communications from Mary Worgan.<sup>684</sup>

Worgan's illness probably caused him to leave his position at Hampton as he left 'unavoidably' and moved to London to stay with Sir William and Lady Parsons. Lady Parsons again approached Young seeking any position, even if temporary, making the curious observation that if Worgan was not able 'to give satisfaction, there is no harm done – he is but where he was', blindly ignoring the inconvenience to a potential employer. This comment together with his departure from Hampton suggests that Worgan's emotional stability was a matter of considerable concern.<sup>685</sup> It also suggests Lady Parsons thought nothing of asking Young to find a position for Worgan knowing he might not be successful.

It says something of Young's assessment processes, as well as the social connections of the time, that he should promote the appointment of a man who was previously unknown to him, and whose abilities as a farmer and business man were questionable if he had decided to check. Added to that even though both Richard Worgan and Lady Charlotte Parsons had stressed that he had been forced off the farm through no fault of his own, Lady Parsons in her correspondence had been measured about her brother's skills. Brother Richard, writing to Young after Worgan's appointment to the agricultural survey of Cornwall had said in passing that 'farming I have given up least like my brother I should burn my fingers'.<sup>686</sup>

Eventually, Young was able to convince Sir John Sinclair to agree to the Board of Agriculture providing a role for Worgan and at a meeting of the General Committee of the Board (chaired by Sinclair) held on 3 July 1807, George

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<sup>683</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, 22 Apr 1807. BL, Young papers Add MSS 35129 ff.396-397.

<sup>684</sup> A.B. Sainsbury, 'Sir John Duckworth (1748-1817)', *ODNB Online*.

<sup>685</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, 21 May 1807. BL, Young papers Add MSS 35129 f.419.

<sup>686</sup> Gazley, *Arthur Young*, 513.

Worgan was appointed to carry out the Board's agricultural survey of Cornwall at a fee of £100.<sup>687</sup> This fee may have been increased at a later date, as at a meeting of the General Committee of the Board held in the following March, the accounts recorded a liability to Worgan of £160 for one of the 'surveys contracted for likely to be given in soon'.<sup>688</sup> In approving the appointment, the Committee noted a reservation by Humphry Davy that 'he might want assistance'.<sup>689</sup> Humphry (later Sir Humphry) Davy was already an influential figure. He had been engaged by the Board of Agriculture to give a series of lectures on agricultural chemistry and in 1801 began his series of chemistry lectures at the Royal Institution.<sup>690</sup> Davy was also engaged, at a fee of £100 to conduct the mineralogical section of the Cornwall survey after earlier declining to undertake the entire work.<sup>691</sup> A native of Cornwall, Davy would later succeed Sir Joseph Banks as President of the Royal Society.<sup>692</sup>

In his introductory letter to Young, Worgan had sought some ongoing farming activity, and the more theoretical aspects of conducting and writing the survey within a finite time frame of employment would not have been his first choice of occupation. Charlotte Parsons had earlier reinforced to Young this desire for physical farming, and attempted to boost Worgan's credentials by extolling the skills Worgan's wife would bring to a prospective landlord, particularly in 'the care of Poultry, curing Hams, pickling Pork, Butter making, clotted cream', all attributes of a successful farmer's wife.<sup>693</sup> Worgan later described Cornish women as 'amicable, for the most part accomplished, and make excellent

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<sup>687</sup> Board of Agriculture, General Committee minutes 3 Jul 1807, RASE/B/VII ff. 202-205.

<sup>688</sup> Board of Agriculture, General Committee minutes 18 Mar 1807, RASE/B/VII ff.230-231.

<sup>689</sup> Board of Agriculture, General Committee minutes 3 Jul 1807, RASE/B/VII f.202.

<sup>690</sup> Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 170.

<sup>691</sup> Gazley, *Arthur Young*, p.457, 512. Davy's appointment was made shortly after Worgan's appointment. He is recorded as a creditor for his fee in the General Committee minutes of 18 Mar 1808. RASE/B/VII f. 230.

<sup>692</sup> David Knight, 'Davy, Sir Humphry', *ODNB Online* <http://www.oxforddnb.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/view/article/7314?docPos=7>. Accessed 3 Dec 2012.

<sup>693</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, n.d. BL, Young papers, Add.MSS 35129 f.384.

wives'.<sup>694</sup> However Worgan was in no position to choose and needed to accept whatever role he could, as Charlotte Parsons had earlier stressed to Arthur Young her brother was 'entirely ruined' and the appointment to the Survey provided some financial relief, albeit small.<sup>695</sup> It also provided a worthwhile activity and an opportunity to further his knowledge of the agricultural scene, and develop his connections within the farming community.

Worgan threw himself into the survey with great energy. Having been appointed on 3 July 1807, his introduction to the finished work is dated 30 November 1808, a period of only seventeen months in which time he had traversed a large area of Cornwall and assembled and written his material. The timing and speed of his work was undoubtedly driven by his need for the fee, but it also meant that the finished product was found to have deficiencies. Perhaps remembering the note of caution by Humphry Davy, and aware of some perceived inadequacies, the Board of Agriculture appointed a group of three Cornish landholders to review Worgan's report and amend where necessary.

Two of the men were clergymen and all three are best described as gentlemen farmers who had displayed an active interest in agricultural affairs, especially in the improvement of agricultural practices. A contemporary writer described them as 'amateurs of a superior class, probably, rather than professional men', another, as 'all amateurs and public spirited farmers'.<sup>696</sup> They were Rev. Robert Walker, Vicar of St. Winnow, Rev. Jeremiah Trist, Vicar of Veryan, both Cornwall parishes, and Captain (later Admiral Sir) Charles Vinnicombe Penrose, a serving naval officer and Cornish landholder. Trist and Penrose were members of long established Cornish families while Walker was known for his tracts on agricultural practices and for his active advocacy for parliamentary reform in the early nineteenth century.<sup>697</sup> All three had substantial estates.

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<sup>694</sup> Worgan, *Survey*, xi.

<sup>695</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, 20 Mar 1807, BL, Young papers, Add MSS 35129 ff.389-390.

<sup>696</sup> William Marshall, *The Review and Abstract of the County reports to the Board of Agriculture*, Vol. 5, (London 1818), 527; Allen, *History of Liskeard*, 365.

<sup>697</sup> Allen, *History of Liskeard*, 304.

The three men were all known to Worgan, and in their introduction to the final report they noted they had all corresponded with him previously on agricultural matters. Walker had earlier interceded on Worgan's behalf in his dispute with his landlord P.W. Mayow. Walker's involvement, via Rev. Darell Stephens a friend of Mayow, had incensed Mayow who wrote to Stephens 'he complains to Mr. Walker, but I have no direct communication with him'.<sup>698</sup> Worgan however claimed that Walker's intercession was not at his request but the result of a conversation with a neighbour.<sup>699</sup> The three reviewers acknowledged he had consulted with them while undertaking the survey and they were generally sympathetic to his results. In their introduction, dated 1 May 1810, they stated there had been 'considerable erasements, alterations and additions' but the bulk of the original work had been maintained. The reviewers indicated that any significant amendments 'for which we alone are answerable' would be indicated by their individual initials,<sup>700</sup> although if they were consistent in this approach the final amendments do not appear to be very significant, even though Trist, later wrote that they had found it necessary, 'again & again to revise & correct'.<sup>701</sup> The survey's results quickly became a source of reference. A meeting of the 'North Cornwall Experimental Club for the Advancement of Agriculture' held in 1844 discussed Worgan's recommendations for the use of sea sand as a soil improver.<sup>702</sup> The work is still generally known as 'Worgan's survey'.

The reviewers noted the limitations Worgan had placed upon himself by carrying out the 'greater part' of the survey during winter.<sup>703</sup> That Worgan commenced his work in July 1807 and he wrote his introduction to the final result in November the following year suggests he should have had time to observe good seasons, but given no evidence of his itinerary, the seasonal

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<sup>698</sup> P.W. Mayow to Rev. D. Stephens, 25 Nov 1802. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>699</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, n.d. (c. Jan 1803). Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>700</sup> *Survey*, viii-ix.

<sup>701</sup> Rev. J. Trist to Davies Giddy, 12 May 1810. East Sussex Record Office, GIL 4/162. I am indebted to Christine and Colin Edwards, Cornish historians, for this reference and for introducing me to the helpful staff at the Cornwall Record Office.

<sup>702</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 9 Feb 1844.

<sup>703</sup> *Survey*, viii.

limitations suggested by the reviewers must be accepted. In addition to losing the opportunity to observe growing crops and harvests, the winter conditions made the task more difficult physically, and as Worgan was unable to afford better transport, he undertook his journeys on foot, increasing these difficulties substantially. Even if in the finished result he relied heavily on the input of others, the outcome is a testament to his resolve and determination – character attributes that can be seen in his other, albeit often unsuccessful, activities.

#### iv. The Board of Agriculture

The Board of Agriculture's full name was 'The Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement', and its decision to carry out the agricultural surveys of each county was a key element of its desire to promote improvement in agricultural practices. Unlike the Society of Arts, the Board, and particularly its first President, Sir John Sinclair who personally saw little value in awarding premiums, placed less emphasis on prizes and medals seeing them as part of a wider mix that included the delivery of papers on actual farming practices.<sup>704</sup> Sinclair recognised the need to accumulate what today would be described as a database of the agricultural practices and conditions across the nation, and the county surveys were instituted to achieve this end. He saw this as a personal project and rushed the process to such an extent that all were completed and published within two years of the Board's formation. The unfortunate outcome was that the reports were criticised for their varying quality and reliability, not only because of the speed of the process, but in many cases for the qualifications of the authors. Arthur Young later suggested that many of the authors 'scarcely knew the right end of a plough',<sup>705</sup> and the widespread dissatisfaction with the reports, as well as his own management and leadership skills, resulted in Sinclair being replaced as President in 1798. The Board subsequently agreed to produce a second series of county surveys, and it was the second survey of Cornwall that Worgan was appointed to undertake.

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<sup>704</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture (1793-1822)', *The English Historical Review*, Vol.74, No. 290 (Jan 1959), 44-45.

<sup>705</sup> Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 49.

The first survey had been conducted by Robert Fraser and published in May 1794. William Marshall, in his review of the county surveys described Fraser's work as 'one of the original that were hastily sent in, presently after the birth of the Board'.<sup>706</sup> Fraser's work is a much slimmer volume than Worgan's but covers many of the same topics together with the inclusion of mining.<sup>707</sup> Worgan's review was always intended to exclude mining activities, an important component of Cornwall's economy – that task was assigned to Humphry Davy.

This time the Board approached the surveys in a more organised manner and all reports were prepared in accordance with a standard template, even if it could not guarantee the quality of the result. William Marshall noted that Worgan's information was gathered 'principally, by a *pedestrian tour* (Marshall's emphasis)...the fatigues and privations attending which are not passed unnoticed'.<sup>708</sup> As the reviewers pointed out, working through the winter months meant Worgan could not see many of the crops and implements at work forcing him to rely on some research by correspondence with landholders throughout the county.<sup>709</sup> While that may show something of Worgan's sense of urgency to carry out the task, it also reveals that while the Board of Agriculture had a template for content, it lacked logistical guidelines for the surveys, and to some extent a system of quality control.

In accord with the Board's template, Worgan's survey covered a broad range of subjects including land usage; growing of crops including soil improvement and reclamation of waste lands; livestock and animal husbandry; and agricultural implements. The Board also required the surveys to describe the nature of rural buildings, land tenure and property management, and observations on the local economic conditions. A final chapter allowed each author to include any general observations considered important.

The issue of soil improvement was a subject of discussion across the country and the use of different types of manures occupies a considerable component

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<sup>706</sup> Marshall, *Review and Abstract*, 515.

<sup>707</sup> Robert Fraser, *General View of the County of Cornwall with observations on the means of its improvement* (London 1794).

<sup>708</sup> Marshall, *Review and Abstract*, 528.

<sup>709</sup> *Survey*, viii.

of the finished report. Farmers had long understood the value of maturing the soil and a number of obligations placed on Worgan in his lease agreement for Bray made minimum requirements for the application of lime or some other soil additive and restricted the number of successive crops of corn. But these conditions were a minimum, as since the mid eighteenth century the importance of including root and green crops in the rotation cycle became increasingly recognised. As Overton noted, the farmers of the period may not have known about the science of maintaining nitrogen in the soil or indeed the existence of nitrogen, but they understood the benefits and were learning the value of, for example, including turnip crops in the rotation.<sup>710</sup> In his own farming practices Worgan had been conscious of the need for a planned crop rotation and wrote that while at Bray he had refrained from growing full corn crops until the soil had improved. He regularly added lime and pilchards to the soil, and included green crops, probably turnips or clover, in his planting.<sup>711</sup> During the conduct of the survey, Worgan visited his old farm at Glynn in August 1808 and inspected an extensive crop of turnips his successor had planted and found it 'clean and very promising'.<sup>712</sup> These Cornish improvers were also present in New South Wales where James Ruse, a native of Cornwall, worked on improving the soil on his farm at Rose Hill by a planned method of crop rotation that included the planting of turnips.<sup>713</sup> In his survey Worgan described the rotation of crops in Cornwall as 'extremely reprehensible', arising from a failure not only of a lack of planting green crops but also of not turning them in or following up with correct ploughing.<sup>714</sup> Commenting on the recent increase in farmers having successive corn crops, Worgan noted that the practice commenced as recently as 1801, the result of the high prices being obtained for corn.<sup>715</sup> The benefit of animal manures had long been recognised, but Worgan was concerned that the collection and application of manures, especially cattle dung, was not efficiently

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<sup>710</sup> Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in Britain. The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy 1500-1850*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16.

<sup>711</sup> Worgan to Richard Rosdew, n.d. (c. Jul 1812). Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>712</sup> *Survey*, 70.

<sup>713</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 197-8.

<sup>714</sup> *Survey*, 55.

<sup>715</sup> *Survey*, 57.

managed.<sup>716</sup> His report stressed the need for careful planning of winter stalls with proper roof covering and drainage so that dung could be regularly collected and dispersed. His own attempts to improve the cattle stalls at Bray were delayed by his landlord requiring estate timber to build his summer property at Saltash on the coast of the Tamar River.<sup>717</sup>

Worgan's chapter on agricultural implements is mostly straightforward reporting of different types of ploughs, barrows and wagons and its matter of fact approach belies the significant improvement in ploughs since the introduction of the swing plough around the middle of the eighteenth century. The swing plough, that had no wheels, required fewer horses to operate and therefore fewer men to manage the animals, thus reducing the costs of cultivation, but Worgan chose not to mention his own prize-winning activities in developing the plough.<sup>718</sup> He noted that threshing machines that had been invented some thirty years earlier and mostly powered by horses, were by now 'very general' reflecting the national position, however they were expensive with capital outlays costing up to £100, although Worgan found most to be in the £40 to £60 range.<sup>719</sup> One historian has suggested the cost of threshing machines ranged between £100 and £150 although could be much higher, a stark comparison to a plough or cart that had a maximum cost of around £15.<sup>720</sup> Mechanisation would remain beyond the resources of most small farmers for some time, and as another contemporary writer observed, most threshing machines were operated by horses, usually a team of four, and at the time of writing only one steam-driven machine was in operation in Cornwall.<sup>721</sup> Worgan claimed social benefits in the increased use of threshing machines as they provided employment during the winter months for the women who attended the machines.<sup>722</sup> Those benefits would later evaporate when machines became

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<sup>716</sup> *Survey*, 122.

<sup>717</sup> John Mayow to Worgan, 15 Nov 1800. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>718</sup> Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, 122.

<sup>719</sup> *Survey*, 43. The national position is addressed in Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, 125. The contemporary term 'thrashing' machine was used by Worgan and other writers of the period.

<sup>720</sup> Stuart Macdonald, 'The Progress of the Early Threshing Machine', *The Agricultural History Review*, 23,1 (1975), 63.

<sup>721</sup> C.S. Gilbert, *An Historical Survey of the County of Cornwall*, (2 vols.), Vol. 1, (Plymouth, 1817), 350.

<sup>722</sup> *Survey*, 159.

steam-driven, although it was not until the 1840s that there would be efficient and affordable steam engines available for agricultural use.<sup>723</sup>

Enclosure had been a divisive issue for many years and the removal of age-old common rights to land often caused much social disruption and hardship. The subject has exercised the minds and pens of commentators for generations and in more modern times that of many agricultural and social historians, but is not a matter for in-depth study here.<sup>724</sup> Enclosure operated in different ways across the country but not to any great extent in Cornwall. The issue was briefly considered by Worgan but only in the context of economic benefit. Worgan believed that enclosure allowed landowners to inject capital into the rural economy and by increasing profits pass on economic benefit to the wider community.<sup>725</sup> He did not refer to any social implications arising from the loss of common lands but his experience was probably limited as he noted that there had been no enclosure acts in the county until 'very recently'. Writing a decade later, Gilbert commented that 'several extensive enclosures' had taken place in recent years, but these were of waste lands. Some farms, he noted, had enclosed adjoining blocks using the common Cornish method of stone hedges.<sup>726</sup> In considering the benefits of enclosure, Worgan suggested the enclosure of waste lands had become particularly attractive to landowners during the period of the Napoleonic wars as they took advantage of the rapidly increasing prices for grain. He noted that while a farmer was receiving twenty-eight shillings a bushel for wheat in 1799, this had risen to forty shillings in 1804, revealing the massive increases in grain prices during this period – a cause of much civil unrest and concern to the government.<sup>727</sup> Another early commentator observed that considerable areas of waste land between Liskeard

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<sup>723</sup> Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, 127.

<sup>724</sup> See, for example. K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor. Social Change and Agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); G.E. Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England. An Introduction to its Causes, Incidence and Impact 1750-1850* (London: Longman 1997); and with emphasis on the social and political upheavals caused by enclosures, E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1980). Oliver Goldsmith's poem 'The Deserted Village' (1770) provides a stark contemporary commentary on the impact of enclosures on rural villages.

<sup>725</sup> *Survey*, 182.

<sup>726</sup> Gilbert, *An Historical Survey*, Vol.1, 363-4.

<sup>727</sup> *Survey*, 117-118.

and Bodmin would benefit from enclosure, and reported that one of the largest enclosures by an individual was carried out by Worgan's last landlord, E.J. Glynn of Glynn near Bodmin.<sup>728</sup> That the Board of Agriculture was generally in favour of enclosure is evident in Sir John Sinclair's colourful statement exclaimed in 1803:

Let us not be satisfied with the liberation of Egypt, or the subjugation (sic) of Malta, but let us subdue Finchley Common; let us conquer Hounslow Heath, let us compel Epping Forest to submit to the yoke of improvement.<sup>729</sup>

The Board's enthusiasm for enclosure encouraged it to offer to assist William Pitt in the preparation of a general enclosure bill, considered necessary to overcome the current need for individual enclosures to have their own act of parliament.<sup>730</sup> The third President of the Board, Lord Carrington, was a strong proponent of enclosure but his attempts in 1801 to promote a general enclosure bill failed to defeat the church lobby in the House of Lords who were anxious about the perceived impact of enclosures on church tithes. Carrington's intention to enclose his own estates around Bledlow was an ongoing cause of anxiety and ultimate disappointment for William Dawes when he attempted to create a seminary for missionaries at the property he was leasing from Carrington.<sup>731</sup>

The agricultural commentator and writer William Marshall examined Worgan's survey as part of a review commenting on all the county surveys. Having called for a review of the agricultural methods across England as far back as 1787, Marshall had become a stern critic of the Board's methods and regularly attacked both Sinclair and Young. His reviews of the Board's county surveys were largely made up of quoted sections drawn from each work with some added editorial comment, usually brief. His comments on the Cornwall survey followed this pattern and offered no criticisms of Worgan's processes and

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<sup>728</sup> Rev. Daniel Lysons & Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia; being a Concise Topographical Account of the Several Counties of Great Britain*, Vol.3, Cornwall, (London 1814), clxxxi.

<sup>729</sup> Quoted in Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*, 92.

<sup>730</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Old Board of Agriculture', 47.

<sup>731</sup> See Chapter 3 earlier.

conclusions other than acknowledging the limitations resulting from undertaking the exercise during winter, and noting that original inadequacies were addressed by the trio of reviewers.<sup>732</sup>

In addition to practical farming issues, Worgan's survey also addressed matters such as management practices and the intricate nature of leaseholds that often created difficult financial imposts on tenants. He made a number of recommendations for change, particularly in relation to the financial impact of the Property Act. In his only personal comment and drawing on his own experience, he included a brief but clear paragraph warning prospective tenants of the need to take care when dealing with entailed estates, and noted that his own circumstances were not unique.<sup>733</sup> Worgan's reviewers chose to leave the paragraph in place.

Worgan's survey adds to the understanding of the state of agriculture in Cornwall at the turn of the nineteenth century as well the progress in agricultural and scientific development taking place at the time. In large part it also reflects many of the farming practices Worgan had adopted at Bray. More than that, it provides another window into Worgan's own character and personality and his commitment to a cause he believed in. Apart from his very strong opinions on the inadequacies of crop rotation and soil improvement, Worgan's reporting is mostly a dispassionate coverage of the state of agriculture in the county. William Marshall noted that Worgan rarely revealed his own opinions and was 'most desirous to give a faithful account of the best practice of the County'.<sup>734</sup> However, the nature of Worgan's writing in the Survey shows his strong commitment to good agricultural practice and a belief in the importance of agricultural development.

It is instructive to see that Worgan had put into practice many of the farming methods adopted across the county that received his favourable comments in the survey and the endorsement of his reviewers. Writing after his survey was

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<sup>732</sup> Marshall, *Review and Abstract*. The two Cornwall surveys are discussed at 515-548.

<sup>733</sup> *Survey*, 22.

<sup>734</sup> Marshall, *Review and Abstract*, 528.

published and many years after leaving Bray, Worgan described his activities during the first few years of his tenancy:

I drained land to a great Extent converting the collected Waters to the use of Irrigation, made a general Reservoir for the washings of the Farm-yard, and constructed Catch-pits all around the Estate. I grew Tares [a legume] and other Green Crops and by feeding my Cattle about the Farm-Yard raised immense masses of Manure, Summer & Winter.

Worgan supplemented his manures with lime and waste pilchards (a common practice for manuring in Cornwall with its intensive fishing industry), and held back during the first years in not planting full corn crops. He claimed that by the seventh year of his occupancy the estate was 'as rich as a Garden', a benefit to his successor who made profits of £700. Worgan added that the current tenant at Bray told him that he was not able to achieve the carrying capacity for his sheep as Worgan had done.<sup>735</sup> Worgan understandably exhibits some pride in his achievements and there is a level of frustration that others benefited from his labours, but the description confirms that he was farming for the long term, making investments that a short-term tenured occupant would avoid. Perhaps Philip Mayow's uncharitable remarks that Worgan had done no more than what 'any good Farmer, who understands husbandry would have done' need reassessment<sup>736</sup> as Worgan's testimony of his own achievements suggests previous tenants had failed to achieve the results from the estate that Mayow expected.

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<sup>735</sup> Worgan to Richard Rosdew, n.d. (c. Jul 1812). Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>736</sup> P.W. Mayow to Rev. Darell Stephens, 25 Nov 1802. Bray papers CRO, BRA 1737/45.

## Chapter 15

### The Later Years and Family

#### i. 'A broken Gentleman'

The survey did not solve Worgan's financial situation. At some stage his fee was increased by a further £100, but in September 1808 his brother Richard wrote to Arthur Young (Richard Worgan and Young had become regular correspondents mostly addressing their shared interests in various aspects of religion and philosophy) asking if payment could be expedited as George Worgan had been 'led by the Survey into debts far beyond the hundred pounds he has received' and was now in 'the greatest distress'.<sup>737</sup>

But Worgan's financial, emotional and physical condition was now desperate. In a letter to Davies Giddy (later Davies Gilbert), Rev. Jeremiah Trist, one of the *Survey's* three reviewers, described Worgan's deteriorated situation after the *Survey's* completion. Worgan, Trist reported, had worked in a printer's office for some five weeks before succumbing to a fever 'of the typhus kind' brought on by his 'low living'.<sup>738</sup> Trist added that Worgan had been sending all his earnings to his family and was in effect starving himself – 'the poor man seemed to be resigned to his fate of starvation, anxious only abt his Wife & 4 Children', Trist wrote. Trist told Giddy that the Rev. H.H. Tremayne, who had alerted Trist to Worgan's predicament, initially assisted Worgan who later wrote to Tremayne thanking him for 'your kindness to my poor afflicted family'.<sup>739</sup> Trist took Worgan in to his own home to recover and sought advice from Giddy as to suitable employment.

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<sup>737</sup> Richard Worgan to Arthur Young, n.d. (18 Sept 1809). Young papers, Add MSS 35130 ff, 297-298.

<sup>738</sup> This was 'low living' as caused by poverty, not the modern connotation suggesting issues with morality.

<sup>739</sup> Worgan to Rev. H.H. Tremayne, 10 May 1810. Tremayne family papers, CRO, T/2463.

Trist had found a position as a surgeon on board one of the coastal mail packets that paid £80 to £100 but Worgan decided he could not accept, as he understood it would mean losing his half-pay with the Navy. Importantly for Worgan, losing his half-pay would in turn have meant his wife would cease to be eligible for a widow's pension of £40 per annum, and Trist asked Giddy to check if this was in fact the case. Trist also asked Giddy if he was aware of any clerical positions that might be available in London as it would be difficult to find him employment in the county. Of Worgan, Trist said he was 'competent, he is trustworthy, sober & inoffensive, & disposed to do his best for his Employer'. Trist added that he had written a similar letter to Sir John Sinclair at the Board of Agriculture.<sup>740</sup> Davies Giddy, who became Davies Gilbert in 1817 to comply with the conditions of his wife's inheritance, was at the time a member of the Board of Agriculture and with Sir John Sinclair may have procured the additional payment to Worgan, no doubt supported by Richard Worgan's earlier plea to Arthur Young. Giddy had founded the Geological Society of Cornwall and, as Gilbert, was President during the period Watkin Tench was a member of the committee and Vice President. Gilbert later succeeded Sir Humphry Davy as President of the Royal Society.<sup>741</sup>

This low period in Worgan's life gives some idea of the regard that many of the leading Cornish landholders had for him. In his letter to Davies Giddy, Trist had emphasised that his co-reviewers supported his concern for Worgan while Tremayne was one of the members of the committee that later approved Worgan's teaching position at Liskeard.

Without an income Worgan was soon in even worse financial straits, forcing him to approach some of the leading local citizens for financial support. He painted a picture of destitution and despair, and by 1812 had become a genteel beggar. Writing to P. W. Mayow, Worgan's former landlord, another local landowner, Richard Rosdew, reported that Worgan had appeared at his home seeking financial support and wrote that he had been 'accosted at my front door by a

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<sup>740</sup> Rev. J. Trist to Davies Giddy, 12 May 1810. East Sussex Record Office, GIL 4/162.

<sup>741</sup> D. P. Miller, 'Gilbert (Giddy), Davies (1767-1839)', *ODNB* online. Accessed 11 Jul 2013.

Person somewhat in appearance of a broken Gentleman'.<sup>742</sup> Worgan explained that he had received assistance from others in the district and Rosdew's letter to Mayow referred to a long list of names, prepared on parchment, with 'a great number of names as Subscribers, some as much as £10'.<sup>743</sup>

Worgan had inadvertently met the wrong person when he visited Rosdew's estate. Rosdew's letter to Mayow shows they had a relationship based on business, but was also personal and included family visits. Worgan was not to receive any comfort from Rosdew who considered that Mayow had acted as well as he could or should, and as he told Mayow, he refused Worgan's request because of 'the mischief he is insidiously doing your character'.<sup>744</sup>

While Worgan had generated some support amongst the local gentry, in Rosdew's opinion that support had been obtained because the subscribers had given 'in equal ignorance of the facts' and 'without enquiry'. However, Worgan's situation must have been well known in the neighbourhood and he would have garnered some sympathy given his circumstances.

When writing his *Survey* back in 1808, Worgan had included a paragraph to warn of the dangers of entering into a lease agreement with estates the subject of an entail. Noting that there were others besides himself who were 'fellow sufferers', he advised his readers that enquiries should be made if a proposed lease is with an entailed estate writing:

It behoves every man, who is about to occupy a farm for a term by lease, to make enquiry whether it be an entailed estate or not; because the possessor having the power of letting for his own life only; in the case of his death, the occupier is left entirely at the mercy of his successor.<sup>745</sup>

Unfortunately for George Worgan he did not make those enquiries for himself back in 1795.

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<sup>742</sup> Richard Rosdew lived at Beechwood, over the border in Devonshire.

<sup>743</sup> Richard Rosdew to P.W. Mayow, July 1812. Bray papers, CRO, BRA1737/45.

<sup>744</sup> Richard Rosdew to P.W. Mayow, July 1812. Bray papers, CRO, BRA1737/45.

<sup>745</sup> Worgan, *Survey*, 22.

## ii. Schoolmaster

Worgan chose a new path in his quest to find employment and income. He lacked sufficient capital to return to farming and had a clear distaste for returning to his former occupation as a surgeon, thereby shutting off the two areas in which he had experience and knowledge. However he was nothing if not resilient and at age fifty-seven saw an opportunity to become a schoolteacher.

In December 1811 a meeting of some members of the local gentry took place in Truro, Cornwall where the need to provide a more cost effective method of providing education to the children of the poor was discussed. The meeting agreed that the system created by Dr. Bell was a probable solution and at a second meeting later that month agreed to establish a committee to raise funds and establish schools using Bell's method of tuition within the principles of the Church of England. Attending the first meeting were two acquaintances of George Worgan, Revs. H. H. Tremayne and Josiah Trist.<sup>746</sup>

Dr. Bell's method of education involved the schoolteacher instructing older and more experienced children, who in turn passed on the lessons to younger groups. The National system that used Bell's method was restricted to schools established by the Church of England and excluded Dissenters. A similar method developed by Dr. Joseph Lancaster was created to include dissenting denominations, and was used by William Dawes in his schools in Antigua until pressures from the Church of England caused him to implement the National system. The new organisation commenced on 23 December 1811 under the name 'The Society for promoting the Education of the Children of the Poor in the County of Cornwall, upon Dr. Bell's system in the principles of Christian religion, as taught in the Established Church'.

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<sup>746</sup> Minutes of meetings held 3 Dec 1811 and 23 Dec 1811. Truro Central Schools Committee minute book, CRO, D/CS/1, ff.1-2.

In November 1812 the Committee received an enquiry from Rev. A. Laffer of Liskeard requesting information about Dr. Bell's system as he intended to establish a similar school attached to St Martin's Church at Liskeard. Eighteen months later, the Committee received another letter from Laffer recommending Mr. G.B. Worgan 'be instructed as a School Master for the Liskeard School'. The Committee agreed to the recommendation.<sup>747</sup> The circumstances behind Laffer's recommendation are not known, but as Worgan played the organ at St. Martin's he would have heard of the plans and identified an opportunity for himself.

The school in Liskeard commenced shortly afterwards as a school for boys after subscribers had raised funds to build a new schoolhouse. The school was established to accommodate one hundred boys and showed initial promise even though it was 'not quite full' a year after commencement.<sup>748</sup> It lasted for a number of years until falling enrolments were cited as causing its closure. Allen's history of Liskeard says the additional reason for the school's closure was an ownership issue, as the building had been constructed on land owned by the town corporation as nominee for the Duchy of Cornwall and had not been transferred to the school's subscribers.<sup>749</sup> The school closed around 1835 after the introduction of the Municipal Reform Act of that year changed the structure of the local Liskeard town council. Worgan was seventy-eight years old at that time and it is possible he had already retired although the actual time of his departure from the school is not known. But he kept up his musical activities and in the year before his death he was reported as having performed at a concert and ball at Lostwithiel, approximately ten miles from his home at Liskeard.<sup>750</sup>

Two final questions remain unanswered in Worgan's last years. In 1836, now aged seventy-nine he constructed a new home in Liskeard called Wadeland House. The house was substantial enough to be included by Allen in his list of 'modern houses' in Liskeard written twenty years later.<sup>751</sup> The house still exists

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<sup>747</sup> Committee minutes, 16 Nov 1812 and 7 Feb 1814. CRO, D/CS/1 ff. 27,54.

<sup>748</sup> Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, 358.

<sup>749</sup> Allen, *History of Liskeard*, 183-4.

<sup>750</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 23 Jun 1837.

<sup>751</sup> Allen, *History of Liskeard*, 452.

in New Street, Liskeard although there have been some additions. Worgan had commenced his teaching career only a few years after begging for financial support and it does not seem likely that he could develop sufficient capital from his teaching income to fund the cost of the house.<sup>752</sup> The source of the money remains unknown.

The second unanswered question is the cause of Worgan's death. His death certificate (Worgan died the year after official registration of births, marriages and deaths commenced) states that he died on 4 March 1838 at Liskeard, the cause of death being given as 'apoplexy', likely to be either a stroke or heart attack.<sup>753</sup> However, Worgan's entry in the *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis*, written some twenty years after his death suggests that he had 'hung himself'.<sup>754</sup> Given the time elapsed and that the authors provide no substantiation, the claim needs to be treated with suspicion. The only other known mention of suicide occurs in the revised edition of Allen's *History* where the author, the then Liskeard Archivist, is more definite stating that Worgan died 'by his own hand', a supposed fact not mentioned in the original edition of the *History*.<sup>755</sup> Again, the author provides no substantiation for the comment and, as one of his general sources is the *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis*, it is possible he simply elaborated on that book's entry for Worgan. Why, after decades of rising above many difficult periods in his life would George Worgan choose to kill himself at age eighty? That is a question that is unlikely to be answered but as he is buried in consecrated ground at St. Martin's, Liskeard it is almost certain he died of natural causes as described in the death certificate.

### iii. Marriage and family

When Worgan returned to England from New South Wales and joined the hospital ship *Le Caton* at Plymouth, he was close to the farming areas of south-

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<sup>752</sup> I am grateful to Anthony Wood of Liskeard, a former owner of the house, for information on its history and association with Worgan.

<sup>753</sup> Certified copy of an entry of death for George Bouchier Worgan, General Register Office, issued 18 March 2011, personally held.

<sup>754</sup> Boase and Courtney, *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis*, 906.

<sup>755</sup> John Allen, *The History of the Borough of Liskeard*, edited and revised by Councillor William H. Paynter, M.S.A., Liskeard Borough Archivist, (Marazion (Cornwall), n.d. (c.1967)), 99.

east Cornwall and in May 1793, at age thirty-six, he married Mary Lawry, aged twenty-seven, of Liskeard, the wedding taking place at St. Martin's Church.<sup>756</sup>

The Lawry family had lived in and around Liskeard for a number of generations and Mary Lawry's father William was a maltser. At his death, William Lawry was described as a gentleman, but appears unlikely to have been able to provide much support for his daughter and her family during their later difficulties. He died intestate in 1811 leaving an estate valued at under £200.<sup>757</sup>

In September 1795, Worgan took the lease of the farm at Bray that was near the town of Morval about five miles from Liskeard. Worgan's children were all born during the period of his tenancy at Bray, their baptisms being recorded at the parish church at Morval. There is some confusion about the number of children. Relevant church records indicate four children were born, although it appears only three survived. The first child, Mary, baptised on 6 May 1798, must have died during infancy as the Worgan's third child, another daughter named Mary was baptised two and a half years later in September 1801.<sup>758</sup> However in later documents, Worgan refers to his family as comprising both three and four children. These documents were produced at times of significant financial and emotional stress, but it is strange that he would confuse the size of his family.<sup>759</sup> It is possible that he was emphasising his difficult situation by presenting facts in a nonfactual manner, as may have been the case in his later request to the government for support for his youngest son John, or it may be that another child is not evident in the records.

Worgan's two sons, George William Worgan and John Parsons Worgan, both emigrated to Australia as young adults. Worgan's younger son John Parsons Worgan, arrived in Sydney in 1830 and in September that year is recorded as being employed as a clerk to the Bench of Magistrates at Hyde Park Barracks

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<sup>756</sup> CRO, St Martins (Liskeard) parish register, marriages.

<sup>757</sup> Register of Intestate Administration, Cornwall Archdeaconry, Abstracts of Administration and Probate of Wills, TNA, IR/26/341/1180.

<sup>758</sup> CRO, St Wenna (Morval) parish register.

<sup>759</sup> For example, Worgan's memorial to P.W. Mayow dated 31 July 1804 refers to three children, while his letter to Richard Rosdew, undated but c. Jul 1812, mentions four. CRO, Bray papers, BRA 1737/45. Worgan's letter to Arthur Young seeking employment refers to four children. Worgan to Young, 16 Feb 1807. Young papers Add MSS 35129 ff 369-370.

on a salary of £100 per annum.<sup>760</sup> His appointment appears to have been the successful outcome of a petition sent by his father in 1828 to the Colonial Secretary, Sir George Murray, requesting employment for his son in New South Wales. He referred to his previous connection with the colony, conscious of the opportunities the colony offered adding that was not able to 'provide for, or obtain any means of Maintenance' for his son.<sup>761</sup>

In the petition Worgan referred to his period in New South Wales, noting he 'was Surgeon to the said Frigate (HMS *Sirius*) when she was wrecked at Norfolk Island'. While the statement is factually correct in that he held the appointment of surgeon at the time the vessel went to Norfolk Island, the implication that he was on board when the vessel was wrecked on 19 March 1790 was not, as Worgan had remained at Port Jackson. After the loss of the vessel, the ship's complement returned to Port Jackson in two groups. A small number returned within days on HMS *Supply* and in identifying those men, William Bradley did not include Worgan.<sup>762</sup> Worgan was certainly not among the larger group that remained on the island as he is recorded as being a member of an expedition inland with William Dawes and Watkin Tench in August 1790.<sup>763</sup> The main group did not return to Sydney until 26 February 1791.<sup>764</sup> Worgan very sensibly omitted any reference to his service on the hospital ship *Le Caton*.

As Worgan had a habit of emphasising his woes, it is possible that he connected the loss of the *Sirius* to his position on the vessel to add strength to his request. It may also be a case of simple ambiguity.

Worgan's eldest son, George William Worgan, left Plymouth for New South Wales on 11 April 1838, just a month after his father's death. He arrived at Sydney in August of that year and continued a family tradition by working as a

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<sup>760</sup> New South Wales Colonial Secretary, 'Return of the Colony, 1830', 4/261 114. State Records Authority of New South Wales.

<sup>761</sup> Worgan, Memorial to Sir George Murray, 1828. TNA CO 323/132, f.502.

<sup>762</sup> Bradley, *A Voyage to New South Wales*, 197. Of the various settlement journals and records, Bradley provides the most details of this group.

<sup>763</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 174.

<sup>764</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 218.

musician and music teacher.<sup>765</sup> A newspaper advertisement in October 1838 promoted his availability as a teacher of singing and pianoforte, and claimed membership of the Royal Society of Musicians.<sup>766</sup> He performed regularly in Sydney including as a church organist at St. Mary's Church among others. But he was better known as a vocalist and performed at the dedication service of St. Mary's as a singer employing his 'swelling tenor' voice to great effect.<sup>767</sup> In December 1845 he was reported as being one of the principal vocalists in a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, a work championed by his grandfather. Another of the principals was a Miss Tuohy. Worgan married Mary Tuohy in Sydney in 1847.<sup>768</sup>

George Worgan's nephew, another George, also emigrated to the Antipodes, arriving in New Zealand around 1850 where he stayed until his death in 1888. Like his uncle he was also a failure with his farming ventures but earned a modest reputation as a performing musician and piano teacher. George Worgan was the son of Rev. Joseph Worgan, George Bouchier Worgan's younger brother.<sup>769</sup>

Little is known of Worgan's daughter Mary other than she continued to live with her parents. She does not appear to have married.

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<sup>765</sup> *The Sydney Herald*, 6 Aug 1838.

<sup>766</sup> *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 10 Oct 1838.

<sup>767</sup> *The Australian*, (Sydney), 16 Oct 1838.

<sup>768</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 20 Dec 1845.

<sup>769</sup> Parker, 'Mr. George Worgan', 490-1.

**Part IV:**  
**Looking through the prism:**  
**themes from the lives.**

When Barbara Tuchman's prism is applied to the lives of these three men a number of significant themes of the period become evident. In most cases they are seen in all three lives, micro examples of macro influences, movements, and social, political, and economic developments of the period. Most are apparent in the life studies but a few benefit from further emphasis.

i. 'His Grace knows me well': Connections, networks and patronage.<sup>770</sup>

Patronage was inextricably linked to beneficial social connections. Persons of power and influence provided support and encouragement leading to appointments and general career advancement. Dawes and Tench both enjoyed the benefits of patronage at the commencement of their careers when unknown patrons led to their commissions in the Marines, for we know from Britt Zerbe's groundbreaking study of the Marine Corps of the period that patronage was the principle mode of entry to an officer's commission in the Corps.<sup>771</sup> Tench's dedication to the Williams Wynn family in his second New South Wales book, and Dawes' father Benjamin's acknowledgement of the patronage of the Duke of Richmond, both suggest possible identities.

The three lives under study show how personal connections operated in a variety of ways. These connections were both direct and indirect and were often the result of working in a number of inter-linked networks. Zoë Laidlaw has described how the many networks of personal communication and patronage held the British Empire together and that 'networks of personal

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<sup>770</sup> Benjamin Dawes to Nevil Maskelyne, 9 Jun 1789, RGO 14/48, f.295.

<sup>771</sup> Zerbe, "That most useful body of men", 72.

connections were of critical importance to colonial governance in the early nineteenth century'.<sup>772</sup> Examples of these imperial networks are referred to later but these men also inhabited a variety of special interest networks that included scientific, military, evangelical, and commercial activities.

William Dawes was a member of an important scientific network of navigators and astronomers from his appointment to the First Fleet until he left his position at Christ's Hospital twelve years later. His New South Wales appointment commenced with his hometown connections when In August 1786, William Bayly, Headmaster of the Royal Naval Academy at Portsmouth, recommended Dawes to Sir Joseph Banks as a suitable appointment.<sup>773</sup> Bayly also recommended Dawes to Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal, who became a strong supporter of Dawes activities in New South Wales. Maskelyne subsequently took Dawes into the Royal Observatory at Greenwich for further training in navigational and astronomical matters, and in the use of the relevant technical instruments.

The scientific network to which Dawes belonged was an impressive group of men centred as it was on the Astronomer Royal. In addition to Bayly he was also known to William Wales, both men having been astronomers to James Cook; Bayly on Cook's second and third voyages, Wales on the second. Wales had taken the Kendall K1 timekeeper on the voyage, the same instrument used by Dawes on the voyage to New South Wales. Dawes was in regular contact with George Gilpin, assistant to Wales on the Cook voyage, while Wales and Gilpin had also served as assistants to Maskelyne and consecutive periods as Secretary to the Board of Longitude.<sup>774</sup> Gilpin was later a long serving Secretary of the Royal Society. Networks and connections could also carry across generations. Dawes' son, William Rutter Dawes for example, continued the family scientific line as an astronomer and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society six years before his father's death. Thirty-five years later Dawes junior was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for his astronomical work.

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<sup>772</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 13.

<sup>773</sup> William Bayly to Sir Joseph Banks, 8 Aug 1786. Kew Library Archives, Banks Papers JBK/1/4 f.137.

<sup>774</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 20 Mar 1787. RGO 14/48.

Connections also worked in a succession of contacts that included people unknown to the originator, that Laidlaw calls 'weak ties'<sup>775</sup>, and seen in the campaign to support Dawes' appointment to the First Fleet. Captain William Twiss of the Royal Engineers then based in Portsmouth, wrote a letter of recommendation for Dawes to Brook Watson, Member of Parliament and a Director of the Bank of England who in turn forwarded the recommendation to Evan Nepean, Under Secretary at the Home Office.<sup>776</sup>

In New South Wales, Dawes was concerned with his ongoing employment, at times unsure if he wanted to stay in the colony or return to England and the Marines, and had both his father and Maskelyne assisting his cause. As Clerk of Works in the Ordnance office at the Portsmouth dockyard, Benjamin Dawes was well placed to interact with people in a superior social position and told Maskelyne that he was prepared to use his connections to assist his son's career. As William Dawes had been given responsibility for both engineering and artillery in New South Wales, future employment might be under the ambit of the Ordnance Office or the Admiralty if he remained with the Marines and Benjamin Dawes offered alternative names in support of those potential roles. Dawes senior said of the Duke of Richmond, Master-General of the Ordnance, 'His Grace knows me well' and had also met his son. Additionally the Dawes family was well known to Lady Hood, wife of Admiral Lord Hood, while an engineer appointment could be supported by Captain Twiss of the Royal Engineers, then working on the defences of Portsmouth harbour and who had previously supported William Dawes in his appointment to the First Fleet.<sup>777</sup> Benjamin Dawes was using his patrons and networks in a reasoned and strategic manner to gain maximum support for his son's career.

Dawes had the good fortune to have some very influential patrons throughout his career, particularly those associated with the Evangelical wing of the Church of England. His meeting with Rev. Richard Johnson in New South Wales led to an introduction to the elder statesman of the Evangelical clergy, Rev. John

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<sup>775</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 14-15.

<sup>776</sup> Twiss to Watson, 24 Oct 1786; Watson to Nepean, 2 Nov 1786. TNA HO 42/10 f.393.

<sup>777</sup> Benjamin Dawes to Maskelyne, 9 Jun 1789. RGO 14/48, f.295.

Newton and in turn to other members of the Eclectic Society including Revs. John Venn and Thomas Scott, the leading laymen William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, and their colleagues in the so-called Clapham Sect.<sup>778</sup> Dawes was never a member of the Clapham Sect but he remained in close orbit around its sun. Scott later took in Dawes' son when Dawes was in Sierra Leone and supported Dawes in the short-lived missionary academy at Bledlow. Dawes had the benefit of Wilberforce and Thornton as patrons during his periods in Sierra Leone and would have been thankful for their support when he was under sustained attack during Thompson's period as governor.

Dawes also had those connections to thank for his lucrative appointment to the survey of the west coast of Africa that involved little activity for a substantial level of remuneration. The wide reach and extraordinary influence of Wilberforce and his associates including at the highest levels of government has been the subject of recent study by Gareth Atkins,<sup>779</sup> while a contemporary summation of their influence by Dawes *bête noire* in Sierra Leone, Thomas Perronet Thompson, may have been delivered with sarcasm but accuracy nonetheless:

At the African Institution they impudently declare that they have no concern either with commerce or with Missions, they step into their coaches and *presto* – they are the Sierra Leone Company – *hey pass* and they are The Society for Missions to Africa and the East; another transformation makes them the Society for the Suppression of Vice, a fourth carries them to the East India House, and a fifth lands them in the House of Commons. This Marvellous property of being everywhere is not one of their least dangerous qualifications.<sup>780</sup>

Besides his Evangelical connections, Dawes' introduction to the Sierra Leone Company was supported by another contact from New South Wales. John

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<sup>778</sup> Wilberforce and Thornton had also been instrumental in Johnson's appointment to New South Wales. See Wilberforce, *Private Papers of William Wilberforce*, 33.

<sup>779</sup> Gareth Atkins, 'Wilberforce and his milieu: the worlds of Anglican Evangelicalism, c.1780-1830', (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>780</sup> Thompson to an unidentified ship's captain, 3 Aug 1809, Thompson papers, DTH 1/41.

Lowes, assistant surgeon to George Worgan on HMS *Sirius* had travelled to the colony with Dawes and they were together on a number of expeditions including Phillip's punitive expedition in December 1791. Lowes joined the Sierra Leone Company after returning to England and acting on the Company's behalf contacted Dawes offering him employment with the company. Dawes eventually travelled to London, met with the Directors and joined the Company. Those two contacts with Johnson and Lowes forged in New South Wales, directly contributed to the direction taken by Dawes' life after his time in the colony.

Dawes enjoyed the benefits of both his scientific and evangelical connections when he was appointed to the Royal Mathematical School. Recommended by Maskelyne, he had the added advantage of being known to Sir Joseph Banks and to two of the Directors of the Board of Christ's Hospital, Henry and Samuel Thornton of the Sierra Leone Company.<sup>781</sup> Dawes succeeded William Wales to the role joining a succession of distinguished appointments that stretched back to the formation of the School by Charles II.

However not all connections were positive, as George Worgan discovered arising from his friendship with Thomas Mein who he had known before departing for New South Wales. Worgan's later involvement with Mein in some dubious contracting arrangements for *Le Caton* hospital ship, led to his official censure when they were exposed during a subsequent government inquiry.

Worgan had more beneficial contacts when it came to his appointment to the agricultural survey of Cornwall. His sister, Lady Charlotte Parsons, led an assertive campaign to convince Arthur Young at the Board of Agriculture to secure her brother's appointment and in the process called on her and her husband's influential connections. Neither Young nor the Board's President, Sir John Sinclair, had previously heard of Worgan and the process is a good example of social connections in action. A later writer described Charlotte Parsons as 'a great favourite at the Court of George III',<sup>782</sup> but it was her

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<sup>781</sup> Minutes of the Council of Governors of Christ's Hospital, 25 Jan 1799, Christ's Hospital archives, MS 12806/13.

<sup>782</sup> Parker, 'Mr. George Worgan', 490-1.

husband's connections she overtly exploited to assist her brother. Sir William Parsons had been Master of the King's Musick since 1787 and taught music to the King's younger daughters. He was also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, where Sir John Sinclair, President of the Board of Agriculture, was also a Fellow.<sup>783</sup>

When Young attempted to secure employment for Worgan with Colonel Thomas Wood, Charlotte Parsons used her husband's connections by telling Young that if Wood was married to Lady Caroline Stewart, daughter of Lord Londonderry, (as she was) then her husband Sir William Parsons well knew 'all her connections' and 'they might consequently discover him [George Worgan] to be a brother of mine'. Caroline Wood's brother was Viscount Castlereagh, then Secretary for War and the Colonies.<sup>784</sup>

The position with Colonel Wood did not eventuate but the episode shows how social connections of the period worked in practice. Charlotte Parsons immediate intervention makes it clear that she knew the importance of being aware of marriage and family relationships and although she was not an intimate part of the Wood/Stewart circle she held a 'recognisable social position' that allowed her to exploit her place in society.<sup>785</sup> Arthur Young's assessment procedures of Worgan's abilities were slight at best, but that he acted on Charlotte Parson's recommendation and the quality of her connections was not unusual during the period.

Patronage was not just conferred by the aristocracy or leading families and more modest connections had also benefitted George Worgan's in-laws. His wife Mary was confident of continuing support from Admiral Duckworth who 'has ever been a kind friend to all her family', to seek his support in finding a position for her husband.<sup>786</sup> Duckworth undoubtedly had his own connections, but his

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<sup>783</sup> Middleton, 'Sir William Parsons', *OBND Online*.

<sup>784</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, n.d. (c. Apr-May 1807). BL, Young papers, Add. MSS 35129 f.384-385.

<sup>785</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 76.

<sup>786</sup> Charlotte Parsons to Arthur Young, 22 Apr 1807. BL, Young papers Add MSS 35129 ff.396-397.

career was middling and his networks largely naval. In the end his support was not required.

Charlotte Parson's support for her brother is an example of how family was often the only reliable means of obtaining influential introductions and advancements as well as changes in careers. Dawes' family experience shows how many evangelical relationships were tightly interwoven through kinship and marriage and no less so for the Gilbert family network. Dawes had met the Rev. Nathaniel Gilbert and Rev. Melvil Horne in the initial years of the Sierra Leone Company and Dawes later worked with Gilbert at Bledlow where Gilbert held the living. Gilbert's son had married Horne's daughter while Horne's son married Rev. Thomas Scott's daughter,<sup>787</sup> and in 1811 Dawes married Gilbert's cousin, Grace Gilbert.<sup>788</sup> The Gilbert connection was the reason for Dawes moving to Antigua where he worked closely with his wife's brother John. John Gilbert was married to Ann Hart, sister of Elizabeth who was married to Charles Thwaites, all close colleagues and campaigners for the education of slaves and their children on the island.

These familial connections and networks were a simple form of patronage and often used. George Worgan's petition to the Colonial Secretary secured a government appointment in New South Wales for his younger son, John Parsons Worgan.<sup>789</sup> Similarly, Watkin Tench's personal intervention with the First Lord of the Admiralty resulted in the confirmation of a commission and a posting for his nephew, Delboeuf Bedford, in the Royal Navy.<sup>790</sup>

The many networks of personal communication and patronage that operated throughout the British Empire were assisted in no small part by the reach and movement of the Royal Navy. Watkin Tench's conversation with the Governor of St. Helena, Robert Brooke, and Brooke's subsequent passing on of that information to Governor Macartney at the Cape Colony was a typical example of how personal information supplemented less informative official

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<sup>787</sup> Atkins, 'Wilberforce and his millieux', 215.

<sup>788</sup> Parish register, (Old Church) St Pancras, London, 25 May 1811.

<sup>789</sup> Worgan memorial to Sir George Murray, 1828. TNA CO 323/132, f.502.

<sup>790</sup> Tench to J.S. Bedford, 23 Apr 1830. Papers of the Tench and Bedford families, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MAV/FM3/722.

correspondence. In the case of Brooke and Macartney, both were responsible for strategically placed colonies on the shipping lane to India and the Far East and now New South Wales, and such information was important for their own awareness and local planning. The flow of information between officials had the benefit of placing third party information and events in a broader, imperial context. Tench's discussion with Brooke covered the relatively current situation in Europe including the breakdown in negotiations between the British government and the newly installed Directory in France.<sup>791</sup> This information transfer was also important in adding to a general awareness of developments supplementing the supply of newspapers, often received well out of date. Tench had experienced the frustration of a lack of news in New South Wales when a convict transport arrived from England without a supply of newspapers and magazines.<sup>792</sup> George Worgan also wrote of the frustrations caused by irregular shipping between the new colony and home.<sup>793</sup>

Colonial networks came into play again in 1815 when Thomas Davey, Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land wrote to Tench asking him to assist the wife of a convict, William Jemott, in obtaining her husband's pardon. Davey was a former colleague of Tench when, as a Marine Lieutenant, he served with Tench in New South Wales and was a member of the court martial in early 1788 presided over by Tench that resulted in their arrest by Major Ross. Tench's intervention may have helped as Viscount Sidmouth the then Home Secretary subsequently endorsed the application.<sup>794</sup> Jemott received his conditional pardon in May 1816 followed by an absolute pardon five years later.<sup>795</sup>

While these men lived and worked in a world that was large geographically, personally it was quite small. Degrees of separation were few and many connections, direct and indirect, continued to link the three men and the different worlds they inhabited. Some major personalities of the period such as

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<sup>791</sup> Robert Brooke to Earl Macartney, 14 December 1797. *Calendar of Brooke Letters*, University of Witwatersrand Historical Papers A737/24.

<sup>792</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 241.

<sup>793</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 44.

<sup>794</sup> Davey to Tench, 5 Oct 1815. TNA PRO 30/45/1. Mrs. Jemott's petition was attached to Tench's letter and is at the same reference.

<sup>795</sup> SRNSW, Convict records, 4/4430, Reel 774, p102. The absolute pardon is at 4/4486, reel 800.

Sir Joseph Banks and William Wilberforce had influence across many layers of life and society and both appear in the lives of the three subjects, but there were other less prominent personalities that appeared. There are a number of examples of intersected lives throughout these studies and the following selections demonstrate the smallness of the men's worlds.

When the mathematician George Witchell, a Fellow of the Royal Society, led the Royal Naval Academy, his assistant as Second Mathematical Master was John Bradley, father of William Bradley later First Lieutenant on HMS *Sirius* who shared the navigational readings with Dawes during the voyage to New South Wales.<sup>796</sup> Bradley had been baptised at St. Thomas, Portsmouth some three years earlier than Dawes.

The Marine Corps provided opportunities for interconnecting lives. At the naval battle off Chesapeake Bay in September 1781 during which Dawes was wounded, Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark, later to join the fleet to New South Wales, was also wounded while serving on HMS *London*.<sup>797</sup> Later, Dawes served on HMS *Merlin* where George Lumsdaine was Captain. Twenty years later, Lumsdaine was Captain of the much bigger ship HMS *Polyphemus* when Watkin commanded the onboard marine detachment. Other Marine Corps examples are seen in two of the signatories to the officers' memorandum that led to Tench's dismissal from his command at Plymouth. Both names appear in other circumstances. Lieutenant Joseph Childs, later to gain notoriety as Commandant on Norfolk Island was the son of Joseph Childs, attorney for the Mayows during their dispute with George Worgan. Lieutenant Evan Nepean was nephew to Evan Nepean whose name was given to the river in New South Wales 'discovered' by Tench.

Similarly in the Royal Navy we find an example of intersections. Charles Morice Pole, then a naval captain, was a member of the court martial that tried Captain Richard Bligh after the loss of HMS *Alexander* during the action that led to Tench's period as a prisoner in France. As an admiral, Pole headed the

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<sup>796</sup> H.W. Dickinson, 'The Portsmouth Naval Academy, 1733-1806', *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol.89, No.1 (Feb 2003), 17-30.

<sup>797</sup> Nicolas, *Historical Records*, 116-7.

Commission of Naval Enquiry that made strong adverse findings against George Worgan for his activities on the hospital ship *Le Caton*.

Outside of the military we see Davies Giddy who appears in the lives of both Tench and Worgan. Giddy, who later became Davies Gilbert to comply with the conditions of an inheritance, was approached by Rev. Josiah Trist to assist in finding employment for a then sick and impoverished Worgan.<sup>798</sup> Later, Giddy, now Gilbert, was President of the Cornwall Geological Society during the period Tench was a member of the Committee and Vice President. Trist had been alerted to his predicament by another acquaintance, Rev. H.H. Tremayne whose son, John Hearle Tremayne, later received support from Tench for his re-election as a Member of Parliament.<sup>799</sup>

Cornwall was a small community, to some extent the result of its relative isolation, but the Royal Navy and Royal Marines were also small communities. Laidlaw has discussed the wide reach and influence of the small community she calls 'the Peninsular network' made up of army officers who had served closely with the Duke of Wellington during the Napoleonic war.<sup>800</sup> The Plymouth Naval Club, comprising former naval officers who had served at the Battle of Trafalgar and to which Tench had donated a table centrepiece, was a similar small community that had sufficient influence to attract Royal patronage but seemingly no greater reach than its own ever decreasing membership.

The lives of these three men have provided opportunities to see examples of patronage and connections across military, religious, political, familial, imperial, and regional networks. These relationships emphasise the tight structural and hierarchical society in which they lived and worked.

## ii. Honour, Duty, and Gentlemanly Behaviour

Dawes, Tench, and Worgan commenced their military careers in service at sea during a time of war, an environment that inculcated in them the values of duty

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<sup>798</sup> Rev. J. Trist to Davies Giddy, 12 May 1810. East Sussex Record Office, GIL 4/162.

<sup>799</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 3 Jun 1826.

<sup>800</sup> Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 21 and following.

and self-discipline; attributes that were evident during the remainder of their lives.

They were also exposed to the long held concept of honour that was deeply ingrained in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, as it was in all the armed forces, having been born centuries before in military culture.<sup>801</sup> Described by one historian as a 'hereditary military virtue', its importance in the Navy was colourfully described in 1800 by Admiral, Lord St. Vincent as 'the honour of an Officer may be compared to the chastity of a woman, and when once wounded can never be recovered',<sup>802</sup> while Horatio Nelson succinctly put it 'you cannot be a good officer without being a Gentleman'.<sup>803</sup>

Honour, duty, and gentlemanly behaviour were bound by rules. They were not codified but were understood. Donna Andrew has argued that the code of honour was a social code that forced gentlemen to live by its unwritten rules or 'face social ostracism'.<sup>804</sup> Harold Perkin has described the 'aristocratic ideal of the gentleman' as a 'moral ideal based on the chivalrous code of honour'.<sup>805</sup> Tench's career provides two significant examples of the importance of these tenets and the expectations of the military officer class in meeting acceptable standards of gentlemanly behaviour.

Tench's commitment to the concept of honour and duty commenced during his early days as a Marine that he confirmed at the end of his career. Reflecting back to when he joined the Marines he wrote:

the honor and respectability of the corps was cherished with enthusiasm by its old Officers, and inculcated with earnestness on the minds of the youths who joined quarters; and the first

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<sup>801</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, 'Honour and duty at sea, 1660-1815', *Historical Research*, 75, 190 (Nov 2002), 425-447. Rodger has discussed the concepts of honour and duty as understood and accepted by naval officers in great detail.

<sup>802</sup> Rodger, 'Honour and duty at sea', 436.

<sup>803</sup> Rodger, 'Honour and duty at sea', 428.

<sup>804</sup> Donna T. Andrew, 'The Code of Honour and Its Critics: The Opposition to Duelling in England, 1700-1850', *Social History*, 5, 3 (Oct 1980), 415.

<sup>805</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, Kindle, 226.

military impression stamped in my bosom remains unaffected.<sup>806</sup>

When Tench and Colonel Desborough campaigned for improved conditions for the Marine Corps, there was more involved than improved pay and conditions. There was also the important matter of the honour of both the Corps and its individual officers. The omission of promotions for Royal Marine officers after the Battle of Trafalgar and the lack of access to substantive rank on the general staff were just two examples Tench and Desborough provided to the Admiralty. As the two officers emphasised, these were matters of personal honour as they affected the manner in which their 'estimation in society is measured'.<sup>807</sup>

The intricacies of honour and understanding of gentlemanly behaviour are obvious in the court martial of two Royal Marine officers that led to the end of Tench's career. Although discussed earlier, aspects of the case deserve repeating. The dispute between Lieutenant Colonels Abernethie and Savage originated as a disagreement over a seemingly uncontentious wager that led to harsh language and Savage suffering a perceived insult. The matter drifted for almost three years with both officers failing to settle the dispute. Finally, Abernethie was court martialled on charges brought by Savage that involved claims of ungentlemanly and dishonourable behaviour. The trial ended with all charges dismissed, but by failing to resolve the matter the Admiralty considered both officers had brought the Corps into disrepute. Both were removed from the Corps.<sup>808</sup>

Modern sensibilities may make this affair difficult to comprehend, but for the period, and clearly for those involved, the concept of honour was strongly held and was a core component of the character of a gentleman, particularly the officer class. One of the issues that so concerned the Admiralty was that the language involved – 'damned impertinent fellow' – had been uttered in the

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<sup>806</sup> Tench to John Barrow, 18 Aug 1821, Admiralty Correspondence: Marine Officers. Letters from Commandants at Plymouth. TNA ADM 1/3281.

<sup>807</sup> Colonels Desborough and Tench to Charles Yorke [First Lord of the Admiralty], 13 Mar 1811, reproduced in Nicolas, *Historical Records* 377-81.

<sup>808</sup> Details of the Court Martial are from TNA ADM 1/5458, Navy, Royal Marines Courts Martial 1 Jan 1818 – 31 Jul 1818. Abernethie's trial was held at Royal Marine Barracks Woolwich, commencing 2 Jan 1818.

Royal Marine library in the presence of other officers, behaviour they considered brought the Corps into disrepute.

An officer's sense of honour could easily be challenged by any event that he might envisage as a threat to his reputation as a gentleman and was often satisfied by challenging the offender to a duel. Perkin has observed that the high moral ground claimed by 'the code of honour was above religion, and stronger than Christian morality',<sup>809</sup> explaining Savage's attempts to have Abernethie challenge him. Savage had previously engaged in a number of duels, his first when as a fifteen year old army officer he challenged his Colonel.<sup>810</sup> The Admiralty was formally opposed to duelling, but was forced to quietly ignore the practice as it felt unable to take action against an officer who had a need to defend his honour.<sup>811</sup> This conflicting attitude emerged in the findings of the Court in the Savage-Abernethie dispute, when it declared its displeasure at the parties failing to make an attempt at 'honorable adjustment'.

Three years later Abernethie and Savage were reinstated, the Admiralty considering they had sufficient punishment. The decision upset the officers of the Plymouth Division and their Commandant, Tench. The Plymouth officers prepared a memorandum to the Admiralty expressing their 'pain and concern' at the reinstatements and stressed that they had 'no other object than their own characters, and the honour and respectability of their corps, and for its continuance'. Once again, a matter of honour was involved.<sup>812</sup>

As we know, the memorandum cost Tench his job. The two officers had been reinstated on the orders of the Admiralty and the approval of the King. Tench should have been aware of or at least considered the possibility of reinstatement. He may not have been aware of the King's involvement but would have if he had made enquiries before acting – after all the Prince Regent had formally approved the original decision. His actions may therefore be described as political naivety or lapse of judgement, but importantly, they may

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<sup>809</sup> Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 226 (Kindle).

<sup>810</sup> G.F.S-A., *History of the Savage Family*, 251.

<sup>811</sup> Rodger, 'Honour and duty at sea', 436.

<sup>812</sup> Tench to J.W. Croker (Officers' memorial attached) 5 Aug 1821, Admiralty Correspondence, Letters Plymouth, TNA ADM 1/3281.

also be considered as conflict between his sense of honour and his duty to his superiors. Honour triumphed, but to his cost.

Tench's earlier experience as a prisoner of war in France allowed him to compare the standards of gentlemanly behaviour of officers of the French Revolutionary Navy and the Royal Navy. He was incensed that when first captured he and his officer colleagues did not have their swords returned – a standard practice of gentlemanly behaviour that had existed before the Revolution.<sup>813</sup> To emphasise the differences he provided the example of a French officer of the old class who had been a prisoner in England and on release and return to France had expressed to Tench the 'polite attentions' he had received from 'our most distinguished naval officers'.<sup>814</sup>

In the military, a gentleman's honour was at the core of the system of parole granted to officer prisoners. Tench, along with other senior officers was transferred on parole to a private home in Quimper where he was now 'comfortably lodged, and seated at an "English table"'.<sup>815</sup> He was now free to roam around the town and even ventured two or three miles into the countryside although sometimes challenged by French troops. In a variation of the parole system Tench wrote he was not on his personal parole, 'either written or verbal' but his landlady had a bond for his 'appearance at all times' in the amount of '3000 livres', creating a moral liability that undoubtedly put more pressure on an English gentleman not to attempt an escape.<sup>816</sup>

In his earlier experience as a prisoner of war in America, Tench and his fellow officers were allowed on parole after their capture but were soon transferred to a 'Common Gaol'.<sup>817</sup> This was a cause of great affront to the British officers and their application to be paroled resulted in some strong debates in the Continental Congress. Tench was exchanged before the matter was resolved but the British officers' reaction indicated that they felt their imprisonment

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<sup>813</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 18.

<sup>814</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 22.

<sup>815</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 53.

<sup>816</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 62.

<sup>817</sup> Officers of HMS *Mermaid* to Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress, 2 Aug 1778, *Papers of the Continental Congress. Miscellaneous Letters to Congress 1775-89*, Vol.11, 313-4.

reflected upon their status as officers and gentlemen and the reliability of their word of honour.

The system where captured officers were granted parole to move relatively freely, secured by their own recognisance as gentlemen, was common in France and similar conditions existed in Britain where captured French officers were free to live in designated parole towns. The practice developed during the eighteenth century and was described by one historian as 'captives with privileges'.<sup>818</sup> Prisoner exchange was a common solution to holding captured officers, recognising the reliability of a gentleman's word of honour particularly when exchange was accompanied by conditions that imposed restrictions on the period before an exchanged officer could re-engage in military activities. Morieux cites one example when a British officer was removed from his command after the Admiralty discovered he was a 'prisoner on his parole of honour'.<sup>819</sup> The system of parole came to an end during the Napoleonic wars when the French began to keep prisoners of war interred during the whole period of hostilities, a practice that has continued to the present day.<sup>820</sup> Tench was fortunate in being able to enjoy the benefits of prisoner exchange in both periods he was a prisoner of war.

Tench was conscious of the need to instil the values of a gentleman in the younger generation. In 1820 Tench wrote to his fifteen year old nephew John Sargent Bedford, a cadet at the Royal Military College, commending him for not being involved in a recent student disturbance at the College. Stressing the importance of honour and duty, Tench observed that had he been the father of an expelled cadet it would have caused him 'the deepest distress' and he would have felt 'dishonored' by such conduct.<sup>821</sup>

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<sup>818</sup> Renard Morieux, 'French Prisoners of War, Conflicts of Honour, and Social Inversions in England, 1744-1783', *The Historical Journal*, 56, 1 (Mar 2013), 55-88.

<sup>819</sup> Morieux, 'French Prisoners of War', 62.

<sup>820</sup> Gavin Daly, 'Napoleon's Lost Legions: French Prisoners of War in Britain, 1803-1814', *History*, 89, 295 (Jul 2004), 361-380.

<sup>821</sup> Watkin Tench to John Bedford, 6 Apr 1820. Papers of the Tench and Bedford families, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MAV/FM3/722.

Being a gentleman also required social graces. Fisher Tench's early career as a dancer gave him the knowledge and experience to become a Dancing Master when he moved to Chester. The skills of a dancing master required more than just dancing experience, as in addition to teaching the dance steps of the day he also instructed social skills such as good manners, basic social attributes such as the correct way to sit and walk, etiquette and the ability to correctly greet people of different rank.<sup>822</sup> The people requiring this social development were from the aristocracy and gentry, as we see in the letters written by the Earl of Chesterfield to his son then in Europe enjoying the grand tour. Chesterfield emphasised the importance of dance as a key component in his son's social development and reinforced his advice by sending the young man a copy of John Locke's *On Politics and Education* (1693) in which Locke argued that the acquisition of social grace was clear evidence of good breeding.<sup>823</sup> These skills were also important in developing gentlemanly attributes in young naval officers whose social development, especially correct manners in the presence of ladies, suffered from 'so long being kept from their enlivening society'. Vice-Admiral Rainier's advice to his young nephew added the concern that 'I don't ever recollect having seen you dance'.<sup>824</sup>

Worgan knew the importance of gentlemanly connections when he leased the farm at Bray from Rev. Philip Mayow. A gentleman himself, Worgan understood his lesser social standing to his new landlord and expressed his satisfaction with the arrangements as he was seeking 'to have a Gentleman for my Landlord' and secondly, 'a House possessing some convenience superior to what is to be found in a Common Farm House'.<sup>825</sup> What's more, Mayow was a 'clergyman of respectable Character and Connections' enhancing his gentleman landlord's credentials.<sup>826</sup> There was comfort to be found in dealing with a gentleman and in occupying a residence that indicated a respectable social status.

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<sup>822</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, 107, 547, and Bloomfield, 'Pedagogue of the dance', 605, 617.

<sup>823</sup> Anne Bloomfield, 'Agent of the Enlightenment'.

<sup>824</sup> Quoted in Rodger, 'Honour and duty at sea', 434.

<sup>825</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, Jan 1803. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

<sup>826</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, n.d. (c.Jan1803). Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

### iii. Authority and Hierarchy

As discussed, duty was both a concept bound up in the responsibilities of gentlemanly behaviour and a function of authority where formal expectations were tabulated, particularly in the armed forces. When Dawes, Tench and Worgan arrived in New South Wales they had all spent a decade subjected to the strict and harsh conditions of the Articles of War. They were well experienced with authority and formal hierarchy, but they found differences in the new colony where the same rules still applied although complicated by distance and competing jurisdictions. Further, it was a small community that offered little relief from personal conflicts.

As Governor of the colony, Arthur Phillip was given extensive powers that caused Marine Lieutenant Ralph Clark to observe that he had 'never herd [sic] of any single Person having So great a Power in Vested in him'.<sup>827</sup> The colony's Judge Advocate, David Collins, after detailing the structures of the judicial system considered that 'great care had been taken on our setting out, to furnish us with a stable foundation whereon to erect our little colony'.<sup>828</sup> However, Tench identified a practical deficiency that would impact on Phillip's ability to exert control over the Marines. Admiralty regulations set a minimum number of officers required to sit on a general court martial at thirteen but, as Tench observed, failing to adjust that number to allow for the small officer contingent in the colony, meant that a court 'may not always be found practicable to be obtained'.<sup>829</sup>

Tench's concerns became reality in the dispute with the Marine commander Major Robert Ross, when Ross arrested Tench and his fellow members of a court bench in early 1788. Ross had urged that the officers be tried, but Phillip pointed out the impracticability of that course, as with four officers under arrest and two sick there were insufficient to carry out official duties. The matter was

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<sup>827</sup> Clark, *Journal and Letters*, 96.

<sup>828</sup> Collins, *An Account*, 11.

<sup>829</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 42.

forced to linger until the Marines returned to England where it was finally dropped due to the lapse of time.<sup>830</sup>

Dawes' relationship with Arthur Phillip was difficult from the first year in the colony. Dawes found a conflict between Phillip's authority over his activities in the colony and what he believed to be his duty to Nevil Maskelyne in the development of the observatory. But there was a more severe disagreement when Dawes clashed with the Governor's authority over the punitive expedition against the Aboriginal people of the Botany Bay region.

As we have seen, Dawes refused to take part in the mission. The issue was referred to Phillip who was unable to convince Dawes to change his mind even after the threat of a court martial. After receiving advice from the colony's chaplain Dawes agreed to take part but on his return advised Phillip that he would refuse any similar future order. Dawes clearly felt the authority of his conscience superior to the temporal authority of the Governor, but again there was the effect of distance from England and Phillip was in a difficult position as his authority was limited when it came to censuring the Marine officers. Dawes was entitled to choose not to be court martialled in New South Wales and in taking that option he effectively ruled out any severe penalties while in the colony. This left Phillip the only option of an informal but practical exercise of authority by refusing to appoint Dawes to any position if he remained in the colony unless he received a personal apology, which Dawes refused to do.<sup>831</sup> It is not possible of course to know how Dawes reconciled his clear duty to Phillip and the dictates of his conscience, but it shows that duty could be a flexible concept as we have also seen in Tench's life.

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<sup>830</sup> Ross to Secretary Stephens (with enclosures), 9 Jul 1788. *HRNSW*, Vol.1, Pt.2, 156-164. Other relevant correspondence between the parties together with the proceedings of the court martial were forwarded by Phillip to Lord Sydney, the Secretary of State; Phillip to Lord Sydney, 16 May 1788, *HRNSW*, Vol.1, Pt.2, 139-141. The originals are found at TNA ADM1/3824, NSW Return of Officers.

<sup>831</sup> Details of the disagreement between Dawes and Phillip are contained in Phillip's correspondence to Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville 7 Nov 1791. *HRNSW*, Vol.1 (Pt.2), 543-546; and *HRA*, Vol.1, 290-4.

The impact of the hierarchy of metropolitan elites was starkly displayed in the clash of ideas and personalities that occurred in Sierra Leone between Governor Thompson and the Sierra Leone Company and its former employees. The confrontation was resolved by Wilberforce and his associates exercising some extraordinary powers of influence over the British government. Before Thompson's arrival in Sierra Leone in 1808, Zachary Macaulay had written two letters to the then Governor, Thomas Ludlam, about arrangements following the transfer of the colony to the Crown and the proposed establishment of the African Institution, a de facto replacement for the Sierra Leone Company. Macaulay noted that the first meeting of the Institution was expecting attendees to include the Duke of Gloucester, brother of George III, Spencer Percival, George Canning, Lord Grenville and Lord Howick, all abolitionists and all leading politicians of the day. Percival, Canning (briefly) and Howick (as Earl Grey) were all future Prime Ministers.<sup>832</sup> The second letter highlights the extent of the influence wielded by Wilberforce and Henry Thornton, as Macaulay noted that although Castlereagh was sympathetic to the involvement of the African Institution, his influential secretary, Edward Cooke, was 'hostile to the whole thing'. However Macaulay had 'no doubt [emphasis in original] that Government will be disposed to adopt almost any plan which we may propose with respect to Africa, provided we will save them the trouble of thinking. This you will see to be highly important'.<sup>833</sup> This was an extraordinary expression of confidence in the extent of their influence, but it also reflected the realities of the time. Castlereagh did not have African affairs, particularly the difficult colony of Sierra Leone, too high on his list of priorities – there was after all, the war against Napoleonic France to consider.

Later, when Thompson began accusing Wilberforce and the Sierra Leone Company of traducing the original values of the colony and encouraging ongoing slavery, Wilberforce found it necessary to defend his reputation and that of his colleagues. Writing to Castlereagh, Wilberforce said 'a little conclave on Sierra Leone' had been formed consisting of former directors of the Sierra Leone Company, Henry Thornton, Lord Teignmouth, James Stephen and

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<sup>832</sup> Macaulay to Ludlam, 31 Mar 1807, included in Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808. TNA CO 267/27.

<sup>833</sup> Macaulay to Ludlam, 4 Nov 1807, included in Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808, TNA CO 267/27.

Macaulay. All were members of the Clapham Sect, and Stephen was also Wilberforce's brother-in-law while Teignmouth, previously John Shore, was a former Governor-General of India and President of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Wilberforce asked Castlereagh for the letters and reports Thompson sent to him, noting in passing that Macaulay had difficulty in seeing Edward Cooke about the request. Wilberforce assured Castlereagh that they would be the only people to see them and they would only keep them for three or four days. Wilberforce had already been privy to the documents. That Castlereagh apparently acceded to the request again demonstrates both Wilberforce's influence and Castlereagh's disinterest. Thompson was recalled a few weeks later.<sup>834</sup> In his letter of recall Castlereagh told Thompson that he found his accusations wanting and expected him to substantiate them on his return to England. On his return Thompson found himself isolated and unable to meet with either Castlereagh or his successor Lord Liverpool.<sup>835</sup>

The 'right is might' approach that Dawes continued to adopt in his dealing with authority did not succeed when it came to his later confrontation with the authority of the Church of England. As a fervent Evangelical, Dawes operated in a welcoming spiritual environment during his early years in Antigua. Through his wife he was related to the Gilbert and Thwaites families, both Wesleyans, and worked closely with them in establishing schools for the children of slaves and organisations designed to protect the morals of female slaves such as the Female Refuge Society. There was ongoing opposition from many of the planter class, concerned with the potential of civil and social disruption from slaves with literacy skills, opposition that heightened after the Demerara slave revolt in 1823 but Dawes and his colleagues found that by avoiding the politics of slavery they could continue to operate in that environment particularly as their organisations enjoyed vice-regal patronage and support from influential society in Britain.

However the Church of England was a different matter. The creation of two bishoprics in the West Indies in 1824 and the arrival of Bishop Coleridge and

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<sup>834</sup> Wilberforce to Castlereagh, 7 Dec 1808. Colonial Office, Secretary of State original correspondence Sierra Leone, TNA CO 267/24.

<sup>835</sup> Castlereagh to Thompson, 3 Apr 1809. TNA CO 268/6.

his assistant Archdeacon Parry in the new Diocese of Barbados in 1825 brought about the end of Dawes' plans to educate and spread the influence of Christianity on the Island. It was also the beginning of the end of the Church Missionary Society's activities on Antigua. Bishop Coleridge was determined to assert the primacy of the Church of England and in so doing remove the influence of the Methodist teachers and missionaries from their teaching and preaching.

For Dawes, this conflict with authority was a spiritual one. He had a low opinion of the local Church of England clergy unwisely telling Antigua's governor there was a 'want of sound preaching' in the parochial churches, a claim that did not aid his cause.<sup>836</sup> The morals of the slaves were also at risk and Dawes was horrified when he discovered that the Bishop and Archdeacon had attended a dance and feared that the lack of moral leadership would lead to 'promoting pride, debauchery & every other vice & will at length end in a rebellion against all authority'.<sup>837</sup> Dawes always considered himself a committed member of the Church of England yet was affronted by what he saw as lax morals and lazy pastoral responsibilities by many of the clergy. The partnership he had with some of the Methodists, especially his in-laws was essential to the successful operation of the schools along evangelical lines but it was a relationship that was unacceptable to the Church. Dawes reported to the CMS that since the arrival of the Bishop:

his grand object is not the inculcation of real vital Xtianity but almost exclusively the accomplishment of what will produce a directly opposite effect, by supplanting the C.M. Socty's Schools, & abolishing the Wesleyan Methodist Mission altogether.<sup>838</sup>

Parry later told him he 'was wrong in having blended my efforts with those of the Methodists', an observation that Dawes found offensive.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>836</sup> The discussion with Governor D'Urban also caused great concern within the Church Missionary Society needing to maintain good relations with the establishment of the Church of England. See CMS Minutes, 13 Jan 1824; 27 Jan 1824; and 27 Feb 1824. CMS G/C1/6.

<sup>837</sup> Dawes to CMS Secretary (marked 'Private'), 2 Sep 1825. CMS W/O 31/60b.

<sup>838</sup> Dawes to CMS, 19 Sep 1825. CMS W/O 31/63.

<sup>839</sup> Dawes to CMS, 5 Aug 1828. CMS W/O 31/98a.

Archdeacon Parry's dismissal of many of the Methodist teachers and catechists led to a decline in numbers of the school and the Church's insistence on the schools only employing teachers approved by the Bishop led to the wind-up of the activities. The CMS found it impossible to recruit sufficient teachers acceptable to the Church, and the costs of running what remained of the CMS supported schools led to its decision to withdraw from Antigua with 'great regret'.<sup>840</sup> Dawes spent the remainder of his life unemployed and died in poverty.

Dawes, his colleagues and the CMS operations in Antigua all succumbed to the authority of the local Church of England hierarchy for a variety of reasons. There was the determination of Bishop Coleridge to remove the involvement of the Methodists and reduce the influence of the Evangelicals within the Church, a situation not helped by Dawes intransigence and typical refusal to compromise when he found his beliefs being challenged. His discussions with Governor D'Urban were particularly damaging. Distance was again an issue as the CMS was too far from the scene and although it attempted to find a compromise it did not help that Coleridge did not consider the CMS to be a church society.<sup>841</sup>

In Cornwall, Tench was a minor participant in another move by the Church of England to assert its spiritual authority over other sects. Tench joined his fellow committee members of the local branch of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in supporting the Penzance curate, Rev. Charles Le Grice – 'a staunch defender of the rights of the Church', in removing the committee's president, Sir Rose Price.<sup>842</sup> Price was a leading local citizen, and West Indian plantation owner, but he was also a Unitarian. His beliefs had already been an issue prompting his resignation as President of the Penzance Library where Tench had succeeded him. Le Grice achieved his goal at the SPCK and replaced Price as head of the local committee.

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<sup>840</sup> CMS Minutes, Special meeting 7 Aug 1829. CMS G/C1/10

<sup>841</sup> Dawes to Bickersteth, 29 Jul 1825. CMS C W/O 31/59b

<sup>842</sup> Pool, *History of Penzance*, 85.

Tench may have been able to challenge the authority of his senior Marine officer when in New South Wales, but as one of the Royal Marines most senior officers a clash with the hierarchy of the Admiralty cost him his job.

The circumstances leading to his dismissal as Commandant of the Plymouth Division of Royal Marines have been considered, but there are aspects of the line of authority at the Admiralty to be noted. The Commissioners of the Admiralty told Tench that 'they still more deeply deplore that an Officer of your rank should have so far forgotten his station and duty'.<sup>843</sup> The reinstatement of the two officers, Abernethie and Savage, had approval all the way to the King and Tench was in no place to counter the strength of the Admiralty hierarchy.

Worgan's brief but significant exposure to the authority of the Admiralty led to his formal censure, but having left the Navy at the time he suffered no further adverse action. However, Worgan did have considerable difficulties in his experiences as a tenant farmer. Here authority arose from social hierarchy where individuals knew their position and the influence of their social superiors.

Worgan had taken on the lease at Bray motivated in part by having 'a Gentleman for my Landlord' and it is revealing how the social superiority of landlord over tenant impacted on Worgan's life.<sup>844</sup> Worgan's first landlord was a clergyman apparently only interested in the Bray property as a source of revenue, and his influence on Worgan was benign. His successor, John Mayow however had expectations of the use of the property that were non negotiable and at odds with Worgan's expectations of quiet enjoyment of the leasehold.

Mayow's assertion of his rights to share occupancy of the Worgan's house was a combination of his social authority and his superior negotiating ability arising from Worgan holding an invalid lease. Mayow's structured life was somewhat stereotypical of landed gentry of the time with winters spent in Bath and

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<sup>843</sup> Barrow to Tench, 8 Aug 1821 with enclosure Bell to Barrow, 7 Aug 1821. Admiralty: Out letters. Marines. TNA ADM 2/1225.

<sup>844</sup> Worgan to P.W. Mayow, Jan 1803. Bray papers, CRO, BRA 1737/45.

summers at Saltash in the coast of the Tamar River to which Mayow intended to include a few weeks during the autumn at Bray.

However it is a series of smaller, inconsequential matters that show Mayow's superior social position. Mayow asked Worgan to outlay funds on his behalf for personal expenses that would have had an adverse effect on Worgan's financial position. Mayow asked Worgan to pay the expenses of his (Mayow's) mother's funeral – for the clergyman and pallbearers, plus the costs of the coffin maker and gravediggers. Later he asked that as he, Mayow, was 'now a considerable Land owner in your Parish, I think it my Duty to give my mite [small sums] to the Poor at Christmas' and requested Worgan to outlay the expenses on his behalf, an amount of two guineas, adding that Worgan should deduct the expenses from his next rental instalment. The result was that Worgan was acting as Mayow's creditor for a period of up to three months before he could be reimbursed from his quarterly rent instalment, an adverse impact on Worgan's already difficult cash flow management.

#### iv. Empire and Britishness

Linda Colley has pursued the development of a growing nationalism in Britain seen in the adoption of the concept of 'Britishness', a process that was closely tied to the growth of empire and driven largely by an ongoing rivalry with France, boosted in time of war. Allied was the English/British understanding of the supremacy of Protestantism over the Catholicism of France and her allies.<sup>845</sup> The British system of government and its limited constitutional monarchy, its civil society and its social structures were all seen as superior to France's three phases of government that occurred during the working lives of Dawes, Tench and Worgan.

Tench and Dawes had been in action against the French during the American war, and Tench again later during the war against Revolutionary France. War can at times bind a nation and its citizens together, and overt celebrations of victories and individual heroics all added to the glue. Dawes had been a

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<sup>845</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)

participant in the engagement with a French fleet off the coast of Dominica in the West Indies in April 1782 known as the Battle of the Saintes. It was a much-needed victory for the British after a series of bad news coming from the war in America, and even the King wrote that the battle had ‘again so far roused the nation’.<sup>846</sup> Described as ‘a clear but by no means overwhelming British victory’ it resulted in great celebrations when the news reached Britain and quickly assumed the high status of ‘the glorious 12<sup>th</sup> of April’ while Admiral Rodney, the British commander, earned himself a peerage and a handsome pension.<sup>847</sup>

The Battle of the Saintes made an additional contribution to the sense of national fervour through the death of Dawes’ captain, Lord Robert Manners. Manners was the grandson of two dukes and the son of a celebrated general against the French in the Seven Years War. He was mortally wounded in the action and died as he was being taken back to Britain. His youth, social status and the national morale impact of the naval victory meant that Manners was now promoted beyond navy rank to the great pantheon of British military heroes, joining two other senior officers on the sole monument to the American war erected in Westminster Abbey. Myth making of this nature was an important component of nation building, but a monument such as this also represented an element of propaganda. As Holger Hock has discussed, the monument emphasised an episode of heroic victory that put some gloss on what in fact was part of the terrible tragedy of the loss of the American colonies.<sup>848</sup>

Tench was serving as commander of the Marine contingent on HMS *Alexander* in May-June 1794 when it was part of the auxiliary fleet supporting the main engagement in the battle known as the Third Battle of Ushant. The British victory was another ‘glorious’ result becoming better known as the ‘Glorious First of June’. The ‘politics of glory’ helped in emphasising the superiority of British arms over the French by formal acknowledgement of the King and

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<sup>846</sup> Jeremy Black, *George III. America’s Last King* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 251.

<sup>847</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 354.

<sup>848</sup> Holger Hock, *Empires of the Imagination. Politics, War and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile Books, 2010), 68-71.

Parliament through the award of honours and memorials.<sup>849</sup> Heroes and heroic events may have been a morale boost for the armed forces but they also encouraged a 'popular patriotism', key to the ground roots development of nationhood.<sup>850</sup>

Tench also emphasised the British superiority in social manners by highlighting the roughness of the French republicans. He had arrived at Quimper in Carnival week and described the festivities and social gatherings at his landlady's house. He refused to use the 'boorish and disgusting' title of *Citoyenne* when speaking to the ladies, and made a point of referring to one aristocratic guest as 'Madame la Marquise' being in turn addressed as 'Monsieur le Major' a welcome sign of 'good old-fashioned courtesies'.<sup>851</sup> Being English did not have any adverse effect on his reception in the 'little knot of royalists to which, you may suppose, I attach myself'.<sup>852</sup> As far as Tench was concerned this was not only about maintaining what for him was proper society, but also making the point of difference from the French revolutionaries, as he had 'never' come across a 'fierce and flaming republican' who possessed the manners to reveal him as a true gentleman.<sup>853</sup> Tench was scathing when commenting on the manners of some of the republican officials in Quimper. The courtiers of Versailles with their 'paints, patches, and perfumery' looking like a 'ridiculous and contemptible animal' were preferable to the 'indecent blockhead' who failed to remove his hat and kept his hands in his breeches 'not pockets' [Tench's emphasis] when speaking to a marchioness.<sup>854</sup>

He also made clear the benefits of Britain's national and civic structures as the French revolution allowed him to compare the two systems of government. Like a number of his class and whiggish persuasion, he initially found the overthrow of the French absolute monarchy a subject for celebration – 'that wonderful and unexpected event'.<sup>855</sup> Tench was scornful of the wife of a former member of the French king's household who told Tench she hoped for a restoration of 'the old

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<sup>849</sup> Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination*, 145-6.

<sup>850</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 290.

<sup>851</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 63.

<sup>852</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 64.

<sup>853</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 64.

<sup>854</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 65-6.

<sup>855</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 170.

system', writing that the 'poor woman' could not 'separate the splendour of the court, and the unlimited power of a kin, from the prosperity and happiness of the people'.<sup>856</sup> Pleased as he was at the end of the French monarchy, Tench's attitude changed completely when the revolution turned into a period of oppression and terror:

Had I been born a Frenchman, I should have struggled as hard for the revolution of 1789, as I should have resisted with all my might that of 1792. Much as I hate despotism, I am scarcely less a foe to democracy; a sentiment which accords pretty well with those of my royal friends here.<sup>857</sup>

Tench held to this view when he wrote 'I still think a limited monarchy the best of governments'.<sup>858</sup> Tench was echoing the attitude of government at the time.

William Pitt expressed similar sentiments:

we are living under a system of government, which our ever happy experience leads us to pronounce the best and wisest which has ever yet been formed.<sup>859</sup>

A limited monarchy required a monarch, and Linda Colley has discussed how the reign of George III represented a growing connection between the monarchy and a sense of nationalism.<sup>860</sup> Tench recorded with pleasure the news of the recovery of the King from his first illness while George Worgan had earlier described the organisation for the first King's birthday celebrated in New South Wales. Similar celebrations came to be held across Britain's colonial outposts emphasising the monarchy and helping to bind the empire together.<sup>861</sup> Worgan related the combination of formality and pleasure: flag raising and a twenty-one gun salute followed by what appears to have been a long lunch organised by Phillip for the officers. The evening was for everyone, with bonfires that were 'really a noble sight'. Worgan summed up the day 'in a

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<sup>856</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 100-1.

<sup>857</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 170, 100.

<sup>858</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 100.

<sup>859</sup> Pitt's speech quoted in Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?*, 194.

<sup>860</sup> Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820, *Past & Present*, 102 (Feb 1984), 94-129.

<sup>861</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 378.

Word, every Heart beat with Loyalty & Joy' [his emphasis].<sup>862</sup> Birthday celebrations continued to be observed annually with appropriate celebrations, pardons, and issues of grog and rations.

Colley's other great unifying theme in *Britons* was 'the absolute centrality of Protestantism', closely tied to the conflict with Catholic France. The Protestantism of Dawes, Tench and Worgan is clear, but again we have to refer to Tench to see supporting evidence of this component of Colley's thesis. Tench made direct references to the inferiority and damaging influences of Catholicism in his observations in Rio de Janiero and during his period as a prisoner in France. He was unimpressed with conditions in Rio de Janiero finding blame in the influence of the Catholic Church and wrote 'Let him who would wish to give his son a distaste of Popery, point out to him the sloth, the ignorance, and the bigotry of this place'.<sup>863</sup> In France he wrote of his contempt for 'the monstrous absurdities of the Romish church, and the impositions of the priesthood'<sup>864</sup> but he did not hold any apparent aggressive anti-Catholicism. In fact, he was sympathetic of the local citizens being prohibited from exercising their faith and shocked at the desecration of the churches. Later as the influence of Robespierre's Terror eased Tench was pleased that church services were held even if an Easter service he observed was ruined by the playing of *La Marseillaise* – 'that war-whoop'.<sup>865</sup> For Tench, restoration of church services also represented a sign of the restoration of social order.

For all that is learned from Tench's observations on the supremacy of the British system and Protestantism (in itself limited to the Church of England's version), did Tench see himself as British or English? The answer is surely both. The choice of language in his published works overwhelmingly favoured 'England' and 'English' over 'Britain' and 'British': in *Letters from France* the variation is over eight to one. However those statistics are likely too superficial and perhaps misleading, as we do not know, as a senior officer of the Royal Marines whose life was intimately linked to that great British institution the Royal

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<sup>862</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 52-4. His emphasis.

<sup>863</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 24.

<sup>864</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 41.

<sup>865</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 124.

Navy, how deep his Britishness was, especially as his loyalty and commitment to the institutions of British life cannot be questioned.

#### v. Science and improvement<sup>866</sup>

'The Enlightenment encouraged official Britain to support the study of plants, minerals, and stars around the world',<sup>867</sup> is a statement that neatly includes the experiences and interests of Dawes, Tench, and Worgan in both the new imperial setting of New South Wales and at home in England. Science and the zeal for improvement featured strongly in their lives. Dawes had developed skills in astronomy, mathematics, botany and mineralogy before he sought a position on the First Fleet. In August 1786 when William Bayly recommended Dawes to Sir Joseph Banks, the young Marine was only twenty-five years old and had recently returned from four years active service in the American war. His knowledge of these fields of science indicates a typical enlightenment mind of inquiry and learning. A period of further training with Nevil Maskelyne where he was also 'receiving instructions for discovering and observing the Comet of 1532 and 1661', resulted in Maskelyne's confirming to Banks that Dawes was now 'very ready and will do the business very well'.<sup>868</sup>

There was more than that. Dawes must have also met Maskelyne's definition of a good astronomer, attributes that involved more than technical skills. What Maskelyne expected was an understanding of:

arithmetic, algebra, plane and spherical trigonometry and logarithms, have a good eye and good ears, be well grown, and have a good constitution to enable him to apply several hours in the day to calculations and to get up to the observations

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<sup>866</sup> It is anachronistic to use the terms 'science' and 'scientists' when discussing this period but they have been used for convenience.

<sup>867</sup> Richard Drayton, 'Knowledge and Empire, in P.J. Marshall (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. II, 'The Eighteenth Century', (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), 250.

<sup>868</sup> Maskelyne to Banks 8 Nov 1786. RGO 35/64.

that happen at late hours at night. To write a good hand and to be a ready and steady arithmetical computer.<sup>869</sup>

Dawes' later efforts in New South Wales met all these criteria even if his constitution was tested by his other duties.

This was a period of significant advances in the fields of astronomy and navigation. The Board of Longitude's campaign to discover a method to calculate longitude had been achieved, allowing for the reliable navigation a widespread empire would require. The technology was still relatively new when the Kendall K1 chronometer was used by William Wales on Cook's second voyage and again when entrusted to Arthur Phillip and Dawes for use on the voyage to New South Wales.<sup>870</sup> The timekeeper was of critical importance and new as it was, it was vital for the safe navigation of the expedition. Before the First Fleet's departure Dawes was careful to have it checked by Bayly at Portsmouth and had some small errors in the instrument's rate adjusted.<sup>871</sup> The Admiralty considered the instruments security so important that it had earlier ordered that the timekeeper 'be secured by three locks', the keys to which were held by the ship's commander, first lieutenant and one of the astronomers, and no person was allowed to use the instrument alone.<sup>872</sup> On HMS *Sirius* it was wound at noon every day in the presence of Phillip together with Hunter or Dawes, and the officer of the watch. There was a Marine guard placed outside the cabin for security.

Dawes took to his involvement in these scientific duties with great zeal and commitment, and what appears to be a genuine interest. Later he took one of the Board of Longitude's instruments to Sierra Leone but after leaving Christ's

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<sup>869</sup> Quoted in Simon Schaffer, 'Instruments, Surveys and Maritime Empire', in David Cannadine (ed), *Empire, the Sea and Global History. Britain's Maritime World, c.1760-.c1840*. (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 93.

<sup>870</sup> The K1 was instrument maker Larcum Kendall's first timekeeper and was a copy of John Harrison's chronometer, H4. The Board of Longitude approved H4 as worthy of part of the prize for calculating longitude. Harrison's next piece, H5, received the final award.

<sup>871</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 8 May 1787, RGO 14/48.

<sup>872</sup> Richard Sorrenson, 'The state's demand for accurate astronomical and navigational instruments in eighteenth-century Britain', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800. Image, Object, Text*. (Oxford, Routledge, 1997), 263.

Hospital other interests meant there was no apparent further involvement in scientific activities.

Dawes engaged in some international scientific cooperation when the First Fleet stopped at the Cape Colony and he met Colonel Gordon the local military commander, finding him to have a 'great love of science'. Dawes assisted Gordon with preparations for observing the comet due the following year and asked Maskelyne to send Gordon some instruments to complement his sextant by the leading British instrument maker, Jesse Ramsden. Dawes added that Gordon was also keen to receive any directions from Maskelyne that might assist in his observations.<sup>873</sup> Earlier, at Rio de Janeiro, Dawes met two Portuguese astronomers who expressed a willingness to pass on their scientific observations to Maskelyne.<sup>874</sup>

This willingness to assist in scientific matters did not recognise national boundaries in what John Gascoigne describes as 'a cosmopolitan Republic of Letters'.<sup>875</sup> The principal scientific driver of the period was the ubiquitous Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society and *ex officio* member of various scientific bodies including the Board of Longitude and the Society of Arts. Where he was not directly involved his influence was considerable, as in his relationship with the Board of Agriculture where he was regularly consulted.

Banks was close to the scientific fraternity in France and endeavoured to suggest that war between the two countries should not be an impediment to scientific cooperation, an opinion he offered to the French botanist Labillardière in 1796 – 'that the science of the two Nations may be at Peace while their Politics are at war'.<sup>876</sup> Banks regularly exchanged ideas, papers, and specimens, particularly botanical specimens, on a regular basis<sup>877</sup> encouraging others such as Arthur Young who was impressed with the French emphasis on

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<sup>873</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne 9 Nov 1787. RGO 14/48.

<sup>874</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 3 Sep 1787. RGO 14/48.

<sup>875</sup> John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire. Joseph Banks, the British State and the uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Port Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2010) 147-51.

<sup>876</sup> Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire*, 159.

<sup>877</sup> Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government. Science, Imperial Britain and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 96-7.

agriculture as a foundation of a successful economy.<sup>878</sup> Banks was also Vice President of the Society for the Improving of Naval Architecture, a subject that interested Tench while a prisoner in France. Tench thought the reason French ships could often sail faster than the British was superior design, due to 'men of science' adopting mathematics in the design process, and wondered why the Royal Navy did not adopt mathematical methods.<sup>879</sup>

The 'Republic of Letters' briefly appeared at Botany Bay with the arrival of the French vessels under the Comte de La Perouse. Dawes quickly developed a professional relationship with Lepaute Dagelet, the French astronomer, and the two cooperated on Dawes' planned observatory. Philip King noted how well the French ships were fitted out with astronomical and navigational instruments. Dagelet's instruments included a dipping needle used by James Cook that had been loaned to the French by the Board of Longitude, an example of the cooperation between England and France on scientific matters.<sup>880</sup> In conversation with King, La Pérouse also commented on the reliability of Cook's 'astronomical & nautical works'.<sup>881</sup>

Dawes took great care in recording weather conditions in the colony. He understood the importance of maintaining this scientific data and included it in his regular correspondence with Maskelyne. A recent study of Dawes climate records came to the conclusion that:

remarkably, the records appear comparable with modern day measurements taken from Sydney Observatory Hill, displaying similar daily variability, a distinct seasonal cycle and considerable inter-annual variability.<sup>882</sup>

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<sup>878</sup> Drayton, *Nature's Government*, 79.

<sup>879</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 28.

<sup>880</sup> King, *Journal*, 39. A dipping needle was a type of magnetic compass that used a vertical and a horizontal axis used to assist in calculating latitude. It was a problematic instrument in that it was influenced by too many magnetic fields and was not widely used.

<sup>881</sup> King, *Journal*, 40.

<sup>882</sup> Joël Geris and David J. Karoly and Rob J. Allan, 'A climate reconstruction of Sydney Cove, New South Wales, using weather journal and documentary data, 1788-1791', *Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Journal*, 58 (2009), 83-98.

Another writer said of Dawes' work: 'The data serve as a memorial to an outstanding personality, briefly involved in Australia's origins'.<sup>883</sup>

Tench's scientific interests were not just limited to ship design. At some stage in his career, seemingly as early as 1787 during the visit to Rio de Janeiro, he collected specimens of local semi-precious stones that he donated to the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall in 1830.<sup>884</sup> Tench was a member of the Society's committee since 1827 and Vice President since 1829. When it was formed in 1814, the Society was more interested in the mining interests of its member than geology, but it also established the first scientific museum in the country the following year.<sup>885</sup> The Society was representative of the growing interest in science even if for many members, these societies were a 'polite recreation' that provided lectures and demonstrations without the need for greater study, but countered against this was an undoubted real interest in science. The Cornwall society did commence with competing expectations, as twenty-eight percent of the initial membership comprised businessmen with interests in banking and mining, but by the time Tench joined the Society it had become firmly established as a scientific organisation under the leadership of Davies Gilbert.<sup>886</sup> Tench's action in taking back soil samples from New South Wales seem to have been motivated by a general enlightenment sense of inquiry rather than any significant interest in botany. Botany benefited from his interest when the renowned botanist, William Curtis, found the samples contained sufficient seeds for him to successfully raise fourteen plants, 'most of which were altogether new'.<sup>887</sup> Tench's scientific curiosity extended to using his magnet to examine stones for their iron content, but he found the exercise unsuccessful.<sup>888</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> McAfee, *Dawes's Meteorological Journal*, 27.

<sup>884</sup> Reported in *The Philosophical Magazine*, Vol. 8, (1830), 462.

<sup>885</sup> Simon Naylor, 'The Field, the Museum and the Lecture Hall: The Spaces of Natural History in Victorian Cornwall', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, (New Series) 27, 4 (2002) 494-513. 498.

<sup>886</sup> Crook, 'The Early History of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall', 53, 83.

<sup>887</sup> Curtis, *The Botanical Magazine*, 287.

<sup>888</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 263.

Worgan became a farmer during a time when agricultural improvement was receiving a fresh impetus and he enthusiastically applied many of the theories of agricultural improvement that were then being debated. Arguing for a greater scientific emphasis, Erasmus Darwin lamented that ‘agriculture and gardening...continue to be only arts’,<sup>889</sup> while Humphry Davy saw some hope and considered that ‘Agriculture, the first of the arts was never cultivated with greater ardour than at present’.<sup>890</sup> By the time the calendar turned over into the nineteenth century, agriculture had become a topic of regular commentary and debate at many levels. Leading writers on agriculture such as William Marshall, Arthur Young, and others pushed for improvement in the practical aspects of land management and crop and livestock development.

The label ‘agricultural revolution’ has been applied to the surge of interest and activity in agricultural improvement that took place from the mid eighteenth century, although the timeframe and extent of the ‘revolution’ has been a matter of extensive debate among historians.<sup>891</sup> However, irrespective of whether a revolution occurred or if it did, when, it is clear that interest in rural improvement gathered momentum during the latter half of the eighteenth century and during the early years of the nineteenth. Worgan’s survey of agriculture in Cornwall formed part of that development.<sup>892</sup> Enthusiasm for agriculture went so far as to include the King who earned the nickname ‘Farmer George’ for his agricultural pursuits, and who was a sometime contributor to Arthur Young’s *Annals of Agriculture* using the pen name ‘Ralph Robinson’.

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<sup>889</sup> From Darwin’s introduction to *Phytologia* (1800) quoted in Porter, *Enlightenment. Britain*, 308.

<sup>890</sup> Humphry Davy to John Tonkin, 12 Jun 1801, in John Davy, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Humphry Davy, bart., LLD, FRS, Foreign Associate of the Institute of France*, Smith Elder & Co, London 1839, 80.

<sup>891</sup> See, for example: Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*; J.D. Chambers & G.E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1966); Robert C. Allen ‘Tracking the Agricultural Revolution in England’, *The Economic History Review*, 52, 2 (May, 1999), 209-235.

<sup>892</sup> John Gascoigne refers to an ‘Agrarian Revolution in Britain’ and his discussion of the development of agriculture in New South Wales shows how the development of agricultural practices described by Worgan had been successfully taken up in the colony. Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, 69-71.

The Society of Arts, founded in 1754, was formed to encourage a broad range of activities, as its full name suggests, principally through the awarding of cash premiums (prizes) for innovation and successful development.<sup>893</sup> Its Agricultural Committee, later chaired by Young, was active in encouraging farming improvement and as early as 1783 allocated half of its prizes to improvements in cultivation and planting.<sup>894</sup> The growing awareness of agricultural development also led to a number of county and regional societies being formed in the latter half of the century, especially in the more established rural and farming areas of the Midlands and south east England. The south west corner of the country was not so well recognised for its agricultural enterprise, but its landowners were as dedicated to agricultural development as elsewhere and quickly established their own farming associations including the Cornwall Agricultural Society in 1793, and the Penzance Agricultural Society where Davies Giddy was President. An important function of these local societies was the encouragement of agricultural improvement by awarding premiums for innovation in farming practices and implements.<sup>895</sup> George Worgan had benefited from a prize awarded by the Cornwall Agricultural Society of his invention of a plough, and he drew attention in his *Survey* to prizes awarded on an annual basis for 'the best hoers', a ten guinea premium in 1808 for 'the best watered meadow', and an award for shearing.<sup>896</sup> The recognition of labour skills, innovations and encouragement in good husbandry, and technical improvements, mirrored the activities of the Society of Arts at a national level. The Society conducted trials over a number of years testing different types of ploughs and awarded premiums for the best performers. A gold medal was awarded for the design of a yoke for oxen, and even Young was awarded a medal for experiments in growing potatoes.<sup>897</sup> William Dawes also introduced a reward system in Sierra Leone by awarding premiums for improvements in land clearing and cultivation, and in the breeding of cattle in an

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<sup>893</sup> The Society's full name was 'Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Commerce and Manufactures'. It still operates today with the added adornment of the prefix 'Royal'.

<sup>894</sup> Celina Fox, *The Arts of Industry in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 190-191.

<sup>895</sup> The contemporary term for prize was premium. The terms have been used interchangeably.

<sup>896</sup> *Survey*, 70, 133, 153.

<sup>897</sup> *Gazley*, *Arthur Young*, 64, 109, 130.

attempt to improve the settlement's food supply and develop agricultural practices.<sup>898</sup>

The Board of Agriculture, formed by Royal Charter in 1793, was itself a product of the growth of interest in agricultural improvements. As some historians have pointed out the Board's formation also reflected other considerations, particularly the recognition by William Pitt and his government of the political importance of agriculture given that it was large landowners who were pre-eminent in British society, plus there was the added need to increase agricultural production during a time of war.<sup>899</sup> However, the formal motion to create the Board was more practical recognising that:

though in some particular districts, improved methods of cultivating the soil are practised, yet that in the greatest part of these kingdoms, the principles of Agriculture are not yet sufficiently understood, nor are the implements of husbandry, or the stock of the farmer, brought to the perfection of which they are capable.<sup>900</sup>

The Royal Institution, founded in 1799, looked at agricultural improvement from a scientific angle as in Humphry Davy's studies and lectures on agricultural chemistry. The Board of Agriculture was also interested in the potential benefits of science to agriculture. In early 1803 it appointed Davy to the role of Professor of Chemical Agriculture engaging him to give annual lectures on the benefits of chemistry in farming practice and to be available to provide analysis of soil conditions.<sup>901</sup>

The Board took on the large task of surveying the agricultural practices and conditions for each of the English counties. It was a hurried affair pushed by the President, Sir John Sinclair, and the finished results were generally considered unsatisfactory. The second round of surveys, that included Worgan's survey of Cornwall, was a more reasoned and strategic exercise with

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<sup>898</sup> Sierra Leone Council Minutes, 19 May 1795. TNA CO 270/3.

<sup>899</sup> Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire*, 116-7; 128-9.

<sup>900</sup> Sir Ernest Clarke, *History of the Board of Agriculture 1793-1822* (London 1898), 7-8.

<sup>901</sup> Clarke, *History of the Board of Agriculture*, 34.

the Board establishing a template for the survey reports. The surveys were to allow:

every individual in the Kingdom to have

1. An account of the husbandry of his own particular county; or
2. A general view of the agricultural state of the Kingdom at large, according to the counties, or districts, into which it is divided; or
3. An arranged system of information on agricultural subjects, whether accumulated by the Board since its establishment, or previously known.<sup>902</sup>

## vi. Morality and Slavery

The dominant moral issue of the age was slavery, in particular the abolition of the slave trade. William Dawes spent the greater part of his life associated with the abolition of the trade and the amelioration of conditions for slaves and former slaves. His first exposure to slavery was in the West Indies during the American war when he visited two plantations in Barbados as well as 'others in other Islands' and found the condition of the slaves to be 'very unpleasant and hard'. Later when on board HMS *Resolution* he was shocked to witness the arrival of a slaver in Barbados an emotion shared by the captain and other officers.<sup>903</sup>

There was some apparent ambiguity in Dawes' attitude to slavery, part of which was pragmatism and part of which is difficult to explain. In Sierra Leone the settlement was downriver from the large slave factory at Bance Island and like other administrators of the period, Dawes found it necessary to maintain good relations. Besides, Bance Island was often better resourced than the Sierra

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<sup>902</sup> Arthur Young, *General View of the Agriculture of Hertfordshire* (London, 1804), ix. This pronouncement by the Board was included as a preface in most county reports but not by Worgan.

<sup>903</sup> William Dawes evidence: House of Lords Papers, 28 May 1799, Minutes of evidence taken on the second reading of the Bill, 'An Act to prohibit the Trading for slaves on the coast of Africa within certain limits'. House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.rp.nla.gov.au/fullrec/fullrec.do?id=hlsp-000740>. Accessed 17 Mar 2013.

Leone Company at Freetown and became a necessary trading partner. There was also the reality, however distasteful, that the slave trade was still legal during this period. Even so, Dawes' comment that he supposedly uttered on his return to Sierra Leone in July 1808 that 'I have always thought slavery necessary in the colony, I think it still' (that he later denied uttering) is difficult to explain as it is at odds with his professed beliefs for over half his life.

In Sierra Leone there was disagreement over the use of apprenticeships for freed slaves. Dawes and the Company both considered apprenticeships an essential period of transition, arguing that it helped to settle the individual in a new environment, but perhaps more importantly that it did not interrupt the source of labour available to the colony. Zachary Macaulay believed that after abolition 'he has always been of the opinion (that a) likely means of promoting civilization in the colony would be by indenting the natives for 7 years or age 21', and that their duties would be 'well defined and rigidly supervised',<sup>904</sup> and Henry Thornton also supported apprenticeship provided it had some safeguards.<sup>905</sup> Governor Thompson held the opposing view vehemently believing the situation of native apprentices to be little different to that of slaves.

There was an element of conflict over slavery in Tench's family. His mother Margaret Tench was a daughter of Thomas Tarleton a member of the major Liverpool trading family that was active for many years in the Atlantic trade including the transportation of slaves from the west coast of Africa. Tench's grandfather had made a number of voyages carrying slaves to the West Indies and during the eighteenth century the Tarletons became extremely wealthy. Tench's mother received a substantial cash legacy from her father's estate. Tench however was dismissive of the pro-slavery arguments that abolition would have an adverse effect on the economy and was strong in his denunciation of the institution:

If the opulence of England be founded on the basis of  
African slavery; if the productions of the tropics can be  
dispensed to us only by the blood and tears of the negro,

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<sup>904</sup> Macaulay to Ludlam, 1 May 1807, included in Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808, TNA CO 267/27.

<sup>905</sup> Henry Thornton to Thompson, 20 Oct 1808, included in Report of Sierra Leone Council to Lord Castlereagh, Nov 1808, TNA CO 267/27.

I do not hesitate to exclaim – “Perish our commerce;”  
let our humanity live!<sup>906</sup>

This was a sentiment Tench had expressed earlier while in New South Wales  
Shall I again be told that the sufferings of the wretched  
Africans are indispensable for the culture of our sugar  
colonies: that white men are incapable of sustaining the  
heat of the climate!<sup>907</sup>

In 1826, during his retirement in Cornwall, Tench was active in the formation of  
an Anti-slavery Society. The society was an auxiliary of the parent society in  
London that had been formed in 1823 including in its committee William  
Wilberforce and Zachary Macaulay.

## vii. Observing and learning

New South Wales was new and different. Dawes, Tench and Worgan were like  
their colleagues in finding the environment of the new colony strange and  
perplexing and the inhabitants were unlike any encountered before. Tench  
displayed a genuine curiosity in observing the local people and while many of  
his comments were intended for the ‘amusement and information’ of his  
readership,<sup>908</sup> it is not clear how strong his interest really was. His initial  
observations of physical attributes, accommodation, weapons and implements  
reappear from time to time and he took the trouble to take home some  
souvenirs, but beyond that there was no more than descriptions of the new.  
Tench was keen to record the interaction of the Aborigines with the Europeans  
even though he was not present at many of the events he described but again  
there is a sense that it was written more with his readership in mind. Isabelle  
Merle considered his attitude to the Aborigines to be one of ambivalence  
tempered by sympathy, especially towards the women who were often the  
subject of physical abuse by their men folk,<sup>909</sup> and he was deeply affected by  
witnessing the ravages of smallpox on the local people. But the Aborigines  
apparently made little lasting impression on him as he struggled to recall any

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<sup>906</sup> Tench, *Letters from France*, 108.

<sup>907</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 221.

<sup>908</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 5.

<sup>909</sup> Merle, ‘Notes on the Journal of an officer’, 12-14.

meaningful observations when he spoke with Cyrus Redding in the 1820s: 'his knowledge of the natives was, from the nature of things, very circumscribed'.<sup>910</sup>

Dawes we know was strongly committed to recording the local language but what he chose to record suggests his interest was more than simply lexicographic and was perhaps an attempt at acquiring an understanding of the people and culture. His opposition to Phillip's punitive expedition was both a revolt against the intended violence of the exercise and a suggestion of the affinity he felt towards the local people.

There is little opportunity to understand Worgan's attitudes to the Aborigines. The brief descriptions in his letters to his brother are initially both jocular and friendly and then, like Tench, he goes on to provide detailed descriptions of physical appearances, activities and implements. Worgan was of course, writing for a familial readership and there is a simple honesty in his descriptions. In total he appears sympathetic to the people even if, like his most of his colleagues, he considered them an inferior civilization.

The countryside and environment were equally strange. Apart from the obvious seasonal differences, the fauna and flora were unlike anything previously encountered as Tench recorded: 'the first impression made on a stranger is certainly favourable', but the observer 'looks in vain for the murmuring rills and refreshing springs, which fructify and embellish more happy lands'.<sup>911</sup> Dawes was perhaps feeling the pressures on his time and difficulties with Phillip when he told Nevil Maskelyne that the country was 'dismal, barren, inanimated' in what was his only known comment on the landscape.<sup>912</sup> Tench was generally as ambivalent about the country as he was the people. He devoted a chapter to a description of the country that summarised some of the observations he made of the landscape during his expeditions, but his comments, like his contemporary observers, were restricted to the small geographical area of the settlement. Tench found the quality of the soil wanting in its potential for agriculture, but he often found much to admire in the native flora and that the

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<sup>910</sup> Redding, *Personal Reminiscences*, 270-5.

<sup>911</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 260.

<sup>912</sup> Dawes to Maskelyne, 30 Jul 1790. RGO 14/48.

soil managed to produce 'heads of grass are often so luxuriant, as to hide all deficiency on the surface'. He was impressed with the flowering trees and shrubs and shortly after arrival described a 'tall shrub bearing an elegant white flower which smells like an English May'.<sup>913</sup> At the end of his stay he was still impressed that the country could produce 'rare and beautiful flowering shrubs, which abound in every part' that 'deserve the highest admiration and panegyric'.<sup>914</sup>

Worgan also found the grass 'luxuriant' and the leaves of a tree 'a particularly beautiful Verdue', the same trees being 'very delicate' all contained in a large area that resembled a 'Beautiful Park'.<sup>915</sup> Worgan's journeys revealed 'a Variety of Romantic Views, all thrown together with sweet confusion by the careless hand of Nature' with 'green Trees in abundance' throughout the winter.<sup>916</sup> But Worgan's comments are limited. We only have the advantage of his observations until mid July 1788 but what we do have is remarkable for its genuineness. He was obviously close to his brother Richard and related his observations and comments without the need for show. With Tench there is a suspicion that from time to time his writing has been gilded to provide that 'amusement' as well as information for his readers. In their positive and at time enthusiastic descriptions of the flora and countryside both men were attempting to find the similarities with home in the differences in the colony. It helped that in the remoteness and foreignness there was some comfort.

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<sup>913</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 64-5.

<sup>914</sup> Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, 263.

<sup>915</sup> Worgan, *Journal*, 45.

<sup>916</sup> Worgan, *Journal* 7, 23.

## **Conclusion: Life's lessons**

This thesis set out to be a study of the lives of three men brought together in one of the most significant ventures in empire building that Britain undertook. At the time of their meeting William Dawes, Watkin Tench and George Worgan had come from different backgrounds but had experienced working lives influenced by war, and all displayed a cultured and intelligent personality that brought them together.

The term 'study' was a deliberate choice over 'biography'. The lack of personal papers has shown that a full understanding of their lives, to the extent that is ever possible, cannot be achieved. There are periods of their working lives that are still unknown, but perhaps the greatest gap is in their personal lives. Details of family intimacy, highs and lows that are often to be found in personal correspondence and diaries have to wait until such documents are discovered if in fact they remain to be found at all. However extensive research has shown that official and third party records can reveal more than just encounters with authority, and matters of a more personal nature can be discovered with careful reading.

This thesis offers support for Alan Frost's claim that a lack of personal documentation need not be a fatal impediment to preparing a life study. We simply need to look in different places. Today's historians and biographers have the huge benefit of the power of the internet, power that is increasing at a rapid rate. Search engines are capable of finding references in archives and libraries as well as secondary sources, and it is proper to acknowledge that this thesis may not have been possible without that technology. Catalogue searching of major repositories and libraries is now a relatively easy task – at least at the macro level, but much research for this exercise has come from archives in the English County Record Offices where family and organisation papers have been lodged. In some cases this has been straightforward, but in

many instances it has still required the need to follow leads, not always successfully.

In large part, the narrative of these lives has been a masculine affair. The few women that have made an appearance however were strong in their support and commitment to a cause, reminding us of a degree of agency easily overlooked. George Worgan's wife Mary was the bedrock of a family in deep distress while his sister Charlotte was a formidable champion of his case. Grace Dawes was a constant companion and fighter with her husband in the cause of education and religion and regularly took on his responsibilities while he was away or ill. Grace Dawes' two relations by marriage, Ann Hart Thwaites and Elizabeth Hart Gilbert spent their entire adult lives in educating the children of slaves and former slaves. In New South Wales, William Dawes could not have carried out his work on recording the local language without the support of the young Aboriginal woman Patyeegerang, while Watkin Tench recorded his admiration for Barangaroo and Baneelon. All these women made their mark in the face of opposition and the prejudices of male dominated societies.

In his biography of the Macpherson family, Stephen Foster effectively summed up their contribution to history in a description that applies equally to Dawes, Tench and Worgan:

Sometimes...a family member contributed to large and small episodes relating to the history of Britain and its empire. At other times, their lives provide a window on the times and places in which they lived.<sup>917</sup>

In her biography of the Johnstone family, Emma Rothschild took a similar approach when she said of the history of the family:

It is an exploration of new ways of connecting the microhistories of individuals and families to the larger scenes of which they were part: to important or "macrohistorical" inquiries.<sup>918</sup>

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<sup>917</sup> Stephen Foster, *A Private Empire* (Millers Point: Murdoch Books, 2010), 11-12.

But there are gaps of course. Apart from not knowing more of the intimacies of their private lives, we have not had the opportunity to know the men's attitudes to some of the major events in British history at the time. Britt Zerbe observed that little was known of the Marine Corps until his study and in that context this study of Tench's life has added valuable elements to that knowledge. However, Tench's attitude to the great naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, the progress of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and the civil strife emerging after 1815 are unknown, even if some suggestions are found in the material available. George Worgan made reference to rapidly rising corn prices in his evidence to the Commission of Naval Enquiry and returned to the issue in his survey of agriculture in Cornwall but we are not aware of his reaction to the food riots taking place in Britain's south-west during this period. The politics behind the purpose and activities of the Board of Agriculture were not relevant to Worgan as his concerns were more basic, at times being a simple one of survival. Dawes made a passing reference to the slave rebellion on Demerara in 1823 but only in the context of how the planters' reaction might impact on the growth of the Church Missionary Society's schools.

What is missing may be obvious but any process of research has its limitations, some greater than others. For all that, these three life studies achieve their aim. The men are now visible and better understood, and looking through Barbara Tuchman's prism a greater understanding of the impact of history on individuals and vice versa becomes clearer.

These microhistories represent individual examples of personal contributions to the development of Britain and its empire. All three men displayed a sense of inquiry and an active interest in acquiring knowledge in the natural world as well as the human and were prepared to challenge authority when they thought necessary. In this they exhibited the influences of their eighteenth century enlightenment backgrounds. They commenced their working lives in defending the empire during the American war and were intimately involved in the early rebuilding of the empire through their period in New South Wales. After they

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<sup>918</sup> Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires. An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7.

left the colony their contributions and experiences diverged. Dawes continued to be an active participant in the development of empire through his work in Sierra Leone and Antigua while Tench continued to be part of the defence of empire. Worgan chose a different path and spent the rest of his working life in development at home through his own agricultural interests and through his work for the Board of Agriculture. Each of the three men had failures, suffering those ruptures in life that are common to many, but each of them deserves to be recognised for their contributions.

Except for his lapse in judgement that cost him his position in the Royal Marines, Tench mostly trod a safe, middle path through his life and was not one for extreme causes even if he was prepared to challenge authority when he thought it necessary. Dawes was heavily involved in one of the great political and moral causes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the campaign against slavery. He was momentarily involved in the high politics of the cause when he was called to give evidence to the House of Lords during its inquiry into the slave trade on the west coast of Africa, an experience that included some rigorous questioning by the Duke of Clarence. But, like George Worgan, Dawes operated at a grass roots level, buffeted by authority but as solid as the great rock in New South Wales where he had anchored his astronomical equipment.

The men lived and worked on the margins commencing with their collective experience of life on the edge of empire in New South Wales. Dawes continued to labour on the boundaries of empire but he also remained on the edges of the groups that supported him. Close to members of the Clapham Sect he was never a member nor admitted into the close leadership as his colleague Zachary Macaulay was, and while close to the formal organisation of the Church Missionary Society he was never really taken into the fold. George Worgan also laboured on the margins. His struggles with authority and social superiors and his own limitations reduced him to begging for financial support. Tench spent his working life in the mainstream world of the Royal Marines but the Corps was always a second cousin to the Royal Navy. His challenges to authority cost him his career and his retirement was spent in the geographical margins of English county life.

Still, all three showed remarkable resilience. Worgan reinvented himself to finish his working life as a schoolteacher while Tench established himself as a leading figure in his community. Dawes never gave up fighting for his cause in spite of considerable physical challenges and personal financial struggles that ended in poverty.

In biographical terms the lives of the three are referred to as 'minor lives'. They did not inhabit the corridors of power or view the world from the government house verandah but their life stories open up different experiences of empire and empire building that if not seen from below then at least is seen from the middle. The value in examining them goes beyond the biographical, as their careers provide case studies from which a number of themes emerge. The lives were not representative. They were 'varied lives, but produced within a common field' and it is this commonality and diversity that recommended them as case studies.<sup>919</sup>

In all, these lives have shown the value of life studies and the application of microhistory and revealed three men, previously largely unknown, who contributed to the development of Britain and its empire at a significant period in its history. These were disparate lives that intersected briefly before moving in different directions. They have deserved to be brought to the fore for themselves and their contributions but also for what can be seen and better understood through their eyes.

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<sup>919</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins. Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 203.

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