

# PENAL MODIFICATIONS: THE ANGLOCIZING OF TE WHANGANUI A TARA

**Christine McCarthy\***

School of Architecture, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand

## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the urban modifications made by prisoners which contributed to the development and conversion of Te Whanganui a Tara (lit=the great harbour of Tara) into the Anglo-colonial city of Wellington in New Zealand. The importance of prison labour in the creation of urban places was particularly supported by the needs of the colony, as Pratt notes in *Punishment in a perfect society* "it was claimed that "as labour is scarce in the colony, the best practical remedy would seem to be to authorise [the prisoners'] detention in the colony and their employment at hard labour on some useful public work" (p88). The new town-cum-city was both shaped by inmates and, as its making was hard labour punishment, directed its prisoner-makers towards a desired Victorian reformation. The paper documents the prison labour deployed in the creation of New Zealand's capital city, with a particular emphasis on road-making and public institutions, and considers the social ramifications of the seemingly pervasive presence of prisoners throughout this urban space and their interface with other Wellington citizens.*

**Keywords:** Prison labour gangs, chain gangs, urban space, public space, New Zealand, Wellington.

---

\*Corresponding Author: Christine McCarthy; E-mail- [christine.mccarthy@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:christine.mccarthy@vuw.ac.nz)

## Introduction

An unassuming retaining wall runs along Tasman Street in the capital city of New Zealand, Wellington. Its northern length merges into a former police station which forms a street corner with Buckle St. Its location is close to the summit of Mt Cook (Pukeahu), formerly the site of a prison and a prison brick works (Cooke, 2006). The bricks that the wall is built of are made of Mt Cook clay, the consequent excavation contributing to the hilltop's gradual decline in stature and a reshaping of the landscape form that identified pre-contact Pukeahu. Few passersby notice the recurring presence of arrows imprinted into the bricks' surfaces, which disclose their makers as prisoners. Looking closely reveals that "the surface of some of the bricks shows the finger impressions of the men who handled the bricks when moist, prior to firing" (Kelly & Astwood, 2008). Marked with the British symbol of Crown property: the broad arrow - more famously the pattern of prisoner uniform fabric, the bricks depict an "extension of British practices" in New Zealand (Kelly & Astwood, 2008). More than simply adopting the image of the broad arrow, imprisonment and prison labour were also adopted practices new to Aotearoa, as was the foreign urban form and streets of city that prisoners would help shape and maintain until the early years of the twentieth-century.

The wall (1891-1899) is "the oldest construction of any type left on Mt Cook Reserve," and a rare recognition of the material effects of prison labour in Wellington, being listed on the registers of both Heritage New Zealand (since 2007) and the local Wellington City Council (since 1995) (Kelly & Astwood, 2008; WCC, 2000). But it was not the only part of the city's built fabric that resulted from prison labour. There was a more comprehensive and pervasive contribution of prison labour throughout Wellington, which was colonised in 1839 when the New Zealand Company ship, the *Tory*, entered Te Whanganui a Tara (the great harbour of Tara).

The city was planned by South African-born surveyor William Mein Smith, using a street grid bent by land forms. A grand canal was envisaged terminating in an inland basin, which soon became more conventional roadways circumscribing a cricket ground (the Basin Reserve), following the lifting of land during the 1855 earthquake. The surrounding hills were set aside as public reserves, specifically a town belt, which was gradually reduced in area in order to accommodate the botanical garden and public institutions. A tenth of the town's land was designated as native reserves (known as the tenths), which, like many other aspects of colonialism, is an area of contested ownership and power.

## Literature Review and Methodology

Prison labour formed an early part of this colonial settlement, but until this research, the full extent of the impact of prison labour in the shaping of Te Whanganui a Tara into the colonial city of Wellington had not previously been documented, that is beyond peripheral references in broader accounts of: the city (e.g. Schrader, 2016), specific prisons (e.g. Methven, 2011), or the country's history of its prison system (e.g. Pratt, 1992). Additionally, while there is extensive research documenting instances of colonial penal labour internationally much of it focuses on penal colonies (e.g. New South Wales) (in contrast to the colonial arrangements in New Zealand), indentured servitude, or prisoners labouring in non-public sites (e.g. Tuffin, 2018), none of which are relevant for the Wellington colonial context. Additionally, there is little research on the modification and shaping of urban sites using colonial prison labour which is not indigenous, nor penal colony labour. As Pieris has noted (2003: 39-40) "despite the centrality of spatial ideologies to penal history, this is an area that has received little attention in studies of architecture. ... colonial penal environments have largely been discussed by social historians and

have been dematerialized and displaced by their focus on penal labor and punishment." Casella (2001: 52-53) does examine an aspect of design related to the nature of colonial prisoner labour when she identifies "the domestic nature of female convict labor" (in contrast to the outside male road gangs), to explain the peripheral allocation of staff quarters in Tasmania's Ross female convict factory. She argues, following Evans, that this location prioritised controlling "movement between the exterior free world and the interior prison world - to contain the women within the prison," rather than controlling interior social interactions, which central surveillance achieves (2001: 56), but her focus is the design of a prison, not the modification of an urban landscape. Tuffin (2018: 73) notes the administrative issue that, because of the punitive intent of labour, prisoner skill was not a relevant factor in the application of labour in Tasmanian mines. Marshall (2016: 67-68, 93) similarly notes the inefficiency of penal labour due to prisoners often being whipped while they worked, because "maximising output was a lesser concern," due to ganged labour being a punishment, but observes that this was historically-specific, with a shift by the late 1860s because "the occupation skills and labour potential of Port Arthur's dwindling convict population had become highly prized by the late 1860s." Tuffin (2018: 73) does however note the relevance of prison labour in relation to prisoners providing "some return to the government for the expense which is incurred" and that "penal settlements could not have been built or maintained without ... skills." The balancing of punitive and productive labour requirements is often a theme in colonial literature examining penal labour, an example being Wimhurst's analysis (2012: 154) concluding that the relocation of female prisoners from urban cities in Australia enabled more effective management of the male prisoner labour force.

Through documenting the impact of prison labour on the urban form of Wellington, this paper aims to contribute to an understanding of how prison labour was a necessary part of the creation and maintenance of the physical form of the colonial city. It uses contemporary Wellington newspaper accounts from 1840 to 1915 using the Alexander Turnbull Library's Papers Past collection, and keyword searches: "prison gang," "prison labour gang," "prison labor gang," "hard labor gang," and "prison labor," in order to identify relevant primary sources from which the following narrative is drawn. This material is supplemented by government sources (e.g. the *Appendices to Journals of the House of Representatives*).

### **Description of scheme**

Early images of Wellington as a British settlement suggest an uncertain urban structure. Schrader (2016: 90) quotes one observer in 1842 stating that: ""there is no attempt at a street, save in two places, where a few houses are built in a straight line". This was exacerbated by the model of land speculation which underpinned the colonising New Zealand Company because of "[t]he tendency of absentee or long-term investors to sit on their land and wait for its value to rise [which] meant the task of developing infrastructure fell on settler communities" (Schrader, 2016:91; also McAloon, 2009:201). Prison labour ameliorated this situation. Applications for this labour to the Town Board came from individual citizens, and community groups, including: Weld (June 1865), James Wallace (re: Bolton Street, July 1866), residents of Nairn Street (1865), Roxburgh street (July 1868), John and Wingfield Streets (1869), and those "in and about the neighborhood of Lewisville Terrace, Tinakori Road" (December 1870) (Anon., 1865d; 1865e; 1866e; 1868c; 1869b; 1870a). In some cases private subscription paid for prison labour, including the draining of a swamp to create a new cricket ground, and a scheme of grants-in-aid provided 50% of funding to match resident fund raising (Anon., 1866a). Despite this, a lack of funds could still prevent the deployment of prisoners (Anon., 1868b).

By the 1870s it was clear that the use of prison labour by the city was negotiated with the Provincial government; the Finance Committee's report, for example, reporting that "for the [City Corporation's] free use of the prison labor, on the condition that the Corporation laid down asphalt pavement free of cost in front of the Provincial [Government] Buildings" (Anon., 1875a; 1872a). Following the cessation of Provincial Government, through the 1880s and 1890s, determining prison labour projects involved both the local city and central governments, including the Ministry of Justice (Anon., 1877a; 1881a; 1881c; 1892). Recurring annual work was also programmed for the prison labour gangs. For example, in 1869, the *Wellington Independent* noted that:

In addition to the month usually allotted each year for the several hard labor gangs to clean, repair, reform, and gravel footpaths, clear by streets of grass, and cleansing the various watercourses, the visit of his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh necessitated that extra attention be given to these matters (Anon., 1869b; 1870b).

Prison labour was hence an integral part of city-making processes, acknowledged in these allocation mechanisms permeating Town Board minutes, newspaper reports, and other documents, but also in less administrative processes that became social custom. One example of this was the annual appreciation shown by the city council in "their *usual* practice [... of] go[ing] to the expense of providing a Christmas dinner for the hard labor gang" (Anon., 1872b, emphasis added).

### **Public presence and interactions**

In the 1860s, prison labour gangs each comprised about 6-12 men, with, as an example, a police constable armed with a rifle, and an accompanying overseer with a revolver, who were paid 7s/day in July 1864 (Anon., 1864b; 1865b; 1865c; 1869c). The classification of criminals constituting the prison gang, as well as their number, had administrative ramifications. For example, one gang of high risk inmates in 1868 required an "additional gunman" to enable it to work further away from the prison (Anon., 1868a). The viability of prison labour was, of course, also affected by the number of people convicted. In June 1866 concern was expressed regarding finding "sufficient hard labor men to put in gangs" (Anon., 1866d). In August 1869, one gang had to be broken up because "the number of [prison] discharges [... had] reduced the number [of labourers] below the usual complement to form a gang," and, in November 1870, the small amount of "criminal business" caused "almost daily diminishing in numbers [in the labour gang] owing to the discharge of prisoners who have served their time" (Anon., 1869b; 1870c). In the early twentieth-century, in 1913, one gang "numbered forty-eight, and they were guarded by nine warders, seven of whom carried rifles with bayonets affixed" (Anon., 1913).

With the visual presence of convicted criminals in public spaces, legislation, in addition to armed overseers, was used to manage their co-existence with members of the public and restrict their interactions. Consequently it was an offence for members of the public to interact with prison gangs. Regardless such interaction occurred. Examples included members of the public - many of whom were ex-prisoners (e.g. John Kershaw, James Northey, Henry Pankhurst) - "dropping tobacco and things for the prisoners to pick up," throwing "money to the prisoners," and "remaining too close to the hard labor gang" (Anon., 1866b; 1869a; 1877c; 1909b; 1911a; Special Reporter, 1881). In what appears to be a rare instance, James Northey was arrested for "using insulting language at the corner of Abel Smith Street and Cuba Street at the prisoners being

marched from Mount Cook Barracks to the gaol" (Anon., 1909b). Likewise prisoners were not to engage with the public. The most obvious breach of this was:

a Greek [prisoner], named George Angell, [who] attempted to address his Excellency the Governor, who was passing at the time, his object for so doing being that he might obtain a remission of the sentence he is undergoing, which is for life. This is the second offence of the kind against the same man, and he is to be brought before the visiting justices for punishment (Anon., 1872d).

There was the occasional escape by a prisoner or group of prisoners, such as Herbert Allendale and Fred Middleton, who escaped for a short duration from the Mount Cook brick works, and were found nearby "concealed under the floor of a small house" (Anon., 1885a). There was also the very rare accidental shooting - including that of a Mr. Deans who was overseeing a prison gang and "accidentally shot himself," resulting in his death - but there are no reported instances of injury to the public, despite some valid concerns (Anon., 1867c). In 1913 eighteen prisoners refused to march back to the prison, causing anxiety regarding the public crowding "round the refractories thoughtless of the fact that if one of the prisoners had bolted some warder might have fired, and fired to the injury of some of the spectators" (Anon., 1913). More frequent was the mundane spectacle and noise of prisoners moving about the city. Ward refers to these men going "to work in leg-irons, ponderous, clanking impediments, a pair of which ... weighs 8lbs, being made of 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in. iron" up until 1877 (Ward, 1912: 306).

### **Shaping a City**

The British were not the first people to live in the land around Te Whanganui a Tara, or Port Nicholson, and the making of roads, prescribing movement and arrangement of buildings, signaled a different form of living, transport and new geometries of settlement. Māori migrated across the landscape to maximise seasonal conditions and crops, whereas the British prioritised a static idea of dwelling anchored by individual titles of ownership, which articulated an address as a specific location identified as belonging to someone, in contrast to Māori communal land tenure. These attributes permeate contemporary newspaper accounts of the roads that prisoners worked on.

Nearly 40 different streets are named in relation to prison labour in Wellington newspapers from 1850 to 1909. Roads regulated the three dimensions of the landscape, their placement sensitive to the coastline, and their viability at risk with steep terrain, and mud-inducing rainy weather, requiring retaining walls and cuttings (including Abel Smith St (1867-68), Adelaide Rd (1872), Hill St (1869), and Woolcombe St (1867)), to ease the passage of transport and facilitate connection between the different topographical strata of the city (Anon., 1867a; 1867b; 1869b; 1872f). The roadmaking-regulation of movement was matched with an aesthetic moderation of the view, as is demonstrated by the 1885 proposal for prison labour to make a scenic drive "round the reserves on the hills," and results of the work of the prisoners on reclaimed land, "clearing gorse," and "rapidly making the north end of it look less like a wilderness" (Anon., 1872c; 1872e; 1885b). It is within this context that prison labour was often proposed as the solution to remediating the less tamed aspects of the city. When the Hon. Mr. Mantell referred to the city's Botanic Gardens as having "been passed through on several occasions by visitors in search of them without their even suspecting they had got there," prison labour was part of the solution. The draining of the "impassable swamp," of the Basin Reserve to form a cricket ground (1866) is perhaps the most well-known use of prison labour to ameliorate the landscape and create recreational sites (Anon., 1877b; Wallace, 1877). This area had been set aside as an

inland marina in early maps, but the 1855 Wairarapa earthquake lifted the land almost 1.8m making this unfeasible.

Rifle ranges were another type of recreational space created by prisoners. The first rifle range proposed to use prison labour was in Park Reserve (formerly Wesleyan Reserve) (Anon., 1867a). The 1880s saw the use of prison labour to level the sites of the rifle range in Newtown Park and Polhill Gully (Anon., 1881c; 1881f; 1887b; 1900). In 1911 it was suggested prison labour could "beautify the range and clear the stones away" at Trentham's rifle range (Anon., 1911b). These Town Belt sites conflated the recreational with the military, just as the Basin Reserve, as a site of military parades, would do, and as rifle ranges supported the skills of volunteer forces to supplement the permanent militia, which were contextualised by a perceived Russian threat during the last decades of the nineteenth-century and "resulted in the building of structures like that at Fort Ballance" (Kelly & Astwood, 2008). Prison labour was used to maintain these sites, and in 1901 prisoners repaired the Newtown rifle range due to damage "done ... by the contingents who were encamped there" (Garvey, 1901: 12). Adjacent to the Basin Reserve, the Town Belt accommodated College Reserve, Asylum Reserve, and Hospital Reserve to the south east. To the west of the Basin Reserve was Mt Cook Reserve. All four sites are important locations of historic prison labour as prisoners made material contributions to landmark buildings contributing to the profile of Wellington's cityscape.

### **Siting landmarks**

The first Wellington building site levelled and filled by prisoners to create a building platform was the Congregational Church on Kumutoto Street (present day Bowen St) (also Ward, 1912: 213). An 1865 newspaper described the site as "a central and a good one ... in close proximity to the beach, and almost immediately below the bridge which spans a stream that crosses the Terrace" (Anon., 1865a). This appears to be an isolated instance of prisoners levelling a building site in the 1860s, this activity being more typical in the 1870s, which reaped the economic benefits of "a massive increase in population and in capital investment," and Julius Vogel's ambitious development programme funded by significant borrowing from Britain (McAloon, 2009: 206). Prisoners' contributions to Wellington's buildings in the 1870s were also a byproduct of the political context of the Wellington City Reserves Act, which Yska states prompted "the central and provincial governments joined forces to snatch 143 acres for a college, lunatic asylum, and hospital" just prior to transferring the Town Belt land to the Borough "to be forever hereafter used and appropriated as a public recreation ground for the inhabitants of the city of Wellington" (Yska, 2006: 61-62; Anon., 1874; 1881d).

Work preparing the site for the Mount View Asylum commenced in March 1872, with the cutting of the hill east of Adelaide Rd (Anon., 1872f). A year later wells on the site were being sunk, and further shaping of the land was anticipated requiring "the slicing off the tops of hills which mar the view, the filling up of ugly looking hollows, the carriage entrance with its outlet at the other side, and the subsequent ornamentation by means of trees and shrubs, [indicating that] the site must wear a beautiful appearance" (Anon., 1873b). The two-storey building, designed by Christian Julius Toxward, was opened in May 1873, and replaced the 1850s Mental Hospital in Karori (Anon., 1873a; 1873c; Ward, 1912: 239).

A couple of months following this, the prisoners had cleared a site and built road access for the new Wellington College, which opened in mid 1874 (Anon., 1873d; 1874; Ward, 1912: 407-408). The excavating and levelling of the five acre hospital site commenced the following year, and was anticipated to become "one of the most attractive spots in the whole of the city" (Anon.,

1875b; Anon., 1880; 1881e). Unlike the earlier two institutions, prisoners also made bricks on the site to build the building (also designed by Toxward), using a machine "capable of turning out about 48,000 bricks weekly," as well as cutting a road to access the hospital and connect it with the Asylum (Anon., 1875c; 1880).

The building was completed in 1881 after 1598 days of prison labour (Anon., 1881e; 1881g). One million and a half prison bricks would be used c1887 for the Government Printing Office (1886-1887), and bricks were also supplied to "the Public Works Department, to the Wellington and Manawatu Railway contracts, and Wellington Woollen Company," and for the fortifications at Fort Ballance (1885), Wellington Harbour Board Wharf Office Building (1896), the Parliamentary Library (1897-1899), and the Parliament Building (1914) (Anon., 1887a;1914b;Hume, 1887: 4; Kelly &Astwood, 2008). In the Mt Cook area, structures built of prison bricks included the retaining wall (1891-99), the police station (1894), Garrison Hall (1907), and Defences Stores (1911). The 1887 Prisons Branch Report described the bricks as "universally admitted to be the best ever manufactured in the colony" (Cooke, 2006; Hume, 1887: 4).

### **Educational institutions and prisons**

The prisoners' work levelling the building platform for Wellington College was only one of a number of projects where hard labour gangs contributed to the educational landscape. Following the completion of Wellington College, prisoners enlarged the school's cricket ground in 1879 (Anon., 1879). During the same decade, prisoners excavated a site for the Terrace School (1877) (now Clifton Terrace). They also made school desks and forms in 1881, and in 1892 they levelled the playground of the Mount Cook School (on Taranaki Street, opposite Webb St) (Anon., 1877; 1881b; 1892; Ward, 1912: 316). The three Mt Cook schools (infant, girls and boys) were close to Mt Cook Gaol, just as TeAro School would become a very close neighbour of the Terrace Gaol prior to its closure;TeAroShool initially partly replacing the gaol, and eventually taking over the site (Ward, 1912: 306).

Prisoners also built buildings. These were most often associated with the prisons that incarcerated them (e.g. maintenance and extensions), and auxillary buildings. The Terrace Gaol, for example, was built of Mt Cook prison bricks by prisoners in 1853, and inmates also built "an elegant and substantial residence" there for the warden (1876), planted trees between the gaol and Woolcombe street, maintained "the large garden on the slope of the hill, in rear of the gaol," made padded cells, and concreted yards, and undertook repairs" (McCarthy, 2017a: 233; Anon., 1866c; 1876; 1882c).

### **Mount Cook (Pukeahu)**

Mount Cook is a particularly special and comprehensive product of prison labour. Prisoners built and repaired multiple structures on the site, which located Wellington Gaol, the city's first permanent prison and "first public building" (Schrader, 2016: 124). It echoed London's Pentonville Model Prison, in 1843, but the idea of a prison on the prominent site filled citizens with horror, the *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator* proclaiming that "[e]very mind possessed of a feeling for the beautiful, must be outraged by the mode in which Mount Cook has been appropriated" (Anon., 1844a;McCarthy, 2017b: 391-392). In the 1870s Māori prisoners incarcerated in the Mt Cook Barracks created a road "leading from Tasman-street to the barracks" (Anon., 1871), ameliorating the:

nuisance and an eyesore. In dry weather it was an awkward climb, and in wet it was "a slough of despond" at the bottom, and "a hill of difficulty" in the ascent. Now, all this is being changed. The scrub has been burnt off, an embankment has been formed, and a broad road at an easy gradient is half completed (Anon., 1871).

A new Mount Cook gaol, modelled on the Manchester County Gaol (1850-1888) and built by prisoners, was begun in the 1880s (Anon., 1883; McCarthy, 2017a: 235). In the process of this new building, an old defence building on the site, was transformed by prisoners "into a large store and a commodious workshop" (Anon., 1884). The work on the site also included constructing gardens on Mount Cook's western slopes, of "potatoes, cabbages, peas, and other vegetables, [... which, according to the *New Zealand Times*,] might easily be taken for the work of a professional gardener" (Anon., 1882b). Dramatic reshaping of the hilltop, with "[t]he somewhat rough sides of the eminence [...] being levelled and graded," converted the hill into "a very even and regular shape on all sides [...] before long, the locality will be most attractive to the eye" (Anon., 1882a).

The quarrying of clay also shaped Mt Cook's form. Kelly and Astwood (2008) note that: "[t]he clay was taken largely from the south-western face of Mt Cook, which eventually created what are today Wellington High School's playing fields." Yet even this significant, if gradual, carving out of the hillside, pales in comparison to the cumulative effect of the nineteenth-century impact of prison labour on the hill. As Cooke (2006) records: "[t]he prisoners' main influence is having reduced the height of the hill at least three times between 1843 and 1920s (to create flat ground for buildings, and to quarry clay for brickmaking), a reduction now totaling 25m." Perhaps more significant though, in relation to the civic importance of the prisoner gang in Wellington's landscape, was the nineteenth-century use of Mount Cook as the cartographic datum point, from which the city's maps were drawn, and from where buildings, roads and urban spaces were located relative to, as the 1891 Thomas Ward map documents: "Mt Cook Trig (Zero of Map)."

### **Conclusion: hiding and removal**

Prisoners shaped our city during its formative stages to a degree not previously fully recognised. They made and maintained public thoroughfares easing movement through the city by ameliorating gradients and resolving flooding through the provision of drainage. The recreational space and public institutions that they prepared the land for enabled the civil and social infrastructure that makes a city. Their labour not only materialised British values into the built environment, operating as civilising agents, but also configured city-making as punitive and implemented in a reformatory morality which saw those convicted of crimes being seen as they repaid their "debt to society." As Pieris (2003: 27) has noted, the prison "was linked to urbanization and citizenship, through a nineteenth century discourse linking moral reform and civilization with environmental determinism."

Simultaneously, the presence of prisoners in the city was visual, their leg-irons noisy, and sometimes implicated in a violent urban space; their minders armed and the potential of gun fire very real. By the early years of the twentieth-century the prisoners' public presence was considered problematic. Pratt refers to an increasing public sensitivity to the cruelty of having prisoners wear leg-irons, and the behavior of prisoners as lacking public decorum (Pratt, 1992: 113-114). In 1914 the *Dominion* printed MP Mr. Fisher's views that: "the public parade of the prisoners ... inflicts a needless indignity upon them and is not a pleasant experience, for people,



old and young, who see them passing by" (Anon., 1914b). Ashmore identified the ever-present temptation of escape for public works prisoners as interfering with their ability to contemplate - the notion of the penitentiary being premised on a silent reflection to enable repentance and reformation - as why prison labour on public works was a concern. He wrote: ""Liberty with all its comforts was before them, the heart yearned to be free, and the whole energy of the mind is bent on escape, no time is allowed for reflection"" (Methven, 2011: 35).

Since the 1880s in Wellington prison labour had been increasingly deployed at the defence works on Point Halswell, at a distance from the city's centre. The adaption of the barracks there as a temporary prison became more permanent, relieving the poor state of accommodation at the Terrace Gaol and the political difficulties of using the purpose-built prison at Mt Cook (Anon., 1888) because, "owing to local agitation and other causes, this [Mt Cook] prison, though suitable for a prison and only a prison, is lying idle, while the department is allowed to suffer for want of suitable accommodation for prisoners in this city" (Hume, 1900: 3). At the same time there was a push to find work for prisoners in rural contexts which would be less likely to compete with non-convict labour. From 1908 to 1923 the number of prisoners working in New Zealand tree-planting camps grew from 12.5% to 70% (Pratt, 1992: 157; Newbold, 2007: 36). British models of providing hard labour for prisoners inside prison walls, away from the public eye and incontrollable spaces may have also been an influence, and an early New Zealand view consistent with this thinking was voiced in 1870 by Wellington's City Engineer who stated: "I do not desire to underrate prisonlabor; considering it as forced labor it answers remarkably well — in certain cases is very valuable, and, removed from off street, probably may be made much more so"(Anon., 1870b). In Wellington, Point Halswell became a permanent female prison in 1919, and further away, in the Hutt valley hinterland, the Wi Tako work camp (now Rimutaka Prison) became a permanent male prison that same year (McCarthy, 2017a: 236-237). The need for soldiers to support WWI would also have impacted on the numbers of prisoners available for public works.

Another, perhaps less obvious, motive may have been the conflict between the philosophies of urban and town planning movements emerging from North America with the material presence of the prisoner as a civilising agent. The City Beautiful movement took the ethos of Acclimatisation Societies and Beautifying Associations to another level and explicitly linked morality with aesthetic virtues. As Peterson (1976: 424) put it: "[t]he town which has well kept streets, beautiful parks, attractive home grounds, plenty of fresh air and generally favorable sanitary conditions is the town the moral development and industrial progress of which will always commend it." Cleaning repairing and civic maintenance might have had a reformatory moral value, but the visual presence of convicted criminals in urban spaces was no doubt at odds with new found City Beautiful sensitivities.

Towards the end of this period, following New Zealand's transition in 1907 from a colony to a dominion, increasingly fewer prisoners were evident on Wellington's street - but a public image of the convict labourer did not disappear. Instead references to prison labour gangs in contemporary newspapers increasingly present the plot descriptions of movies shown in the city, including: *The Man from Mexico* (Criterion Theatre, 1906), *The Convict's Sacrifice* (His Majesty's Theater, 1909), *As Midnight Chimes* (the Opera House, 1910), and *The Mystery of Pine Creek Camp* (the Empress Theatre, 1914) (Anon., 1906; 1909a; 1910; 1914a). Thus, while prison labour was progressively removed from city streets, and the capital city coalesced into its more permanent physical and social form, the new public architecture of the cinema interior now housed images of prisoners - albeit images of a distant and foreign chain-gang prison labour - in a new twentieth-century urban medium.

## References

- Anonymous. (1870) 'Evening Post', *Evening Post*, 12 November, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1844a) 'Barracks', *New Zealand Gazette and Wellington Spectator*, 10 February, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1864b) 'The Wellington Independent: The Estimates', *Wellington Independent*, 19 July p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1865a) 'Local and General News', *Wellington Independent*, 28 September, p. 5
- Anonymous. (1865b) 'Provincial Council', *Wellington Independent*, 3 August, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1865c) 'Supreme Court Criminal Sittings', *Wellington Independent*, 5 September, p. 6.
- Anonymous. (1865d) 'Town Board', *Wellington Independent*, 10 August, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1865e) 'Town Board Meeting', *Wellington Independent*, 15 June, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1866a) 'Local and General News', *Wellington Independent*, 17 July, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1866b) 'Supreme Court-Criminal Sittings: Yesterday', *Evening Post*, 5 December, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1866c) 'The Wellington Gaol', *Wellington Independent*, 20 March, p. 6.
- Anonymous. (1866d) 'Town Board Meeting', *Wellington Independent*, 2 June, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1866e) 'Town Board Meeting', *Wellington Independent*, 14 July, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1867a) 'Town Board', *Wellington Independent*, 7 December, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1867b) 'Town Board', *Wellington Independent*, 9 November, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1867c) 'Town News of the Week', *Wairarapa Standard*, 8 June, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1868a) 'Town Board', *Wellington Independent*, 7 January, p. 5
- Anonymous. (1868b) 'Town Board', *Wellington Independent*, 23 June, p. 4.
- Anonymous. (1868c) 'Town Board', *Wellington Independent*, 4 July, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1869a) 'Evening Post', *Evening Post*, 9 November, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1869b) 'Ratepayers' meeting', *Wellington Independent*, 17 August, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1869c) 'Wellington Independent', *Wellington Independent*, 13 February, p. 4.
- Anonymous. (1870a) 'City Council', *Evening Post*, 17 December, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1870b) 'Meeting of Ratepayers', *Wellington Independent*, 20 August, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1870c) 'Evening Post', *Evening Post*, 12 November, p. 2
- Anonymous. (1871) 'Evening Post', *Evening Post*, 1 May, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1872a) 'City Council', *Wellington Independent*, 9 November, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1872b) 'City Council', *Wellington Independent*, 14 December, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1872c) 'Evening Post', *Evening Post*, 15 November, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1872d) 'Local and General News', *Wellington Independent*, 17 January, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1872e) 'Local and General News', *Wellington Independent*, 19 March, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1872f) 'Local and General News', *Wellington Independent*, 21 March, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1873a) 'The New Lunatic Asylum', *Evening Post*, 30 January, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1873b) 'The New Lunatic Asylum', *Wellington Independent*, 25 February, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1873c) 'Wellington Independent', *Wellington Independent*, 28 May, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1873d) 'Wellington Independent', *Wellington Independent*, 18 August, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1874) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 23 June, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1875a) 'City Council', *New Zealand Times*, 30 September, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1875b) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 10 June, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1875c) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 5 July, p. 4.
- Anonymous. (1876) 'A Visit to the Wellington Gaol', *Evening Post*, 12 February, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1877a) 'Education Board', *Evening Post*, 6 July, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1877b) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 20 September, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1877c) 'Resident Magistrate's Court: This Day', *Evening Post*, 9 March, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1879) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 25 April, p. 4.
- Anonymous. (1880) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 11 March, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1881a) 'Board of Education' *New Zealand Times*, 27 October, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1881b) 'Latest Telegrams', *Wairarapa Standard*, 12 July, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1881c) 'Meeting of Volunteer Officers' *New Zealand Times*, 22 March, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1881d) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 20 October, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1881e) 'The New Hospital', *New Zealand Times*, 6 May, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1881f) 'Volunteer Parade: The Proposed Volunteer Rifle Range', *Evening Post*, 6 August, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1881g) 'Wellington New Hospital', *New Zealand Times*, 8 August, p. 2.

- Anonymous. (1882a) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 19 August, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1882b) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 21 October, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1882c) 'Report of the Inspector of Prisons', *New Zealand Times*, 14 June, p. 3.
- Anonymous. (1883) 'Parliament', *New Zealand Times*, 25 July, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1884) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 18 November, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1885a) 'Telegraphic', *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 3 November, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1885b) 'The Mayoralty', *New Zealand Times*, 11 November, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1887a) 'Annual Report of the Engineer-in-Chief', *New Zealand Times*, 9 June, p. 5.
- Anonymous. (1887b) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 8 September, p. 4.
- Anonymous. (1888) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 16 February, p. 4.
- Anonymous. (1892) 'New Zealand Times', *New Zealand Times*, 12 May p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1900) 'Conciliation Board', *Evening Post*, 27 August, p. 6.
- Anonymous. (1906) 'Theatrical Gossip', *New Zealand Times*, 2 June, p. 11.
- Anonymous. (1909a) 'Entertainments', *Dominion*, 14 October, p. 8.
- Anonymous. (1909b) 'Magistrate's Court', *Dominion*, 19 March, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1910) 'Entertainments', *Evening Post*, 11 May, p. 2.
- Anonymous. (1911a) 'Magistrate's Court', *Evening Post*, 12 June, p. 8.
- Anonymous. (1911b) 'Trentham Rifle Range: Scheme of Improvement: Necessary Work Nearing Completion', *New Zealand Times*, 17 January, p. 9.
- Anonymous. (1913) 'The Terrace Gaol Gang: eighteen punished', *Dominion*, 30 September, p. 7.
- Anonymous. (1914a) 'Entertainments', *New Zealand Times*, 9 October, p. 7.
- Anonymous. (1914b) 'Mount Cook Reserve', *Dominion*, 10 June, p. 8.
- Casella, E.C. (2001) 'To Watch or Restrain: Female Convict Prisons in 19th-century Tasmania' *international Journal of Historical Archaeology* vol. 5:1, pp. 45-72.
- Cooke, P. (2006) Mt Cook, Wellington - A History, viewed 18 July 2018, [http://mtcookmobilised.pbworks.com/f/MtCook\\_History-COOKE.pdf](http://mtcookmobilised.pbworks.com/f/MtCook_History-COOKE.pdf)
- Garvey, P.S. (1901) 'H20: Wellington Prison', *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives*, Wellington: Government Printer.
- Hume, A. (1887) 'H-8: Department of Justice, Prisons Branch (Report on)', *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives*, Wellington, Government Printer.
- Hume, A. (1900) 'H-20: Department of Justice, Prisons Branch (Report on)', *Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives*, Wellington: Government Printer.
- Kelly, M. & Astwood, K. (2008) Tasman Street Wall, Tasman Street, Mt Cook, Wellington, Heritage New Zealand, viewed 18 July 2018, <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7758>.
- McAloon, J. (2009) 'The New Zealand Economy', in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- McCarthy, C. (2017a) 'Siting penal heritage: a history of Wellington's prison landscape', *Archaeologica Hereditas*, ed. Weronika Kobylińska-Bunsch, Zbigniew Kobyliński and Louis Daniel Nebelsick, Warsaw, Poland: Res Publica Multiethnica Foundation, pp. 231-242.
- McCarthy, C. (2017b) 'The Sincerest Form of Flattery: imitation and early prison design in New Zealand', *Quotation, Quotation: 34th Annual Conference Society of Architectural Historians Australia and New Zealand*, Canberra: Society of Architectural Historians, pp. 391-397.
- Marshall, L. (2016) 'A benign institution?: Convict health, living conditions, and labour management at Port Arthur penal station, 1868-1870', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* vol. 18, pp. [65]-94.
- Methven, P. (2011) *The Terrace Gaol*, Aotearoa: Steels Roberts.
- Newbold, G. (2007) *The Problem of Prisons: corrections reform in New Zealand since 1840*, Wellington: Dunmore Press.
- Peterson, J.A. (1976) 'The City Beautiful Movement: Forgotten Origins and Lost Meanings', *Journal of Urban History* vol. 2:4, pp. 415-434.
- Pieris, A.D. (2003) 'Hidden hands and divided landscapes: Penal labor and colonial citizenship in Singapore and the Straits Settlements, 1825-1873', Berkeley: University of California, PhD thesis.
- Pratt, J. (1992) *Punishment in a perfect society*, Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Schrader, B. (2016) *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.
- Special Reporter (1881) 'The Wellington Gaol', *Evening Post*, 14 April, p. 2.

- Tuffin, R. (2018) 'Convicts of the "proper description": The appropriation and management of skilled convict labour', *Labour History*, vol. 114, pp.69-92
- Wallace, J.H. (1877) 'The People's Land [Letter to Editor]', *New Zealand Times*, 2 June, p. 2.
- Ward, L.E. (1912) *Early Wellington*, Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs.
- Wellington City Council [WCC] (2000) District Plan, viewed 18 July 2018, <https://wellington.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/district-plan/volume-1-objectives-policies-and-rules>.
- Wimshurst, K. (2012) 'Intersections in colonial and penal politics: The case of Queensland in the 1870s', *History Australia* vol. 9:2, pp.135-156.
- Yska, R. (2006) *Wellington: Biography of a City*, Auckland: Reed Books.