

Lost in transportation: Mummie and Australia

'Australia, there's no place like it' – tout the tourism ads and they are correct. It is unique. For the people arriving on sailing ships in the late 1700s and early 1800s it was a continent dominated by a massive desert, a landscape worn down by eons of weathering, a predominately flat landscape. A land occupied by people whose history reached back to the first migrations of humans out of Africa. An island continent with flora and fauna adapted to life in climates and environments varying from jungle in the north to desert in the centre and south. A place so foreign as to be 'alien' to the Europeans landed on its shores, people who were ill-equipped to decipher and survive its vicissitudes. Life was harsh, but survivable.

The new inhabitants learned to accommodate and profit from the environment. In the process aspects of European culture were abandoned as unproductive to survival or simply became socially impossible to pursue. Mummie was one such casualty. An event housed in the seasonal acquisition of money based in customary dispersal of food and spirits during Christmas and which could also be used throughout the year to express political and economic dissent did not survive the environmental and social realities presented by early Australian settlement. There were a number of factors which affected the survival of mummie including the environment, climate, the presence of indigenous peoples, and the circumstances of the penal colonies established to accommodate convicts transported from the British Isles and other regions of the empire.

Environment

The current geography of the Australian continent began with the breakup of Gondwana 60-80 million years ago. Since that time no major volcanic activity or plate tectonics have created new mountain ranges or created new soil. The resultant land mass is the lowest and flattest of the continents, the soils deficient in minerals due to leaching by sun and rain, and it is the driest continent with the exception of Antarctica. The unique flora and fauna inhabiting the area developed to accommodate and survive within a climate noted for extremes in water and heat, fire and drought.

The environment encountered by the convicts and settlers was dramatically different from that of Britain; but the Australian world was recognizably similar, perhaps deceptively familiar. The new

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immigrants set about transforming an unknown space into a known one, and in the process were changed themselves: the relationship between humans and the environment is a dynamic one. Humans can initiate change, they transplant elements of their previous environment into the new one, they attempt to transform the unknown new into a form of the previously known, but the transformations are necessarily incomplete, always mediated by the dictates of the new environment. Introduced flora and fauna often survive in their general form, somewhat altered in order to survive and maximize life in the new circumstances. Some thrive, successful beyond expectation, and endanger numerous native animals and plants¹. Climate and environment also affect humans by introducing new physical realities which must be addressed through culture, the means humans have of successfully and rapidly encountering and adapting to new circumstances.

Environmental information about early settlement times can be gleaned from historical records including ships logs, journals, diaries and letters of the new arrivals. There is also a large body of knowledge concerning climate and environment within the culture of the native peoples. Although not readily accessible to the new arrivals, this indigenous knowledge² accurately and in great detail described a geography, climate, flora and fauna, and seasonal cycles totally foreign to European newcomers. The aboriginal understanding of environment and the division of the year into seasons was based on knowledge of the movement of stars and the plant and animal life cycles which were influenced by the yearly weather patterns. Aboriginal understandings of climate and conceptions of time, understandings honed through centuries of living within the demands of the Australian environment, were unknown and inaccessible to the new arrivals.

Climate was punctuated by extremes in heat and water, fire and drought. The land was subject to bush fires triggered by heat, above normal rainfall resulted in flooding, and droughts often lasting years were marked by below average rainfall and extreme heat.

Climate

As Australia is located in the southern hemisphere the yearly seasonal progression is inverted from that found in the northern hemisphere. The application of European calendar seasons to the Australian climate seasons meant the Christmas season occurred in the Australian summer, a time marked by heat and long sun-drenched days, an opposite to the British Christmas season of cold, damp, and short sun-deprived days. In the Britain of the 17th and 18th centuries it was a time of little gainful employment

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and looming shortages of food and comfort, whereas in Australia it was a time of seasonal work and the potential for gainful employment.

The nature of the new living circumstances of the immigrants located in New South Wales is ably described by Alan Moorehead in *Cooper's Creek*³ and warrants extensive quotation:

The land was absolutely untouched and unknown, and except for primitive aboriginal tribes, there was no sign of any previous civilization whatever: not a scrap of pottery, not a Chinese coin, not even the vestige of a Portuguese fort. Nothing in this strange country seemed to bear the slightest resemblance to the outside world: it was so primitive, so lacking in greenness, so silent, so old. It was not a measurable man-made antiquity, but an appearance of exhaustion and weariness in the land itself ... Everything was the wrong way about. Midwinter fell in July, and in January summer was at its height; in the bush there were giant birds that never flew, and queer, antediluvian animals that hopped instead of walked or sat munching mutely in the trees. Even the constellations in the sky were upside down and seemed to belong to another system of the sun. As for the naked aborigines, they were caught in a timeless apathy in which nothing ever changed or progressed; they built no villages, they planted no crops, and except for a few flea-bitten dogs possessed no domestic animals of any kind. ... In the midsummer heat the land scarcely breathed ... Somehow European crops were made to grow in land that had never been tilled before, and imported cattle, horses and sheep managed to survive in a country where the farmer had no precedents to guide him. Every man was a Robinson Crusoe. A flood could and did wipe out a year's labour in a single day, and when a drought began there was no knowing when it would ever end. Everything was new and had to be begun from the beginning.

The new immigrants to Australia were transplanted to an alien environment, they were reliant primarily upon the ships stores and supply ships from England until they could successfully adapt to their new circumstances. They were also faced with the reality that the territory they inhabited was already occupied by another people exercised by the new arrivals appropriating use of their tribal lands.

Indigenous Peoples

Darwin's view of the native people of Tierra del Fuego in 1832 - 'I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilised man; it is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal'⁴ - was not shared by Governor Arthur Phillips, first Governor of the penal colony established at Sydney in 1788. Phillips required those under his command, whether military, convict, or free men, treat the Australian natives as humans and act upon an understanding of 'the universality of reason and goodwill'⁵. Nevertheless, in the following decades under the leadership of numerous other

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Governors, it became apparent the newcomers failed to adequately address the reality that they had entered already occupied and tribally claimed land.

The indigenous people occupying the land had created and maintained a culture adapted to the geography, climate, and flora and fauna of Australia, information the immigrants were unable to access except in the most obvious terms of learning to hunt various species of birds and animals. Relations between aboriginal groups and new immigrants moved from dancing together in the first few days of contact⁶ to repeated raiding and conflict⁷. Cross-cultural communication problems, conflicting values, and dispute over land resulted in aggressive behaviour and violence. Increasingly the aboriginals were perceived as primitive and the land terra nullius⁸. The imposition of British culture on and within a foreign environment and climate with an agenda of establishing penal colonies and settlements meant the British were engaged in colonization.

Penal Colonies

Tensions and celebrations inherent in the social life of a penal colony found expression in behaviour in keeping with the local circumstances. Social and interpersonal tensions and potential social critiques could have been expressed through mummings. However, the availability of mummings as a means of community social control and self-regulation was curtailed through attention by the authorities of the identity, whereabouts, and activities of the convicts. The practice of cooperating with or acquiescing to the authorities was a better way to manage personal survival than covert or overt dissent or rebellion. Nevertheless there was rebellion against the authority structure: some convicts fled the settlements in the belief they could walk to 'china' and freedom, but they almost invariably perished on the land or were killed by the aborigines; some refused to work; and some resorted to criminal activity within the colony. Public floggings and hangings were commonplace. Recalcitrant convicts were shipped to the notorious Norfolk Island penal colony off the coast of Australia. By contrast, good behaviour was rewarded. People useful to the authorities in the building of communities could move into positions of power and prestige. There were several institutionalized means by which one's convict position could be alleviated, including tickets of leave, pardons, and absolute pardons⁹.

The use of an accepted social event, a theatrical performance, gave expression to some discontent among the convicts as early as 1789. On June 4 1789 in celebration of the King's birthday the first full-scale theatrical production, 'The Recruiting Officer', was performed in Sydney by convicts and attended

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by members of the general community including the governing and military personnel¹⁰. A prologue and epilogue written by one of the convicts included 'some tolerable allusions to the situation of the parties'¹¹. Unfortunately, no copy survived, nor has the identity of the author¹². The performance venue was a convict hut decorated with stained paper and lit with candles¹³. Contemporary-dress costumes required for the performance were readily attainable: military uniforms were borrowed from resident military, and civilian dress for men and women was available from the stores of convicts themselves, some of whom brought chests of necessaries with them on the journey from Britain¹⁴.

Among the convicts, government functionaries, and military personnel there was a familiarity with and skills in performance, music, acting, theatre and theatre production. Performance in many different types of venues was standard entertainment in Britain and by extension in the new colony. A penchant for performance among the convicts was displayed on the transport ship 'the Scarborough' on 2 January 1788 when on 'this Night the Convicts Made a play & Sang many Songs'¹⁵. There were also activities, noted as disturbances within the colonial records, in the convict huts¹⁶. Whether some performances carried the lines and characters of a mummers play or were understood as mumming events is not mentioned in the records.

Conditions within the new settlement deteriorated rapidly with dwindling food stores necessitating the introduction of food rationing. Difficulties encountered by the new immigrants in growing their own food and thereby alleviating the extreme food shortages were exacerbated by the climate conditions - a period of cool wet weather in 1788-90 was followed in 1791-93 by drought conditions¹⁷. Supply ships failed to materialize or brought insufficient or tainted supplies of food. At the same time increasing numbers of convicts were transported to the penal colony. The conditions in Sydney were intensified by increasing incidents of crime and the infliction of harsh punishments for wrong-doing such as stealing food. The fear and desperation engendered amongst a group of people with little or no expectation of returning home to Britain, living within an alien environment and with few means to generate a livelihood and replenish food stores, was understandable. The perception was of being isolated at the edge of the world¹⁸. 'It was impossible to behold without emotion the departure of the ships. On their speedy arrival in England perhaps hinged our fate...'¹⁹

Numerous social conditions within the colony hindered the use of mumming as entertainment, a means

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or acquiring money, a venue for social critique, or as a means of community social control and self-regulation. The rapidly declining fortunes of the penal settlements did not provide a social situation conducive to Christmas celebration and mumming entertainment, nor to critique of the social, legal and penal systems, or to covert acts of defiance to authority. Given the deteriorating material realities of the colony, it is unlikely mumming could have been used as a means for performers to generate cash or barter goods in return for a performance. The social and economic structure of the community did not include a propertied class with a history or expectation of mumming entertainment in exchange for money or food during the Christmas season. Except for the Governor and military personnel there were few if any in Sydney with cash or goods to pay for a performance. Members of the lower orders in the colony who were potential audience for mumming were as materially poor and socially constrained as potential performers.

The social circumstance for mumming had changed from that in Britain – the entertainment value of going about masked and disguised in the dark would have been lost on the authorities governing the penal colony; within a short couple of years of 1788 clothing was in short supply with little excess for the disguise and costuming necessary to mumming²⁰; within the penal colony, persons were unable to access the freedom necessary to engage in an activity that potentially came under British statutes such as the Black Act and the Riot Act; the potential of harsh punishment for countervention of British law and Governor edicts was readily apparent with public floggings and hangings and secondary transportation; the violent and subversive nature of disguise and hostilities between the English ruling elite and Irish prisoners constrained the event as a means of social critique and collective social action²¹.

Avenues of Inquiry: mumming research

The contemporary and historical lack of mumming in Australia may indicate that an emphasis upon the event itself could be expanded within academic inquiry. Historical and contemporary avenues of inquiry could be directed towards what are often regarded as peripheral characteristics or supports, including availability of venues and of costume material, lack of means to reciprocate by the audience, and composition of the mumming group. If an appropriate venue, a location and social circumstance safe from interference by the authorities is not available, a performance cannot or will seldom occur, and then in a clandestine manner hopefully unnoticed by the authorities. An appropriate performance location must also be a gathering place for people who can then become an audience. Convict huts were available for gatherings but were under the constraints of a nightly Watch which constrained the

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time and content of the gatherings. Costuming is another consideration. Whether a costume is made of strips of paper, constructed of straw, a lady's dress, or a borrowed military uniform, the availability of the wherewithal to costume performers is an important component of mumming particularly if disguise is a required part of the event. Reciprocity between audience members and performers is another important element. Mumming can be a means whereby social liaisons are constructed between individuals who may otherwise not have engaged in social contact. If the means of reciprocity, the giving of food or drink to performers, are not available an audience may hesitate to engage in the event as they will become indebted with no means to alleviate the indebtedness. For performers a performance was to gain payment whether in the form of money, goods, or social contacts, elements of mumming not as readily available to the immigrants as they would have been to mumming performers and audience in Britain, particularly in the early years of the settlements.

Within the penal colonies the core assemblage of persons required to form a mumming group was not necessarily available due to the circumstance of incarceration by the British legal system. The composition of the mumming group may be crucial to the creation of a group and an eventual performance. These groups can be comprised of family members, friends, or a combination of the two, sometimes gender specific, with outsiders to the community occasionally joining the group. In the penal colony mumming groups comprised of family members would have been difficult to create as prisoners' families had been left behind in transportation, and newly created friendship groups may have lacked the communal knowledge required to create a performance. Some mumming groups in Britain were loosely affiliated collections of people assembling to earn money during an economic low-point of the year²². In Australia Christmas occurred in the summer, a time when work was available. The use of mumming as a component of collective social action would not have required either a family grouping or a friendship grouping to establish a mumming group. A group using mumming for collective social action could have been formed of like-minded individuals motivated by social critique and conceivably such a grouping could have been assembled within a penal colony, particularly among Irish political prisoners. It is unlikely that venues to be used for social critique would have been available free from interference by the authorities.

The new immigrants were evidently bored and in need of something to pass the time²³ given the isolated nature of and the social constraints existent in a penal colony. England at the time was alive with various forms of entertainment that all social classes could have accessed as audience members

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and performers. There were various forms of musical entertainment, dramatic presentations, monologues, recitations, and dance such that an 'evening took on the characteristics of a variety show'. Given easy access to performances and venues in Britain, immigrants to Australia were knowledgeable about - and some were skilled in - various performance forms. Theatre productions soon became part of penal colonial life. It is reasonable to assume that these abilities would have been used in domestic entertainment in the penal colonies²⁴. Domestic entertainments such as mumming could have occurred in venues such as work sheds²⁵ and convict huts²⁶.

Historical Records

'The 'historical record', with its silences, absences and evasions, accidental and deliberate is a most imperfect mirror of 'what happened'²⁷. The fallibility of historical records means that the silence of the records on mumming in Australia cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that mumming did not occur. It may simply reflect that the event was so usual and known that no one saw the need to note its occurrence. The lack of historical evidence may also mean that the event and some of its characteristics (including disguising and going about in the dark possibly armed)²⁸ did not attract attention because the event was not used as a means of critique, in collective social action or in the commission of crimes. There is a high probability that the structure of the penal colonies and settlements precluded its use even as entertainment because elements of the event in other locations were used against the authorities. It may also be that historical records noting the existence of mumming did not survive into the present.

Some elements of mumming - disguise, going about after dark, scaring people, and committing crimes while disguised – do appear in the Australian historical record but not as mumming, and they lack a crucial element, the motivation for the event. When a disguising event occurs but lacks the motivation of entertainment, social engagement, social critique, collective social action, or reciprocity, it isn't mumming. There is one newspaper article of particular interest within the Australian historical record that tells of a lone mummer scaring people²⁹. There are other instances of people using disguise in the commission of a crime³⁰, but given the paucity of evidence in newspapers and other historical records disguise was not a usual part of behaviour, criminal or otherwise. Without evidence of any recognizable mumming events, these historical pieces cannot be other than disguise used as a means of concealing identity and engaging in mischief or crime. These events are occurring without the social context of mumming. Without instances of purposeful or recognizable mumming events occurring

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there are no grounds for noting the historical newspaper reports as mumming events. To make this point clearer: there is anecdotal evidence in Newfoundland³¹ of the lone mummer figure appearing during the Christmas season and in the spring of the year, but the event occurs within a context in which other mumming events were common and expected forms of behaviour and the figures were recognized as mummers.

The lack of mumming in Australia is the result of numerous factors, summarized under the headings of climate, environment, indigenous peoples, and the structure of the Australian penal colony. This paper is an initial inquiry into the penal colony established in New South Wales at Sydney. The penal colony established in Tasmania was situated in a climate and environment different from that in New South Wales. These differences are important to note when looking at the two circumstances and why mumming did not continue as a part of the culture of the British immigrants. Tasmania was a gifted land with ready availability of food in the form of shellfish, kangaroo and wallaby, an abundance of fresh water and a mild climate. New South Wales, in contrast, was a poor source of bush food and extremes in climate made it a poor location in which to establish settlements³².

There are mumming groups within contemporary Australia and New Zealand. As mumming is not widely known or practiced and is not understood as a 'traditional' aspect of Australian culture I regard contemporary mumming as an importation from Britain in the 20th century. None of the group websites make claim to having existed continuously from settlement days, nor make claim to any prior performing groups and knowledge³³.

¹ Dunlap, Thomas R. (1999). *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, Australia. pp. 309-316.

²O'Connor, M.H. and Prober, S.M. (2010). 'A calendar of Ngadju seasonal knowledge'. A report to Ngadju Community and Working Group. CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, Floreat, WA. <http://www.csiro.au/en/Portals/Publications/Research--Reports/Ngadju-Calendar.aspx> – accessed 15 Sept. 2012. 'Seven seasons of the Kulin People', Museum Victoria. www.museumvictoria.com.au/forest/climate/kulin.html – accessed 14 Sept. 2012. Indigenous Weather Knowledge, D'harawal Calendar. <http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/dharawal/index.shtml> – accessed 13 Sept. 2012.

³Moorehead, Alan (1985). *Cooper's Creek: The Real Story of Burke and Wills*. The MacMillan Company of Australia Pty Ltd., South Melbourne Australia. pp. 1-2. I am indebted to Peter Harrop for this fine reference.

⁴Darwin, Charles (1930, 1839). *A Naturalist's Voyage around the World (the Voyage of H.M.S. 'beagle', 1839)*. Oxford World Classics, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Also noted as *A Naturalist's Diary*,

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- ⁵Clendinnen, Inga (2005). *Dancing with Strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne Australia. p. 26.
- ⁶Clendinnen, Inga (2005). *Dancing with Strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact*. Cambridge University Press.
- ⁷Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p.37. Boyce, James (2009). *Van Diemen's Land*. Black Inc., Melbourne, Australia. This book is an excellent history of Van Diemen's Land (later renamed Tasmania) when the island was used as a penal colony by the British, and is an excellent history of relations between the British and indigenous people who resided in Tasmania.
- ⁸Banner, Stuart (2005). 'Why Terra Nullius? Anthropology and Property Law in Early Australia'. *Law and History Review*, 23, pp. 95-131 doi: 10.1017/S073824800000067. Cambridge Journals Online journals.cambridge.org/ Article also available at www.treatynow.wordpress.com/
- ⁹The 'ticket of leave' system was instituted in 1801 with an eye to reducing costs by allowing convicts to be self-employed and to acquire property. They had to remain within a designated area, report to the authorities regularly and, if possible, attend church regularly. Convicts became free when pardoned or the sentence expired. Pardons reduced the length of sentence a convict was to serve, and were granted in recognition of good behaviour, for skills useful to the colony, and for assuming special responsibilities. Under a conditional pardon a person was free but had to remain within a designated area, the colony, until the sentence expired. With an absolute pardon the sentence was remitted and the convict became a free person able to move freely from colony to colony, to own land and become a settler, and to return to Britain.
- ¹⁰Jordan, Robert 2002 (2003). *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. p.27.
- ¹¹Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p.152.
- ¹²Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p.307.
- ¹³Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p.152.
- ¹⁴Jordan, Robert 2002 (2003). *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. p. 29-31.
- ¹⁵Jordan, Robert 2002 (2003). *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. p. 27-28.
- ¹⁶Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). P.110. In the Notes, endnote 3 to Ch. XIII, A.J. Gray notes that among the convict huts constructed in 1788, activities which occurred in the huts came to the attention of the authorities and were recorded in the proceedings of the Criminal Court and the Bench of Magistrates during 1788-9. (The Criminal Court and the Bench of Magistrates proceedings are not accessible online.) What was the nature of these activities – were they performances of some kind, celebrations, rowdy gatherings, recreational violence?
- ¹⁷Gergis, Joelle, Don Garden and Claire Fenby (2010). 'The Influence of Climate on the First

European Settlement of Australia: A Comparison of Weather Journals, Documentary Data and Palaeoclimate Records, 1788-1793' in *Environmental History* 15(3) pp. 485-507.

<http://envhisoxfordjournals.org/> – accessed Sept. 10 2012.

- ¹⁸ Clendinnen, Inga (2005). *Dancing with Strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne Australia. Pp 75-82. Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). pp. 136-7.
- ¹⁹ Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p.136. 'The two last of the transports left us for England on the 19th of November, intending to make their passage by Cape Horn. There now remained with us only the Supply. Sequestered and cut off as we were from the rest of civilized nature, their absence carried the effect of desolation.' p.137.
- ²⁰ Clendinnen, Inga (2005). *Dancing with Strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne Australia. p.248.
- ²¹ David Collins, Judge Advocate of Sydney colony, comments made in January 1798 as quoted in Clendinnen *Dancing with Strangers* may be an indication of the British sensibility towards the Irish: 'Here we find extreme ignorance, accompanied by great cunning, producing cruelty ...Could it be imagined that at this day there was existing in a civilised, polished kingdom a race of beings (for they do not deserve the appellation of men) so extremely ignorant, and so little humanised as these were, compared with whom the naked savages of the mountains were an enlightened people?' There were a number of Irish political prisoners within Sydney colony and they and their countrymen were despised by Collins. pp.244-45.
- ²² Bond, David (1986). 'On Playing Musidors' in *Notes and Queries* (Dec.). <Http://nq.oxfordjournals.org> – accessed 10 August 2012. Hone, William (1878). 'Thomas Airay' and 'Grassington Theatricals', To the Editor, in *the Table Book*. London. pp.35-7,538. Tilke, Samuel Westcott (1840). *An Autobiographical Memoir*. London. pp. 45-8.
- ²³ Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p.152. Jordan, Robert (2003). *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire England. p. 35. (Jordan references David Collins *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* ed. by B. Fletcher, 2 vols. Sydney, A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1975.) Despite fledgling businesses developing in the convict and emancipist classes, Sydney 'must have been a place of stupefying boredom, dominated by its work routine.' Jordan's description of life in Sydney circa 1796, eight years after initial settlement, bears repeating: 'The regiment's drums beat the reveille at 6.00 am and tap to at 8.00 or 9.00 pm, and the bells of the dockyard and lumber yard rang out the work sessions. Here a suffocatingly small elite, locked into one another's company, sat in power over an aggressive assembly of convict and emancipist entrepreneurs, a larger community of seemingly feckless and incorrigible felony, and a growing number of political prisoners who added an edge of insecurity to the prevailing torpor and frustration. Drink, gambling, sexual license and the arrival of a new convict ship from England were projected as the major sources of excitement. So desperate for entertainment were many of the people that the dissection of an executed prisoner by the settlement's doctors attracted a large crowd ...'.
- ²⁴ Jordan, Robert (2003). *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire England. pp. 26-28.
- ²⁵ Jordan, Robert (2003). *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. University of Hertfordshire Press, Hertfordshire England. p. 32. A letter written by Rev. Johnson in 1794 makes

reference to a 'Tile shed (which has since been fitted up, & converted into a play House)'.²⁶

- ²⁶ Tench, Watkin 1789, 1793 (1961). *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). p. 110, Endnote #3, Ch. XIII.
- ²⁷ Clendinnen, Inga (2005). *Dancing with Strangers: Europeans and Australians at first Contact*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne Australia. p.43.
- ²⁸ Lunde, Lynn (2011). 'Illegal Acts in Disguise: Mummings in 19th Century Newfoundland'. Unpublished paper. Discussion of the characteristics of mummings which made it available as an accepted social event which could carry critiques of and activities against authorities.
- ²⁹ Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, Sat. May 2 1812. 'A Ghost was detected in Aug. last at Kensington Gore, after a repetition of its antics for several nights, to the great terror of the neighbourhood. His detection was effected by a large dog, whose master had flown with precipitation from the ghost, which the dog immediately gave chase to, and after tearing off its disguise, obliged the presumptuous spirit to call aloud for mortal aid. When apprehended, the rash imposter acknowledged himself the son of a neighbouring builder, and would have been dismissed, had not several persons come up whom he had dreadfully scared. It was immediately determined he should be ducked, which was performed accordingly; and the unfortunate ghost was allowed to pursue his wandering inclination.' www.trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper – accessed 8 March 2012. This is the only instance I could find when disguise was used to create mischief and used in a manner consistent with a mummings disguise.
- ³⁰ Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, Sun. Sept. 17 1809. Persons entered a house and attacked the owner. The victim identified one of the attackers - 'that the face of the prisoner was a little blackened but not sufficiently to disguise him'. There are several other instances of disguise being used in the commission of crimes over several years – refer to www.trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper – accessed 8 March 2012.
- ³¹ Robertson, Margaret M. (1984). 'The Newfoundland Mummings' Christmas House-visit'. Paper for Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies #49. National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. The lone mummer figure is briefly noted on pg.13. The practice of tricks and scaring people, making mischief, is located on pp. 50-52. Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archives has extensive material on mummings in Newfoundland in the form of anecdotal evidence collected by folklore students over many years.
- ³² Boyce, James (2009). *Van Diemen's Land*. Black Inc., Melbourne, Australia. pp. 2-3. The Introduction is a quick overview of the convict society which developed in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). The radically different experience of life in Van Diemen's Land from that in New South Wales requires that the question of a lack of mummings in Australia should be considered within the two different environments and histories of colonial development.
- ³³ A search on YouTube and Google will display several websites with Australian content.