

Archaeology in The Rocks, Sydney, 1979-1993: from Old Sydney Gaol to Mrs Lewis' Boarding-house

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Over thirty projects have been carried out by archaeologists since 1979 in the Rocks area of Sydney, producing the largest body of data available to Australian historical archaeologists. This account of the way that archaeology has been carried out in the Rocks is set in the context of current notions of historical archaeology's potential scholarly contribution, and of the methodology needed for its realisation. A selection of findings is presented in the hope that their consideration by the archaeological community may lead towards their incorporation into wider research frameworks. The paper concludes with a discussion of the author's work at the 'Jobbins Building', which attempts to address some of the theoretical problems raised earlier.

The Rocks presently covers 21 hectares of land at the northern end of the Central Business District, bounded by Grosvenor Street, the east side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Bradfield Highway and the western side of Circular Quay. Traditionally it comprised the whole peninsula including what is now called Millers Point. The area's location and history have produced its heritage and archaeological significance.¹

The Sydney area was occupied by the Aboriginal Eora people from prehistoric times, until invaded by Europeans. The Union Jack was raised in Sydney Cove on Sunday 26th January 1788. According to Captain Hunter's survey of March 1788, specific activities and sites had already been established around the cove: a hospital complex including a garden, a bakehouse and oven, two sets of male and female convict tents, dwellings for parson, judge, governor, provost and sites of an observatory, parade ground, stores, blacksmith and marine encampment. The area on the west side of the cove, known as the Rocks, has been continuously occupied ever since.²

Despite the outcrops of sandstone which gave it its name, and the steeply sloping ridge the Harbour Bridge was later built along, the Rocks' proximity to the waterfront ensured its importance to the colony, and gave it a distinctively maritime character. Following the outbreak of the bubonic plague in 1900, the Rocks was resumed by the government, and several run-down and overcrowded areas were demolished as part of the 'cleansing' operations. The construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Bradfield Highway during the 1920s further splintered the community, separating Millers Point from the Rocks. The scale and spatial patterns established during the early colonial period survived, however.

In the 1960s and early 1970s the inner city was restructured as investment capital poured into the built environment. In 1960 development proposals for the Rocks were invited by the Labor government. The proposals received emphasised planning concepts such as pedestrian traffic flow, and open space residential precincts. The winning proposal stated that 'although a careful examination has been made of the area, it has been finally concluded that there are few existing features of historical and architectural interest that warrant special efforts of retention.' It planned, however, to keep Cadman's Cottage as a museum, first dismantling and re-erecting it in York Street, so that 'this feature will form a subtle link with history without aggravating problems of physical planning.' This plan did not proceed, but a new one, the Overall Scheme, did, recommending the creation of a statutory authority to implement it.³

In 1968 the *Sydney Cove Redevelopment Act* incorporated the Authority (SCRA, now SCA) which still administers the

Rocks, and it began operations in 1970 with the charter to restore, renovate and redevelop the area.⁴ But before the scheme could be initiated, the Builders' Labourers' Federation, in alliance with various residents' action groups, imposed a series of environmentally-prompted strikes at several sites in the Rocks. These were the 'Green Bans', which successfully halted about \$4 billion worth of construction in Sydney.⁵ By the mid 1970s the SCRA scheme had altered to incorporate the notion of integrated planning, with an emphasis on cultural, social and historic values, and the retention of the resident community of the Rocks.⁶

It was not until more recently, however, that the archaeological significance of the Rocks was recognised. The following brief outline of the development of archaeological resource management in the Rocks provides a context for work carried out in the area which is necessary to an understanding of its current structure. The first excavation project was the 'Old Sydney Gaol' site in 1979. This rescue dig took place before the construction of the Regent of Sydney complex. Although on Authority land, on the corner of Essex and George Streets, the excavation was initiated and financed by the Heritage Council of NSW.⁷

Several minor digs followed this project, for example at 'Reynolds Cottage', Harrington Street, sponsored by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, and at Cadman's Cottage, George Street, sponsored by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW.⁸ The next major excavation was carried out at the Lilyvale Cottage site in 1989, now the 49-storey ANA Hotel. This project was funded by the developer, as a condition of development approval imposed by the newly heritage-conscious Sydney Cove Authority, which was starting to drop the 'Redevelopment' from its title. The evidence recovered from the Lilyvale site was unexpectedly substantial, and more money was made available by the Authority for post-excavation artefact cataloguing and analysis. The highly visible success of this project encouraged more interest in the archaeological resource of the area. As a result several monitoring projects followed which provided for archaeological supervision of road and building works, and which included a stop-work clause should significant material be encountered. Since the Lilyvale project, over thirty projects have been carried out in the area.

In 1991 an 'Archaeological Management Plan for the Rocks and Millers Point' was produced, jointly funded by the Dept of Planning and the Sydney Cove Authority, and aiming to assist local government facilities in the area to meet their legislative obligations with respect to the archaeological resource.⁹ This plan identified sites in both suburbs and made recommenda-

tions for their management, to be implemented by qualified archaeologists.

Several features of the developments outlined above present problems for the practice of archaeology. Local constraints lie in the New South Wales heritage framework for archaeological investigation, which usually allows only for site-specific projects to be carried out, lacks scope for synthesis or in-depth analysis, and awards contracts on the basis of proposal cost, sometimes to the detriment of the quality of analysis. In addition, contractual restriction to supplemental data gathering, thus relegating historical archaeology to a service industry, has always been a problem, paralleled elsewhere and perhaps only soluble by the insistence of archaeologists on adequate problem-oriented research designs.¹⁰ The 'de-archaeologising' of a site to fulfill legislative requirements has sometimes resulted in purely reactive 'monitoring' projects which have produced mere descriptions of holes in the ground and small, useless assortments of artefacts. Further, the geographical limits of the Rocks and the preliminary nature of much of the work done limit the analytic scale of this discussion. The most challenging problem facing historical archaeologists in the area, however, is the development of theoretical and methodological frameworks within which on-going research may be located.

The Contribution of Historical Archaeology

Since its inception debates within historical archaeology have sought to identify the discipline's proper aims, function and methodology, both in America and Australia.¹¹ To this end, Kathleen Deagan defined five main purposes of historical archaeology: historical supplementation, reconstruction of past lifeways, processual studies, archaeological science and cognitive studies.¹² More recently, Barbara Little has argued that Deagan's second, third and fifth categories are subsumed under historical ethnography: 'Everyday life, cognition and cultural process all must be considered in constructing historical ethnography...it no longer makes sense to attempt one without the other'.¹³

The 'questions that count' in historical archaeology are broadly agreed upon.¹⁴ For example, Leone and Potter argue that we have no choice but to accept that our subject be the emergence and development of capitalism.¹⁵ Deagan also claims that:

New World colonialism, Western expansion, the rise of capitalism and its myriad related issues offer an important focus for modern historical archaeology...[e.g.] the development of new means of production, accumulation, distribution and human social organisation. Slavery, imperialism, class formation, cultural syncretism, the manifestation of economic inequality among classes, consumer choice behaviour and accelerated environmental degradation...¹⁶

These questions have structured a range of substantial studies in the discipline, and can be considered in the light of recent work in the Australian context.¹⁷ For example, Grace Karskens and Wendy Thorp have reviewed the historical framework for archaeological data, delineating questions which 'are relevant to archaeological evidence...[and are] now being explored and argued by urban and social historians...'. They examine Sydney's transformation from pre-industrial, late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century society 'based on rank and deference, lacking a middle class and with the hallmarks of pre-industrial culture, to the class-based, separatist, industrial-style society of the 1880s', which is a timely and appropriate conceptual framework.¹⁸ More specifically, Karskens' research design for the Cumberland Street site in the Rocks (analysis in progress) asks:

'When and how did the industrial revolution, with its factory time, its separation of work and home, new

concepts and practices of time discipline and punctuality, standard wages and external rules governing the relationship between employer and worker, emerge in the everyday lives of Rocks people? What of modern ideas about families, home life, the body, drinking, death and the ideal role of women as subservient homemakers infused with the cult of domesticity? Were they accepted, modified or rejected by Rocks people?'.¹⁹

These questions represent an important step forward by locating the archaeological project within a sophisticated historical framework.

The Methodological Gap

But while these aims are admirable, it is methodology, and especially the effective use of both archaeological and documentary records in the implementation of theoretical frameworks, which has been widely seen as a crucial problem.²⁰ As Little points out, 'It is not, however, difficult to find questions that count concerning the modern world after A.D.1500; what is difficult is finding a unique way of addressing them'.²¹ There is broad agreement that historical archaeology's 'unique capability of gaining simultaneous access to the past through multiple, independent categories of evidence' is its great strength.²² Exactly how to do this, avoiding the 'bifurcation of data and text' is the puzzle.²³

Mark Leone has proposed a method analogous to Binford's middle range theory.²⁴ Substituting documentary evidence for the ethnographic record used in Binford's model, he suggests that by assigning the archaeological and documentary evidence different epistemological statuses we may be able to see them as 'independent and unidentical phenomena'.²⁵ Rather than a confrontational approach which seeks silences and disagreements, this relationship need not be a dialogue, but rather a more discursively complex plurality of voices; as Judy Birmingham has noted, 'at times the two records...go past each other without apparent engagement'.²⁶ More recently, Leone has discussed the 'recursivity' of material culture and documentary evidence.²⁷ Interrogation of the data prompts questions which demand independent converging lines of evidence for their resolution, and the combination of sources becomes greater than the sum of their parts.

A recent concern with the symbolic dimensions of material culture has become influential, notably through contextual archaeology.²⁸ Leone has stressed that '...material culture, like language and all other human actions, is symbolic and communicates actively; it is not just or only reflective'.²⁹ Because the relationship between behaviour and material culture depends on the action of individuals within particular culture-historical contexts, archaeologists 'need to make abstractions from the symbolic functions of the objects they excavate in order to identify the meaning content behind them, and this involves examining how the ideas denoted by material symbols themselves play a part in structuring society'.³⁰ This aspect of contextual archaeology is particularly relevant for historical archaeology, which has provided the most successful examples of symbolic and structural archaeology to date.³¹

Gender as an analytic category is another approach which has come to be seen as a fundamental social structuring principle that intersects with other social structures and processes. Understanding how gender roles were defined and operated therefore supplies an important perspective on past social dynamics. Furthermore, by questioning modern assumptions about past gender arrangements, archaeologists can develop a theoretically and methodologically self-aware, self-critical perspective, employing independent, converging lines of evidence.³²

I argue that historical and particularly urban archaeology may benefit from an approach incorporating the following features. First, a focus on historical and ideological context: this may encompass broad frameworks of historical process

such as changing gender ideology, industrialisation, and urbanisation as well as the contemporary meaning content of artefacts and material culture. Second, the development of a recursive relationship between the archaeological and documentary records, which is complementary and plurivocal rather than confrontational. Third, the exploration of the symbolic dimensions of material culture, and its interactive relationship with ideology, both expressing and creating. These elements may lead towards closer links between general questions and theories and empirical data.

The following discussion is *not* intended to be an overview, which suggests, as Paul Carter has written, the 'panoramic eye before whose gaze the historical facts unfold'.³³ Rather, it addresses a few of the diverse research issues stemming from work carried out in the Rocks which are contributing to our understanding of past society. These include our knowledge of Aboriginal culture prior to European invasion, as well as after contact, early European settlement at Sydney Cove, and the nature of late nineteenth-century social transformations such as urbanisation and the development of gender ideology. Rather than being a critique, I have attempted primarily to present results to date, stressing the positive achievements of work in the area.

The First Occupants

Little is known of the Rocks' original inhabitants, the Eora people, but at the Lilyvale site, evidence was found for Aboriginal occupation of the Rocks prior to European settlement. Here a midden built up from food waste was excavated by Val Attenbrow of the Australian Museum. Attenbrow's publication of the data is incorporated into a discussion of the development of criteria for distinguishing between natural accumulations of shell and Aboriginal shell middens.³⁴ The midden was just below the top of the ridge separating the Rocks and Millers Point, about 30 metres above high tide level, overlooking a small bay into which the Tank Stream flowed. At the time, Sydney Cove's shores were rocky, with mudflats around the mouth of the stream. The midden was radiocarbon dated to around 340 years before European settlement (adjusted and calibrated central date 502CAL BP or 1448 AD). It was small, and comprised only shell, fishbone and charcoal, suggesting that it represented only a single meal or snack for a small group of people. The range of species included fourteen shellfish, mainly rock oyster (*Saccostrea cucullata/commercialis*) (83%) and hairy mussel (*Trichomya hirsuta*) (11%), similar to other middens found in the middle and upper estuarine reaches of Port Jackson.³⁵

Contact

With the arrival of Europeans in 1788, traditional Aboriginal culture was altered forever. Contact between Aborigines and Europeans is an area which has recently begun to engage the attention of archaeologists.³⁶ Tim Murray has claimed that the value of these sites, while as yet under-theorised, 'stems from their status as places where a shared history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal began. Contact sites are concrete representations of the beginnings of this shared history as well as the beginnings of the more recent phase of Aboriginal history. By extension, these sites are significant documents for all Australians...'³⁷

In Sydney, several historical archaeological sites have yielded evidence of Aboriginal contact and adaptation in the form of worked European glass. These include the Jobbins Building, the Rocks; Paddys Market, Darling Harbour; First Government House, Sydney Cove; and several sites at Parramatta.³⁸ These may reflect the presence of Aboriginal people in the area before or at the same time as Europeans. Evidence for 'contact' between Aboriginal and European culture comes from sites occupied by Aboriginal people leading their traditional way of life, who continued to occupy

them after coming into contact with European culture. This may be evidenced by Aboriginal re-working of European material culture, such as glass.

At Moore's Wharf, Millers Point, European ceramics were found in the top layer of an Aboriginal camp-site, which was located beneath an 1836 European structure. This suggested that Aboriginal use of the site continued well into the historic period, concurrently with the burgeoning European settlement around the point. No edge damage or similar evidence for use can be seen on these items, which occur in a sealed shell midden layer. Evidence for traditional Aboriginal life, including a range of stone tools, typical of a number of coastal sites around Sydney and southwards at least as far as Bateman's Bay, was also found at this site. For example, implements described as fabricators (scalar cores) were found. These were thought to have been used to produce tiny flakes possibly to barb spears used for hunting and fishing. Other tools recovered included edge polished flakes, small scrapers and elongate flakes with edge damage, and a possible fish hook file. Overall, the evidence from these sites is typical of those in shoreline locations along the central and southern coasts of NSW. While in residence, the Aborigines' subsistence was marine-based. They fished with hook and line, and gathered shellfish from the intertidal zone, speared fish with multi-pronged spears and less frequently, hunted land animals.³⁹ At the Moore's Wharf site, the evidence suggested the continuation of this lifestyle well into the historic period, and supplies a missing Aboriginal perspective on this period in the colony's history.

Early European settlement

At the same time, just over the ridge to the south-east, the European colony was developing. Evidence for the early decades of European occupation of Sydney has been recovered from several sites in the Rocks, notably the Lilyvale site, which is located on the block bounded by Cumberland Street, Essex Street, the Cahill Expressway and Gloucester Lane. We know from documentary sources that by 1816 the south-west area of this block, fronting Essex Street, was owned by John Anthony and Captain Edwards, of the brig *Nautilus*, who offered 'Myrtle Cottage' for sale in that year: 'a most desirable residence containing four rooms, detached premises behind, with kitchen and a two stall stable', as well as a garden with fruit trees.⁴⁰

In 1821 part of the block was bought by a dealer of Brickfield Hill who built 'Geranium Cottage' to the north, in the location of the later Lilyvale Cottage but set further back from Cumberland Street. Archaeological evidence for Myrtle and Geranium Cottages was recovered during excavation, giving details of their construction and site layout. In her draft report on the project Wendy Thorp states that 'the quality of the everyday objects that were used and which furnished the houses [also] testifies to their affluence, comfort and materially rich and varied existence.'⁴¹

The large scale excavation which took place on the site in 1989 recovered evidence of another building to the north. This house was claimed in 1833 by Jane Chandler, who was then 52 years old, having gained her freedom after 17 years servitude. Her husband William was a stonemason, at that time on conditional pardon, and they had two children, Samuel, aged 18 and Thomas, aged 16. The family had been living in the Cumberland Street house in 1828, which according to her memorial stood on the block's eastern boundary. It must have been built after 1796, as a coin of that date found in the construction debris shows. It was perhaps built or acquired by Jane Chandler after gaining her freedom in 1807.⁴²

Archaeological evidence for the building is similar to that found for Myrtle Cottage and Thorp suggests that it was built around 1810. Archaeological evidence indicates that it was single storey and was roofed with sandstock tiles. The front door appears to have been in the north wall at its eastern corner,

with a fireplace in the centre of the southern wall. There was no evidence that the house had a wooden floor, but there were few artefacts in the surface, suggesting that it was either covered dirt, was frequently cleaned, or there was a timber floor. Nor was there evidence for internal subdivisions of the space. On the east side of the house was a narrow two metre wide courtyard, with an enclosed space or room, one metre square. The walls of the courtyard and small room had been continuously whitewashed, although sheet refuse was evident around the house. The Chandlers' lifestyle was comfortable, as indicated by their household possessions, such as a range of porcelains, including Chinese, creamwares and pearlwares, and transfer-printed fine earthenware in a variety of patterns. Local ceramics were also present. Thorp suggests that 'this mix of fine wares and what may have been fairly spartan interiors...perhaps, in Sydney, was the sign of an upwardly mobile convict.'⁴³

Thorp compares the Chandler household with evidence for another house further north which included a surface scatter indicating nearby demolition. Although no structural remains of this house survived, unlike the Chandler house, its well was located, halfway between Gloucester Lane and Cumberland Street. This had been filled with the demolition material, as well as the occupants' household rubbish. The building remains 'were all consistent in type, material and style with the traces left of Myrtle and Geranium Cottages and the Chandler house', suggesting that it was built between c.1800-1810. The household refuse comprised broken ceramics, glass, tobacco pipes, and metal artefacts. Some of the ceramics date between 1786 and 1820. Most notably, large quantities of expensive ceramics were found. There were five Spode patterns: 'Waterloo', 'Lange Lijsen', 'Italian', 'Castle' and an unnamed design. A set of 'Peonies and Bird' style china by the firm of G.M. and C.J. Mason, and 'Village and Church' were also recovered. In addition, there were snuff bottles, stemmed wine glasses, tumblers and decanters.⁴⁴

Thorp suggests that the differences between this house, as well as Myrtle and Geranium Cottages on the one hand, and the Chandler household on the other, may have been due to the former being occupied by ex-convicts. She states that the Chandlers appear to have been less affluent than their neighbours, and that the 'unusual arrangements' of their house (i.e. the courtyard and 'small room') 'may indicate work space as well as residential needs'. While little evidence of household possessions were recovered from the early Chandler house area, she argues that the lack of fine ceramics such as Spode, which was found in quantities to the north, may reflect the Chandlers' less affluent status, as ex-convicts.⁴⁵

But unfortunately, the Chandlers left little household refuse by comparison with the 'Spode' house, and the absence of such evidence cannot be taken as evidence that it did not, in the past, exist. Rather, without comparable assemblages, claims regarding the comparative standards of living of ex-convicts and free lifestyles must remain hypothetical. Moreover, the study of consumer behaviour is complex, and behavioural variables such as ethnicity, the availability of goods or resources, individual preference, household size and composition and dietary function as well as socio-economic status may affect consumer choice, which represents only one stage in the transformations undergone by material objects before becoming part of the archaeological record.⁴⁶ It is therefore misleading to make direct correlations between status and artefact categories because this disregards the complexity of the archaeological record. Furthermore, Graham Wilson has questioned assumptions about the contemporary significance and availability of Spode. He has pointed to the perhaps unexpected proliferation of this presumably expensive ware in archaeological contexts around Sydney, suggesting that the ware was marketed aggressively here. He cites as an example the existence of 'Spodes Crockery Warehouse', a ceramic retailer operating in Sydney in the 1830s.⁴⁷

Despite these problems, the questions raised by this material — what *were* the material dimensions of early colonial social organisation? — are extremely worthwhile, and the forthcoming Lilyvale report will constitute a valuable resource. The Cumberland Street project, currently in progress on a site to the north of Lilyvale, is likely to produce comparative early material.⁴⁸

Urbanisation and Transformation

As the nineteenth century advanced, Sydney's increasingly rapid urbanisation was accompanied by massive social change, characterised by rapid and sustained growth, a deterioration in living conditions, and a large population of casual workers.⁴⁹ General concern for the housing of Sydney's transients was prompted by worsening urban conditions; while there was no government social welfare in the second half of the nineteenth century, institutions such as Benevolent Institutions, Sailors' Homes, Immigrants' Homes and the Magdalen Asylum were set up to address the problems of urbanisation.⁵⁰

In the Rocks, sailors could stay at the Sydney Sailors Home located at 106 George Street from the early 1860s. Archaeological excavation of the Cadman's Cottage site was carried out by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1989. Excavation of a refuse deposit from the neighbouring Home, dated from the mid 1860s to mid 1870s, produced large purple printed fine earthenware platters, which were used to serve food to the sailors.⁵¹ As the 'Vagabond', journalist in disguise, reported of the Melbourne Sailors Home in 1876, the meat was all fried up together with a liberal allowance of onions and 'served up on great dishes, without any pretence of distinction of viand'.⁵²

There was a common perception that the Sailors' Home was responsible for the moral improvement of the sailor, chiefly in terms of temperance. In a discussion of the history and archaeology of the Sydney Sailors' Home, Denis Gojak and Nadia Iacono examine the way that the ideal,

'making sailors conform to late Victorian images of appropriate behaviour...[transforming them] from a stigmatised social underclass, effectively on the periphery of society, to an effective labour force', was challenged by the archaeological evidence.

For instance, they argue that 'The grog bottles which should not have been there hint at continuing resistance to an imposed order'.⁵³

Ethnicity

In an example of the way that past ideologies can be addressed through historical archaeology, Denis Gojak has shown how class-based expressions of ideology and resistance can be understood through material culture.⁵⁴ Evidence for 'New World Nationalism' and the construction of colonial identity during the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries was found at Cadmans Cottage in the form of a glass disc on which is painted an early, unofficial coat of arms, incorporating motifs such as a sheaf of wheat.⁵⁵ This indicates that by the 1850s 'there was already a secure and widely used language of symbolism employed to represent Australia'. Further, 'old world' ethnicity was expressed by political slogans stamped on clay tobacco pipes and by use of particular pipe forms. Irish pipes were associated with emigrants to Britain and Australia, especially labourers, and Gojak argues that their use was a symbolic expression of Irish national identity in Sydney.⁵⁶

Evidence for another ethnic group, the Chinese, was found at Samsons Cottage, Kendall Lane, where an 1844 building was demolished around the end of the nineteenth century to form backyards to tenements fronting George Street.⁵⁷ A phase of use was associated with Chinese merchant Hong On Jang's occupation of one of the tenements for his shipping providoring business between 1916 and 1924.⁵⁸ The Chinese are an ethnic group which is very visible in the archaeological

record, and so have been the subject of several historical archaeological studies both in Australasia and in north America.⁵⁹ Assimilation and acculturation have been the focus of research, and especially material correlates with traditional cultural practices or ethnic boundary markers. At Samsons Cottage, construction techniques, cooking vessels and medicinal vials indicate the maintenance of traditional Chinese practices. A heavy reliance on fish was accompanied by consumption of a wide range of meat which may indicate dietary adaptation to the wide range of meat available. This data may with further study reveal more regarding interaction between the Chinese and the European Rocks community.⁶⁰

Boarding-houses, urbanisation and gender ideology

The following discussion presents some of my own research, addressing the theoretical problems raised earlier. In this study I have attempted to link empirical data to broad conceptual frameworks, examining the interactive nature of world view and material culture through developing a recursive relationship between the archaeological and historical records. Using the notion of gender as a fundamental structuring principle, intersecting with broad processes of change such as industrialisation and urbanisation, I have attempted to account for the role of material culture in expressing as well as reflecting late nineteenth-century ideology.

In the Rocks, transience and temporary accommodation had always been prevalent, but changes in economic conditions and gender organisation in the late nineteenth century led to the proliferation of boarding-houses, which provided for the port's visitors as well as for women trapped between the ideology of domesticity and the reality of survival. Changes to family structure included the rise of what has been termed the cult of domesticity, which stressed the importance of the family as a private retreat from the world, and the loss of housework's economic and productive value.⁶¹ Together with widespread poverty during the late nineteenth century, this meant that many, and especially lone women with young children, faced destitution, deprived of a place in the labour market.⁶²

While some see boarding-house keeping as representing a conflict between domesticity and business,⁶³ others see this merging of home and work as offering certain advantages to women, enabling them to support themselves and their dependants without having to work in public, transgressing the code of respectability. Running a boarding-house was seen as a socially acceptable form of work for women because it was an expansion of women's work in the home.⁶⁴ Furthermore, boarding-house keepers have been seen as 'surrogate parents', alleviating concerns regarding traditional morality and the threats of industrialisation.⁶⁵

Insight into the range of conditions offered by different boarding and lodging establishments in Sydney in 1861 is given by the report of a select committee investigating the state of shore accommodation of seamen. The nine witnesses called distinguished between boarding-houses and common lodging-houses on the basis of cost, length of stay, class of lodger, conditions, whether board was offered, type of proprietor, and whether runners or touts were kept. Common lodging-houses were also known as sixpenny lodging-houses, charging 4pence or 6pence per night. The better quality boarding-houses, often frequented by diggers and sailors, cost 15shillings-1 pound per week.⁶⁶

Mr Richard Seymour, Inspector of Nuisances stated that, 'Boarding-houses are where sailors and people along the wharves come in and reside for a week or a fortnight. They are a different class of house — clean and respectable, the food clean, and so on; but these common lodging-houses, some of them, are in a most frightful state... There are some boarding-houses on the Rocks, but they are generally inhabited by sailors — in Cumberland-street, Gloucester-street, and Harrington-street — where they pay so much a week for board and lodging.'⁶⁷

This implies that these were of better quality than the sixpenny lodging-houses to be found along the east side of Darling Harbour, in Clarence, Goulburn, Kent and Sussex Streets.

But the actual conditions of life in the boarding-house are not easy to recover from documentary sources. Archaeological evidence for Mrs Ann Lewis' late nineteenth-century Rocks boarding-house has built up a picture of the everyday conditions prevailing in her household, as well as for the ideological role of the material culture. This evidence comes from the excavation of a privy deposit dated to the boarding-house occupation period of a terrace within 'Jobbins Building', 103-111 Gloucester Street, erected by ex-convict John Jobbins ca. 1856. The site was excavated by the author over several months from 1992-3.⁶⁸

While the Longs Lane precinct contained 'backyards, filthy and consisting of a water closet placed at the back door, [which] were hardly worth the name,' the substantial Gloucester Street terraces were comfortable, and their tenants well-off, reflecting the Rocks' great socio-economic mix.⁶⁹ Archaeological excavation in the rear yard of 111 Gloucester Street recovered the contents of the terrace's cesspit, which was cut into bedrock to a depth of over three metres. Although it was emptied regularly by the city council, a sealed deposit remained which was dated to before 1865 on the basis of a Water Board plan of that date showing the installation of a drainage line, which stratigraphically cut into it, and effectively ended its use. A line is shown on a Water Board plan of 1865, running from Carahers Lane, and also north across the site. This layout was confirmed through excavation.⁷⁰

The cesspit deposit comprises almost four hundred objects, which appear to have been thrown away over a short time span, possibly only a week or two, and indicate a method of disposal such as a household cleanup. As Praetzelis *et. al* have argued, tracing the transformations between the objects' original use and their context of discovery allows us to understand the way the household functioned.⁷¹ A range of household activities and individual proclivities is evident which apparently reflect a portion of the occupancy of Mrs Lewis and her boarders between 1861 and 1873.⁷² Evidence for the occupants' diet indicates that they enjoyed a range of food and drink. The faunal remains included those of chicken, sheep, cattle, pig, and fish. Most of the bones represent pre-dressed retail cuts, but a disproportionate number of sheep phalanges, today discarded as waste, possibly reflects their purchase for communal meals such as soup, a pattern noted at other sites in the Rocks.⁷³

Family life is evidenced, and individual preference is suggested by several examples of a small number of forms — for example, three of the same type of perfume, and eight of the same kind of medicine for stomach complaints. The consumer may of course, have dumped his or her cache of empties all at once, but if it does accurately reflect consumption then it indicates either a severe stomach complaint, or perhaps reliance on the high alcohol or opiate content of most patent medicines of this time. A north American study, of the Boott Mills boarding-houses at Lowell, Massachusetts, showed that there was a heavy consumption of proprietary medicines by Boott inhabitants, interpreted as due in part to their high drug content, affording women a private, socially acceptable means of consumption.⁷⁴ Mrs Lewis' ceramic assemblage was dominated by dinner plates, suggesting an individual rather than communal table service, such as was evidenced at the Sailors' Home in the same period.

A broader picture of life in the boarding-house was given by evidence from the house and yard, where underfloor deposits, typical of late nineteenth century sites in the Rocks, indicate that the inhabitants tolerated a consequently high level of odour and rodent activity.⁷⁵ The yard space behind the terrace showed that rubbish, much of it burnt, had been thrown into the yard throughout its use, including during Mrs Lewis' tenancy,

in the form of sheet refuse, despite city-wide rubbish collection by the end of the century. Within the context of nineteenth century attitudes, however, this was not unusual, and does not indicate a low standard of living. Rather, by contemporary standards, the evidence suggests a comfortable lifestyle, with a varied and good quality diet, a range of personal items including jewellery and clothing, and household furnishings. I argue that the communal and private patterns of purchase and consumption represent the archaeological dimension of boarding-house life, and that different categories of artefacts reflect these intersecting behaviours.⁷⁶

The assemblage also reveals something of the complex Victorian ideology of 'respectability'. Respectability was closely tied to economic status, its first qualification being regularity of income. Outward appearances, including dress and cleanliness, were vital to its achievement.⁷⁷ Within the domestic environment, women structured social interaction through dining rituals; the way that women, as household decision-makers, selected and used tablewares reflects differences in the construction and maintenance of domestic life. Tea-wares, for example, have been found to play an important part in the construction of middle class domesticity, either to distinguish home life from the commercial marketplace, or to impress and assert status.⁷⁸

The most unusual component of the assemblage was a number of sets of 'breakfast cups' and saucers. These are large, of simple form, and of thick robust china. Although they make up cup-and-saucer sets, they do not form a service, as they carry different, but similar, decorative schemes. They include white moulded, blue transfer printed, and especially purple transfer printed patterns of different kinds, which however bear decorative motifs of similar scale, colour and pattern. Despite the lack of decorative uniformity, their dimensions are almost identical. The fact that there are equal numbers of cups and saucers which form *sets*, might suggest a household accident rather than breakage during use or washing-up, for example, which would create a less symmetrical pattern. Although they were made and perhaps purchased separately, their uniformity suggests that they conform loosely to a standard or model type required by Mrs Lewis' household routine. It seems likely that they were used for serving her boarders; they do not, however, appear to be for communal dining in the same way as the Sailors' Home vessels. They are utilitarian but reflect Mrs Lewis' personal choice of specific decorative schemes (especially purple printed wares) and functional types of vessel.

Mrs Lewis took care, when she purchased the dinner plates and the breakfast cups and saucers, to select items conforming to broad types. They represent selection and appropriation by a consumer creating her environment; they do not merely reflect, but actively constitute culture.⁷⁹ These patterns reflect not merely communal meals, but Mrs Lewis' intentions of presenting a coordinated table-setting, and her care for public appearances. Mrs Lewis' household possessions reveal the economic need to keep up the appearance of respectability. Domestic life, especially where the private became public, as in a boarding-house, became a mode of presenting the self to the wider world. As 'surrogate parents', these women provided an essential service in the Rocks, but more importantly, as indicated by the archaeological evidence, were enabled to support themselves and still conform to contemporary ideals of feminine behaviour.

Conclusion

While this discussion has been selective, omitting substantial but as yet under-researched sites such as 'Reynold's Cottage', 28–32 Harrington Street, the Observer Hotel, and the 'Counting House', enough has been said to indicate the diversity of research issues and studies already carried out, or susceptible to further inquiry.⁸⁰ The archaeological record of the Rocks' history offers Australian historical archaeologists

an unrivalled resource. This is because it covers a period from the present extending back to before European invasion, and most significantly, because it is the largest, and most dense archaeological record of European settlement in Australia. It has been collected in accordance with standard archaeological procedures, and is housed by the Sydney Cove Authority, together with documentation, including reports and a computer data-base of catalogued artefacts. But this resource needs further analysis by researchers. They may need to re-work the data: to re-examine artefact classifications and phasing, or to correlate results across sites to enable comparisons to be made. It is only by taking concrete steps to bridge the gap between abstract theory and empirical data that specific methods will be developed, and that results more sophisticated and convincing than site reports will emerge.

The historical paradigms and questions amenable to historical archaeological investigation are many. The history of the Rocks can be viewed within a framework of industrialisation or capitalism, or as context for more specific studies such as expressions of Irish nationalism or Victorian notions of gender. While contextual historical frameworks have been neglected in the past, they have now begun to be produced, allowing us to understand the contemporary importance and meaning of everyday practice and material culture. Examining the ways that the ideas represented by material symbols structure society allows us to address the structured content of ideas and symbols. The development of methods which connect the raw data to these broader questions have yet to be developed, however; I have argued that a recursive relationship between the archaeological and documentary records may provide a means to do so. Such a relationship develops in response to specific problems, based on data relevant to the questions being posed. Finally, the exploration of the symbolic and interactive nature of material culture and ideology provides a means to link theory and data, and to realise historical archaeology's unique but elusive potential.

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NOTES

1. For a fuller treatment of the area's history and management see Blackmore 1988; Thomson 1988; Logan 1991.
2. Hunter's Survey of Sydney Cove, March 1788.
3. Blackmore 1988:130.
4. Thomson 1988.
5. Munday 1981.
6. Logan 1991; Thomson 1988.
7. Burritt 1980. This material is now housed by the Powerhouse Museum, but is not accessible.
8. Excavation of the Harrington Street well was carried out by Neridah Wyatt-Spratt following preparation of a conservation report, Stephany and Wyatt-Spratt 1986. No excavation report was produced. For excavation of Cadman's Cottage see Gojak 1989.
9. Higginbotham, Kass and Walker 1991.
10. See for example Deagan 1982:159; Schiffer and Gumerman 1977:16; South 1977:294.

11. For American debates see for example Deagan 1982:158-170; Deagan 1988; Schuyler 1978; Schuyler 1987; Leone and Potter 1988. For Australian debates see for example Bairstow 1984; Murray and Allen 1986.
12. Deagan 1982.
13. Little 1994:6-9. Robert Schuyler (1987) has also proposed an approach to what he terms 'historic ethnography' — the anthropological use of ethnohistory in a method which involves a conception of culture as contextualised within 'functional units with temporal and spatial boundaries' (Schuyler 1988:40).
14. See for example Honerkamp 1987.
15. Leone and Potter 1988:19.
16. Deagan 1988:9.
17. See for example Spencer-Wood 1987, Paynter and McGuire 1992, and see Little 1994 for summary.
18. Karskens and Thorp 1992:56.
19. Godden Mackay P/L and Karskens 1994:27.
20. Leone and Potter 1988; Schuyler 1988; Murray 1991; Birmingham 1990.
21. Little 1994:14.
22. Deagan 1988.
23. Leone 1992:130.
24. Leone 1989; Leone and Potter 1988; Binford 1987.
25. Leone 1989:33; Birmingham 1990:14-15.
26. Birmingham 1990:14.
27. Leone 1992:131.
28. See for example Hodder 1985; 1986; 1987; 1989.
29. Leone 1992:131.
30. Hodder 1986:121.
31. Murray 1988:105.
32. See for example Wylie, 1992; Gilchrist 1991. For a discussion of gender in Australian historical archaeology see Lydon forthcoming.
33. Carter 1988:xix.
34. Attenbrow 1992.
35. Attenbrow 1992:6, 20.
36. See for example Colley and Bickford in press; Birmingham 1992.
37. Murray 1993:517.
38. Lydon 1993; Godden Mackay P/L 1993; Proudfoot et al. 1989:47, 96-7; 1993; Higginbotham 1989.
39. Lampert and Truscott 1984:5.
40. Thorp 1994.
41. Thorp 1994:42.
42. Thorp 1994:43-6.
43. Thorp 1994:47.
44. Thorp 1994:47-49.
45. Thorp 1994:45-47.
46. Spencer-Wood 1987.
47. Wilson, G. pers.comm.
48. Godden Mackay and Karskens 1994.
49. Fitzgerald 1987; Grimshaw *et al* 1994:113-130.
50. O'Brien 1988.
51. Gojak and Iacono 1993:9; Gojak pers.comm.
52. Cannon 1983:175.
53. Gojak and Iacono 1993:10-11 and see Fingard 1982.
54. Gojak 1991.
55. McLachlan 1989.
56. Gojak 1991:7.
57. Lydon 1991.
58. *Sands Directory*.
59. For Australasian studies see for example McCarthy 1988; Piper 1988; Ritchie 1984. For American studies see for example Praetzelis et al 1987; Staski 1985; Greenwood 1978, 1980; Evans 1980.
60. Lydon 1991. This is the topic of my Master of Arts research.
61. Landon 1989:37; Matthews 1984:148-171; Hareven 1977:2-3.
62. O'Brien 1982:165.
63. Matthews 1984:164.
64. Landon 1989:41-6; Davidoff 1979:85; Strasser 1982:148; Alford 1984:196.
65. Dublin 1979:79; Landon 1989:42; Modell and Hareven 1977:9.
66. 1876 *Select Committee*: 857-8.
67. 1876 *Select Committee*: 858-9.
68. Lydon 1993a; Lydon in prep.
69. 1860 *NSW Legislative Assembly, Votes and Proceedings*:78. See for example Jevons, cited in Proudfoot 1986:19-20.
70. Lydon 1993:23.
71. Praetzelis *et al.* 1988:201-2.
72. *Sands Directory*.
73. Steele 1993; Lowe 1993; Lydon 1991.
74. Bond 1989.
75. Lydon 1991.
76. And see Beaudry and Mrzowski 1989.
77. McCalman 1980:108.
78. Wall 1991.
79. Douglas and Isherwood 1979:102.
80. Johnson and Parris 1989, Johnson 1990; Lowe 1993; Lydon 1993.

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