The archaeological potential of colonial prison hulks: The Tasmanian case study
Brad Williams
Masters candidate, Maritime Archaeology, Flinders University, ADELAIDE, South Australia
Email: brad@southcom.com.au

Introduction—Hulked ships and their use as prisons
Traditionally, the term hulk refers to the body of any ship or decked vessel. More modern interpretations of the term particularly encompass any ship that is deemed unseaworthy. For the purpose of this work, the term hulk will be used to describe a ship that was no longer engaged in active trade, yet still fulfilled a secondary function. This paper examines only one small section of those vessels which could fit that definition of a hulk—the prison hulks, which will be defined here as a place of confinement aboard a vessel which is permanently moored. Further, the definition as used here will be narrowed to only include vessels which had been deregistered or were unseaworthy, to avoid confusion with convict transport ships, where temporary housing of convicts would have occurred.

Historical background of prison hulks with a focus on Australia
With expansion of the British Empire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, transportation of convicted criminals became a major industry. With the loss of the American colonies, together with tightening of the criminal code, British prison infrastructure failed to accommodate the inflated number of convicts, with hulks moored in the Thames and Severn rivers used for overflow accommodation of prisoners (Barnard, 1986: 207). The hulks were a temporary measure, initially endorsed by British Parliament for two years. Despite this, prison hulks were used in Britain for over 80 years, between 1776 and 1858, with a variety of administrative processes guiding their usage (Shaw, 1977: 43–5). During this period, over 50 hulks were used in English ports or the accommodation of prisoners awaiting transportation—each ship serving up to 32 years. Most of these were located in the ports of Woolwich, Portsmouth, Chatham, Deptford, Plymouth and Sheerness. There were two out-stations of the British hulks, one at Bermuda (1829–1864) that accommodated at least eight hulks, and one at Gibraltar (1842–1870) with at least two hulks (see Campbell 1993: 141–52). One hulk was stationed at each of Dublin and Cork between the years 1825 and 1838 (Keates, 2002).

The use of hulks in Britain was an integral mechanism in the transportation of convicts to the colonies. Most of the convicts sent to Australia spent some time aboard a hulk awaiting transportation (Sweeney, 1981: 32). Hulks and the study of their place in the penal system are, therefore, a significant aspect of the foundation of Australia.

The use of hulks to house prisoners in New South Wales dates from 1825, when Sir Thomas Brisbane arranged purchase of the damaged Phoenix (589 tons), to be repaired and moored at Port Jackson for the accommodation of up to 200 prisoners (State Records New South Wales [SRNSW] agency #413). With the Sydney gaol not expected to be completed until 1830, Governor Brisbane required safe custody for bushrangers until that time (Historical Records of Australia [HRA], series I, vol. XI: 553, 605). In the longer-term, desirability of hulks as a place of colonial confinement is evident in a July 1828 transmission of acts from Governor Darling, who requested the home Government to formulate ‘an act for better regulation of the hulk or floating prison in Sydney Harbour’ (HRA, series I, vol. XIV: 257–8). The colonial hulks were apparently not satisfactory to the home Government, with a dispatch to Governor Darling in March 1828 requesting that the hulk system be abolished, as the vessels were deemed unhealthy and not cost-effective as a place of confinement (HRA, series I, vol. XIV: 84; see also Shaw, 1977: 99). Darling, however, disagreed, stating that conditions upon the hulks were healthy and that it was a cost-effective and secure way to house 100 or so prisoners when compared to a gaol on shore (HRA, series I, vol. XIV: 627). The Phoenix still housed prisoners in 1834, when the brigs Harriet and Indiana were surveyed for potential replacements for that hulk, however, these ships were not found to be capacious enough (Sydney Herald, 15.9.1834). Records of the hulk Phoenix (SRNSW) indicate that it was decommissioned as a prison in 1838.

In Victoria, the President was hulked for use as a prison in Hobson’s Bay Harbour in 1852 and the following year the Success (621 tons), Deborah and Sacramento (moved to Geelong prior to 1854, and later to Williamstown) joined the President. With a doubling of Victoria’s prison population by 1854 the hulk Lysander was added to the fleet (Keates, 2002; Lynn & Armstrong, 1996: 30–40).
processes. Prison hulks, in the context discussed in this paper, however, do not fit this definition—as they provided no support role to any maritime industry. Neither could they fit the discarded vessel definition, as although they no longer served a maritime function, they were still a utilized ship. Richards (2002: 63–4, 309–10) is the only work cited here which archaeologically considers the usage of hulks for non-maritime functions, mostly residential and industrial purposes. Prison hulks, therefore, could be described as an opportunistic recycling of accommodation space. Throughout this paper, the use of hulks for housing prisoners will be explored, and it will be found that all originated as opportunistic recycling of a ship as a temporary arrangement in the absence of established terrestrial infrastructure.

Specific research into prison hulks has received very little archaeological attention. The *Dromedary* project is the only work cited here which utilizes prison hulks as an archaeological resource (Addams & Davis, 1998; Addams & Newell, 1999). The *Dromedary*, (formerly a New Zealand service ship), was one of the eight known hulks to be moored on Ireland Island, Bermuda in 1826. Initiated in the early 1980s, the *Dromedary* archeological project has excavated a series of trenches immediately below the site of the hulk in the Bermuda Dockyard. From these excavations, a significant artefact assemblage has been collected. Including horse and beef bones, buttons, jewellery, bone utensils, clay pipes and carved limestone figures, the analysis of which has given insight into the material culture of the prison hulk.

Preliminary investigations into two of the Victorian hulks, have been commenced recently by Heritage Victoria. Following decommissioning, the hulks *Deborah* and *Sacramento* were towed to Newport, Greenwich Bay, and used in land reclamation works (*The Illustrated Australian News*, 28.4.1888: 82; Foster, 1990: 13; Victorian Heritage Register, Nos S163 & S602; Duncan, 2004). Future investigation of this reclamation may yield insight into the archaeology of prison hulks in the Australian context.

1885, the five Victorian hulks were ordered to be broken up. However, the *Success* escaped this fate and became a floating museum of convict life, travelling the world between 1890 and 1942. In 1945, the ship grounded at Port Clinton (Ohio) and was burned the following year. Many artefacts of the *Success*, relating to shipboard incarceration have survived and are displayed in the Hayes Presidential Center in Fremont, Ohio (see also Norman, 1938: 59; Glasser, 1953: 234–6; Campbell, 1993: 72–6, Norgard, 2002).

Victoria was the colony that seemed to make the most extensive use of hulks for the confinement of prisoners. In South Australia, the *Fitzjames*, moored near Semaphore, was used as a reformatory hulk, and in Tasmania, the *Duke of York* and *Anson* were used as prison/probationary hulks: it is the archaeology of the Tasmanian hulks which will form the basis of further discussion in this paper.

**Prison hulks as an archaeological resource**

The use of hulks to hold prisoners has received much literary attention—most of which is presented within an historical or ethno-historical framework (Branch-Johnson. 1957; Campbell 1993). The general opinion of these works perpetuates the contemporary reports of appalling conditions aboard the hulks and the inefficiencies of the hulk ‘system’.

The first major study into Australian hulks was undertaken by Glasser (1953) and detailed the histories of several ships. Although including discussions of the *Anson* and *Success*, this work was not limited to prison hulks and was not archaeologically based.

The only major archaeological works cited in this paper, which include hulks as a significant proportion of the study, are the series of works by Richards (2002, 2003). Richards discusses the archaeology of vessel abandonment, of which hulking is often an interim mechanism (2002: 311). Richards (2002: 288–90, 303) categorizes vessels converted to a utilitarian hulk (as opposed to a discarded hulk) as ‘secondary support vessels’, meaning that they are converted from their original use to provide a support role to other maritime

Figure 2. Hobson’s Bay hulk c. 1853, possibly the President. The ship in the background may be the Success. (State Library of Victoria.)

Figure 3. The Success on a visit to Hobart c. 1900. (State Library of Tasmania.)
Historical background of the Tasmanian hulks

The merits of the hulk system were expressed in Tasmania as early as 1826, when the Colonial Times [CT] (1.9.1826) described the efficiency of the English system. The advantages of prison hulks described within this article was likely to have been intended to support the position of the newly established Tasmanian hulk, the Duke of York, which was moored in Hobart Harbour.

Formerly known as the Sophia, the Duke of York (61 tons) is first noted in the Tasmanian record in the diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood in 1805 (Knopwood’s Diary, Archives Office of Tasmania [AOT]). Between 1816 and 1821 it was used as a whaler by Captain James Kelly and sailed mostly between Hobart, Port Dalrymple (George Town), the Bass Strait Islands and Port Davey (Hobart Port Certificate Book L11). Sophia was one of two ships (with the Prince Leopold) that made regular trips to Macquarie Harbour to establish the Sarah Island penal colony. The Sophia was purchased by the Tasmanian Government in 1822 and renamed Duke of York, continuing a regular service between Hobart and Macquarie Harbour.

The use of this vessel as a hulk dates from the mid 1820s when it was used as a magazine (CT, 2.7.1830). This makes the Duke of York the first ship hulked in Hobart (Lawson 1986: 212). The earliest mention of the hulk as being used to house prisoners is a letter from James Simmons (presumably the officer in charge of the hulk) to the Colonial Secretary, John Montague, dated November 1824, requesting repairs to a leak in the hull. This letter asks for the prisoners to be removed from the hulk for several hours to allow the repairs (AOT, Public Works Department [PWD] 266/1489). Between 1816 and 1821 it was used as a whaler. The Duke of York was reported ready for reception of the chain-gang on 3 June 1830. The quality of this refit is questionable, considering that, in November 1830, Governor Arthur issued a memorandum that planking aboard the hulk was loose and dangerous in places. Major repairs were again undertaken to the hulk in 1832, with the prisoners being temporarily lodged in the Hobart Town Prisoner’s Barracks (AOT, CSO 1/97/2301).

By 1834, it seems that the Duke of York had deteriorated to a point where it was no longer effective as a hulk. The Roads Commissioner, Roderic O’Connor deemed the hulk as not repairable, however a survey of the Duke of York by the Hobart Town harbour-master and a master shipwright determined that the hulk was still sufficient for its purpose. The Colonial Secretary was not satisfied with the survey of the hulk and ordered another enquiry, supported by Governor Arthur (AOT, CSO 1/897/19064). Further inquiry must have deemed the hulk sufficient, as it was still in use several years later.

At some time during the 1830s the hulk was moved to New Town Bay. It is uncertain exactly when this occurred, the first mention of that station is in documents from 1837, when a portion of the hulk-gang were removed to the station buildings in January of that year. At that time, Director of Public Works, Alexander Cheyne applied to the Port Officer to have the hulk repaired and moored at Gellibrand Point (Opossum Bay) and for temporary buildings to be erected there for cooking and accommodation of the overseer and guard (AOT, CSO 1/897/19064). It is uncertain whether the hulk was ever moved to Gellibrand Point, this being unlikely as it was certainly at New Town Bay in 1840. This is evidenced by a letter from the Superintendent of the New Town Bay Station to the CSO, which reported that the hulk was unfit for accommodation of convicts after it had been necessary to evacuate prisoners with fears that the hulk would break from its moorings and sink, due to the amount of rotting timber (AOT, CSO 5/252/6558). Apparently, to alleviate this problem, the hulk was beached, as an 1841 plan of the New Town Probation Station shows the hulk on dry land (AOT, Public Works Department [PWD] 266/1489).

It seems that by 1843, the Duke of York hulk had either deteriorated to a point where repair was not desirable, or it had become obsolete following the wave of penal infrastructure built during the first two years of the...
1 October 1843. The *Colonial Times* (6.2.1844) reported the arrival of the *Anson* into Hobart Town:

The *Anson*, a large man-of-war, of 72 guns [The NMM Naval Lists state that the *Anson* carried 80 guns], arrived on Sunday [4.2.1844] bringing 500 prisoners and a number of soldiers of the 51st, 58th, 96th and 98th regiments. The *Anson* is to be laid up as a hulk, for the reception of female prisoners.

This was the largest number of convicts to arrive in a single ship-load to that date (Glassford, 1953: 220). The *Hobart Town Gazette*, on February 25th, 1844, reported that the *Anson* would be ready within a month for service as a female factory at Oyster Cove in the D’Entracasteaux Channel, south of Hobart. The *Anson* was refitted in Hobart Town and the female prisoners from the *Woodbridge* and *Angelina* transferred to the hulk on 25 April 1844. It was towed to New Town Bay and soon after to Prince of Wales Bay where it served its life as a hulk. For some reason, the *Anson* never reached Oyster Cove.

The *Anson* held from 250 to 519 women at any one time and was in continuous use as a prison hulk until 1850, when the women were transferred to the Cascades station (Glassford, 1953: 221; Howard, 1993: 134). This paper will not attempt to detail the history of the hulk here, as a significant amount of work has already been undertaken on such (see endnote 3). The *Duke of York*, however, has received no significant literary attention; therefore, the history of that ship is described here in greater detail than that of the *Anson*.

Following removal of the women, the *Anson* was surveyed by the Navy with the aim of returning it to service for the transportation of blue-gum (*Eucalyptus* sp.) to England. Although the timber in the hulk was deemed sound, the treenails were decayed and it was deemed inferior for practical re-commissioning and it was broken up in Prince of Wales Bay (Lawson, 1986: 212) by the crew of HMS *Havannah* which was then in port (Quin-Conroy, n.d). The *Hobart Town Courier* (17.9.1851) advertised an auction of the ballast, iron fittings and timber from the *Anson*, ‘on-site’ at the Domain. Another auction of oak planking from the *Anson* was held in January 1853 (*HTC*, 12.1.1853).

**Archaeological potential of the Tasmanian prison hulks**

This paper will examine two possible avenues of investigation into the archaeology of the Tasmanian prison hulks:

- The archaeology of the hulk itself—including the process of breaking the hulk, recycling of materials and post-breaking/abandonment depositional processes.
- The archaeology of the site and associated artefacts/infrastructure—including the location/type of mooring, artefactual deposition in the immediate vicinity and associated infrastructure.

Whilst this is not a comprehensive consideration of all aspects of the archaeology of prison hulks, these
avenues of investigation will be briefly considered here as a means of demonstrating their archaeological potential and significance.

The primary concern of the archaeology of the hulks is the determination of their exact use location. Information on the precise location of the Duke of York whilst moored at Sullivan’s Cove and the New Wharf in Hobart Town has not been found. As previously stated, only vague descriptions of the mooring point are available, but all indicate that it was moored in front of what is now Salamanca Place. The amount of land reclamation that has occurred in this area would most likely have covered the 1830s harbour bottom over which the hulk floated. An 1841 plan of the New Town Probation Station shows the exact location of the Duke of York hulk during its later association with that site (AOT, PWD 266/1489). The exact location of the Anson is not so clear. While there are at least four contemporary depictions of the hulk moored in Prince of Wales Bay, all differ in their perspective (Fig. 10).

Without necessarily pinpointing the actual location of the hulks, the known circumstances of their moorings is an aspect which would influence their expected archaeological signatures. A primary difference in the use of the Anson and the Duke of York as prison hulks are their mooring positions. The Duke of York was essentially an additional building in the New Town Station. It was moored at the water’s edge, and later beached, serving no other function than the housing of the chain-gang—who left the hulk daily to perform their duties. The Anson, however, was moored offshore in Prince of Wales Bay. The women confined were employed onboard in a female-factory environment—without leaving the confines of the ship. The mooring and accessibility of the hulks would have several consequences when assessing the archaeological record of each.

An 1841 plan (Figs 4 & 8) shows the Duke of York attached to the New Town Probation Station by a gangway and indicates that the hulk was on dry land. This would mean that the site of the hulk would be more a terrestrial site, accentuated by later landfill discussed below. Earlier documentary evidence suggests that the hulk was initially floating at the site, describing fears of it sinking (AOT, CSO 5/252/6558). This presents two scenarios; that the hulk was floating and then beached at another location at that site, or that the hulk was moored in shallow water and fill was placed around the hulk to beach it, this being the first of many phases of land reclamation at that site. Nonetheless, whether beached or moored at a jetty, the archaeological signature of this hulk would be spread over a narrower geographic area than a hulk moored offshore, as demonstrated in Bermuda by the Dromedary project.

The Anson, however, is a different scenario. Being moored offshore, in approximately 3–4 fathoms (5.4–7.3 m) of water (US Hydrographic Office, 1926) which was subject to some tidal fluctuation, the exact position of that hulk would vary with the tide and current. This is demonstrated in several early paintings of the hulk—the
first, an 1846 view of Risdon Ferry (F. Simpkinson de Wesselow) shows the Anson with its bow facing the north-east; the second, an 1848 view of Restdown [sic] Ferry (J. Medland) shows the bow facing west (Both paintings are in the collection of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart. See also Figure 10). This movement of the hulk would mean that the archaeological signatures (i.e. overboard artefacts) of that hulk would be spread over a larger area than if it was moored at a pier or any other more fixed location. The Anson being moored offshore would have less immediately associated infrastructure that the Duke of York. Figure 9 shows the specifications for the Anson mooring, being a complex series of chains and swivels, suggesting that it was expected for the hulk to move over a wide area. The Anson, therefore, would be independent of attached infrastructure such as gang-planks or jetties. It is not known if there was any infrastructure on the shore associated with the Anson, however, it is likely that the hulk was serviced from the nearby Risdon Ferry terminal, as depicted in the contemporary artwork.

Besides aspects of the mooring and use of the hulks, investigation of their breaking also has archaeological potential. This paper has previously explained that at the end of their lives as prison hulks, the Duke of York and Anson were advertised for auction by the Commissariat Department. This would have two main consequences for the archaeological record—the archaeology of the breaking process and dispersal of hulk material.

It is unknown where, or even if the Duke of York was broken up. A search of the Commissariat records from the time of the auction, revealed no clues as to the terms of the sale, incoming revenue from the sale or the identity of the purchaser (AOT, Commissariat Office [CO] series). The disuse of the hulk and continued usage of the site means that the hulk was either removed, or subjected to

---

Figure 8. Excerpt from the 1841 New Town Probation Station plan (AOT, PWD 266/568) showing the Duke of York hulk. This plan suggests that the hulk was beached, as the water-line is on the opposite side of the hulk than the station buildings (the water being the bottom-right section of Figure 4). This is further evidenced by the gangway leading to dry land (top-middle) and the privy over the water accessed by a jetty (bottom-left).

Figure 9. Specifications for the Anson mooring, as provided for the guidance of the ship’s crew. (AOT, PWD 266/683.)

Figure 10. Contemporary images of the Anson from Risdon Ferry. T. LeMesurier Winter (c. 1840s, Mitchell Library). Inset J. Prout (1844, State Library of Tasmania). Reproduced from Penfold (1999: 79–80). These paintings each depict the bow of the hulk facing a different direction, indicating movement of the hulk.

Figure 11. Approximate location of the Anson in Prince of Wales Bay (Tasmap 1: 24 000 aerial photo Hobart 1270–54, not to scale).
WILLIAMS: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF COLONIAL PRISON HULKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Depth</th>
<th>Beam</th>
<th>Hulked</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duke of York/Sophia</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Norman (1938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful Star</td>
<td>Steamer</td>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>146 net, 177 gross</td>
<td>119'2&quot;</td>
<td>10'6&quot;</td>
<td>17'2&quot;</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Broxam &amp; Nash 2000: 36.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Basic data on the ships at the New Town Bay discard site.

in-situ hull reduction through either salvage or destruction (Richards, 2002: 333–5). With the possibility that the Duke of York was largely broken up on site, there may be significant archaeological traces in situ.

Richards (2002: 345–7) describes the differences between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ salvage—each having a distinctly different archaeological signature. ‘Primary’ salvage involves removing the structure of the hulk whilst still maintaining floatation—the hulk then being scuttled on site, or towed to a secondary salvage or discard site. ‘Secondary’ salvage involves the salvage of material crucial to retain floatation of the hulk—i.e. grounding and salvage, a more complete salvage process. The 1841 plan of the New Town Probation Station (Fig. 4) suggests that the Duke of York was on land. This being so, more of the hulk could be salvaged (secondary salvage) as the maintenance of floatation was not an issue. Secondary salvage of the hulk would mean that much less would remain in situ in the archaeological record. This assumes, however, that the Duke of York was not towed to another location for breaking, which would have been impractical unless that was a condition of sale.

After the subsequent closure of the New Town Probation Station, the buildings were gradually demolished, with only the solitary cells, which have been converted into a house, remaining. The site of the hulk was to become a ships’ graveyard, research showing that three other ships, the Monarch, Beautiful Star, (both paddle steamers), and the Huon Chief (schooner) were discarded there (see Table 1).

The site of the Duke of York, besides being the site of a prison hulk, is known to be a ship discard site. The 1946 aerial photograph of the site (Fig. 10) shows at least two other ships discarded in the area.

Owing to the early date of the hulk, likely breaking and timber construction, it is unlikely that any of the hulks in this photograph represent the Duke of York. Further

Figure 12. 1946 aerial photograph of New Town Bay (TLD). The Building on the left is the extended Probation Station cells. The ships’ graveyard can be seen in the centre of the photograph, with two distinct submerged hulks as indicated by subtle dark patches in the shallow water (outlined).
identification of which of these hulks represent which ship (as mentioned above), would assist in an understanding of the site in general.

The site offers significant archaeological potential; however, this is complicated by the site having been buried by land reclamation prior to 1960. During the 1950s, the New Town Probation Station site was owned by the Electrolytic Zinc (EZ) Company (whose operation centre was at nearby Stanhope Point—see Fig. 7). A large portion of land adjacent to the station was reclaimed from New Town Bay, as depicted in Figure 13.

It can be assumed that the remains of the ships listed in Table 1 were used in the fill as reinforcement, in a similar situation to the Victorian hulks Deborah and Sacramento. This reclamation has acted in two ways on the archaeology of the site. Firstly, it has obscured the site—the reclamation being over 2 m in depth leaves potential for extant remains. Secondly, the reclamation has probably acted to preserve the site. The area is industrial fringe/residential, the site having been subject to diverse and intensive usage during the latter half of the 20th century. The entombment of the hulks would have protected them from intentional damage or removal of material.

This paper has previously discussed the possibility of in-situ archaeological deposits related to the Duke of York; the reclamation of land makes this a much different case than the investigation of an underwater or foreshore discard site. The potential for terrestrial excavation of the site is a consideration when assessing the archaeological significance and formulating research designs. There is ample documentary evidence of the site of the hulk, as well as the changes in the foreshore in that area. Figure 15 presents an overlay of three phases of that site, in an attempt to graphically depict the location of major features. These plans were merged using the only fixed, common feature in all—the solitary cells of the Probation Station. Further geo-referencing of the plans would give a more accurate depiction of the sites of features beneath the fill, which would be necessary prior to any archaeological investigations.

Figure 13. Plan of the New Town Probation Station site area c1950. (Tasmanian Lands Department [TLD], Moonah/1a.)

Figure 14. Looking east across the reclamation at the former New Town Probation Station, now the car park for the Friends school rowing sheds (Lallaby road, Lutana). The building in the background is an adaptation of the solitary cells of the station. The probable location of the Duke of York site is believed to be beneath the portion of the shed at the centre of the photograph. (Photo: Brad Williams 21.4.2004.)

More information is known about the breaking of the Anson, with documented surveys, breaking works, auction listings and recycling giving an indication that the process was thorough and well planned. The breaking of the Anson resulted in the timbers being widely distributed. One of the masts was fitted to HMS Meander in 1850 and a large beam was fitted to the paddle steamer Kangaroo (Richards, 2003: 111). Some of the Anson’s timber was used in Ferguson’s building in Murray Street, Hobart (Lawson, 1986: 120). An extant cottage at 190 Bathurst Street, Hobart, reputedly contains timber, including a portion of a mast from the Anson (AOT ship photograph cardfile “Anson”). Richards (2002: 69) discusses the archaeology of recycling ship timbers into other ships and buildings, an area which has apparently received little literary attention. With several references being found as to where elements of the Anson were distributed, this hulk offers research potential into the functions of ship disarticulation, recycling and reuse.

What is unknown about the breaking of the Anson is the exact breaking location at Prince of Wales Bay and whether it fits the category of primary or secondary
salvage. It is uncertain whether the hulk was beached or dry-docked for secondary salvage, or whether the hulk was salvaged while floating and the hull scuttled. The only clue lies in the story of the Anson figurehead being left on the beach to rot following breaking (Quin-Conroy, n.d.), possibly indicating that the hulk was beached. The two auctions of Anson materials held over a year apart suggests either a long-running breaking process, or two separate stages and the first auction being held at the site of the Anson suggests that the hulk was broken on a beach or pier, rather than in an isolated breaking ground (such as nearby Shag Bay). This suggests secondary salvaging of the Anson, probably leaving less of the actual ship in the archaeological record than if only primary salvage had occurred.

This paper has ascertained that the Tasmanian prison hulks represent unique parts of the 19th century penal processes. The sites of these hulks do offer a significant archaeological resource. The archaeology of any ship remnants, particularly the Duke of York, may offer archaeological insight into the techniques of conversion from ship to hulk and the archaeological signatures evident on ship remains relating to the specific purpose of the housing of prisoners. The processes of breaking and dispersal of hulk material has also been discussed here as a significant part of their archaeology. This paper has discussed the mooring of the ships; in particular the Anson mooring may still be in the waters of Prince of Wales Bay. While this is a primary port of Hobart, which may have been subject to disturbance such as dredging, locating and recording the Anson mooring, if extant, would add to an understanding of aspects of hulking and long-term mooring. The infrastructure associated with these hulks, in particular the buildings surrounding the Duke of York, and on shore supporting infrastructure of the Anson, are also aspects of the archaeology that should not be overlooked when investigating the hulks.

In addition to the above, the smaller artefacts associated with the hulks would give perhaps the most significant and intriguing insight into the lives of those confined onboard. The Dromedary project has demonstrated that artefact assemblages associated with a prison hulk give first-hand testament to the material culture of those people on board. This paper has described the expected distribution of artefacts associated with the Tasmanian hulks and future excavations may yield remnants of material culture indicative of activities surrounding the hulks. Between the two Tasmanian hulks, activities were considerably variable. The Duke of York housed male prisoners, who left the hulk daily to perform their chain-gang duties. The Anson housed female prisoners, who were employed upon that ship in a Female Factory, producing craft and undertaking domestic duties in an enclosed microcosm of society. These varying activities and methods of penal servitude would most likely reflect in the archaeology of artefacts associated with the hulks—a point which lends itself to an array of future research. Locating the exact mooring position of the Anson, with subsequent excavation, as well as terrestrial excavation of the Duke of York reclamation site, may yield an artefact assemblage, the assessment of which could add considerably to current knowledge of the material culture associated with incarceration.

Conclusion

Prison hulks, as an archaeological resource, offer a significant opportunity for research into the archaeology of incarceration. The study of the British hulk system is a fundamental key in the understanding of the penal colonisation of colonial outposts. Study into the Australian prison hulks can give insight into the colonial requirement for expedient and economical accommodation of prisoners in the absence of established infrastructure.

The Tasmanian prison hulks are a unique resource within Australia, as they were the only hulks in the colony which were designed for the incarceration of transported convicts, rather than colonial-sentenced offenders. The known location of the Duke of York site and the likelihood of extant remains and associated artefacts make this hulk an important archaeological resource. Similarly, further research into the exact location of the Anson would allow research to be undertaken into the site of that hulk. With established programmes such as the Bermuda project setting the precedent for research into prison hulks sites, as well as an active interest by Heritage Victoria into the Victorian hulks, thematic study into prison hulks, as part of a larger penal system, has significant and exciting archaeological potential.

Endnotes

1 Norman (1938) gives the tonnage of the Sophia as 250 tons. All other documentation cited here agrees with the ship being 60-61 tons.

2 No plans of the Duke of York are known to remain, although a letter from the Port Office to the CSO dated July 3rd, 1830, refers to an enclosed plan—this plan has not remained in the file (AOT CSO 1/97/2301).

3 For further discussion (often contrasting) regarding the
function of the Anson establishment and life on board, see sources such as Howard 1993:132-40, West 1852:321, HTC 29/10/1849, AOT Comptroller General’s Files no’s. 5520, 5563. Also for insight into the lives of Dr. and Mrs. Bowden, the Surgeon and Matron (respectively) of the establishment, see The Australian Dictionary of Biography (1966 vol 1:134), Howard (1993:135-7).

The Hobart Town Courier (16/2/1844) states that the Black Prince was to join the Anson. It is uncertain what was meant by ‘joining’, whether the second hulk was used as a subsidiary hulk to the Anson or whether this simply meant that the Black Prince was intended to become a hulk, not necessarily associated with the Anson.

References
Archives Office of Tasmania, CSO (Commissariat Office) series, early 1840s.
Archives Office of Tasmania, CSO (Colonial Secretary’s Office) 1/897/19064: VDL Colonial Secretary’s Office file of documents relating to repair to the New Town hulk.
Archives Office of Tasmania, CSO 1/97/2501: VDL Colonial Secretary’s Office file of documents relating to repair of the hulk (Duke of York).
Archives Office of Tasmania, CSO 5/252/6558: VDL Colonial Secretary’s Office file of documents relating to ‘sinking of the hulk at New Town’.
Archives Office of Tasmania, PWD Plan series.
British Parliamentary Papers.
State Records New South Wales, Agency #416: Records of the hulk Phoenix.